

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting - Hoosac Valley High School
Tuesday, August 24, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Adam Emerson, Regina Hill, Bethany DeMarco, Nannette Reid

REMOTE: Erin Milne, Mike Mucci

ABSENT: Mike Henault

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

103822 Call to Order

Vice Chairman Bethany DeMarco called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

103823 Public Comment or Questions - None

103824 Approval of Minutes - June 7, 2021

MOTION: On Motion of Regina Hill and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: to approve the June 7, 2021 minutes. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

103825 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager -

A. Authorization to Borrow:

“That the District Treasurer be authorized, under the provisions of General Laws Chapter 71, Section 16(g) as amended by Chapter 134 of the Acts of 1972, and with the approval of the Chairman of the District Committee, to borrow money from time to time in anticipation of revenue for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021 and to issue a note or notes as may be given for a period of less than one year in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 44, Section”.

MOTION: On Motion of Regina Hill and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To approve the authorization to borrow. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

103826 Report of Sub Committee -

A. Policy - Handbook updates / Masks - Aaron gave an overview of the policy handbook. A few pieces to look at with the committee. Getting the policies up to date with the laws. Going through a tiered focus review and they will be looking at our policies. In the packet, you will see handbook language, getting philosophy and goals in the handbook and being consistent. Taking what we had in place and putting it in one formal document. Did have extensive discussion about the goals and work through the language. The main goals: deliver timely and personalized support informed by data; increase the number of students performing at the proficient and advanced levels; engage students through technologically integrated teaching strategies; implement a rigorous and relevant curriculum that improves outcomes for all students with a focus on both college and career readiness; engage the community in developing our pathways for college and career readiness from Pre-K through graduation; establish and nurture meaningful relationships with our students, their families and our community

partners; commit at all levels (teacher, building, district) to review and examine policies, procedure, and available data through an equity lens to both break down barriers and to meet the needs of all students. This will be present in all of our handbooks. Adam Emerson stated that the policy meeting was very productive and the goals were to align the student handbooks at each school so when a child comes in in the elementary school their expectations are the same in each building and you build on that. There has been a lot of good work done and look forward to seeing this through. Aaron: We have updated student discipline language and the process and how we proceed through this. Had to update our suspension process. Academic progress, discipline of students with disabilities to match the law and get us to best practices along those lines. Title 9 being updated to match the laws. Fairly new policy for us is the Hoosac Valley quality gender in athletics. It is important to have in place. Prevention of physical restraints, needed to update those policies. It's a significant handbook but it is getting us into compliance. Our responsible use policy has a more explicit policy to address what you look at at all grade levels. All of these have been updated and will be part of our policies and handbooks moving forward. Bully prevention and intervention plan has been updated. Our policies have been solidly in place. Regina Hill stated that this has been worked on for years and this is just an updated version to comply with the legal standpoint. Aaron: Over the next school year, we will have more policies to update.

MOTION: On Motion of Nannette Reid and second by Adam Emerson.

To: approve the changes and updates in the handbook. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Nannette Reid.

To: approve the waiving of the second reading. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Face coverings: today the DESE instituted a mandate that we have face masks universally in schools until at least October 1st. A lot of controversy over this, Aaron recommends that the committee adopt the universal policy and we can look at over the year as the guidance changes from the state. We can make a change in the policy to match the guidance. We need to protect our unvaccinated and some of our students are not eligible for vaccination as of yet. If the science changes, the vaccines take hold and guidance changes, we can make the change during the school year. It is the responsible thing to do for students and the district. Regina Hill asked Chris Sposato what his thoughts are for masks? Chris, it makes sense for our students and staff at least for the first month. Believes the students are use to it, at this point his concern is if we didn't and an extreme tragedy happens what happens if we don't follow the recommendations. Regina: At her work facility there are a number of new hires and the new requirement is that they become fully vaccinated. For everyone else that is currently employed, they need to wear a mask, unless they are by themselves. Nannette Reid: concerned with the long term effects of masking especially with students with learning disabilities, the barriers that happen wearing the masks. Understands that there is a risk, the likelihood that our youth of getting covid is less, has a hard time with the masking of the kids. Erin Milne: there is a strong scientific consensus. We are in a situation where we don't have an option to choose but to look at the science and how we are safely educating our students. Very unlikely that the vaccine will be approved for students 5 - 12 years old, until the end of the year. Studies showing how effective masks are and no studies show that they are harmful, not ideal, do think there is a lot of evidence that they are the safest and less intrusive. Strongly in favor of adopting this policy. Mike Mucci: keep saying "mandate" are they truly manding k-12 what options do the schools have? Aaron: Being a public school we have to comply with this mandate, as of now it's through October 1st- we can address it at our next meeting. Aaron states that he does not see a significant change by October 1st. We can revisit every month, if there is a change, we can look at adopting the change. We need to have a policy on the books. We are best protected by having the policy in place and we can adjust moving forward, we have meetings every month.

MOTION: On Moton of Nannette Reid and second by Mike Mucci:

VOTED: to approve the face mask policy as presented with the deletion of the last sentence in the third paragraph "face coverings must also be worn outside when social distancing cannot be observed". A roll call vote was taken. The vote was 5-1-0

B. Maintenance - Mike Mucci: met with Keith Lagess from the high school getting prepared for the school year. Nothing jumped out as being extraordinary and did the same with the elementary school. Talked about things we need to continue to do. We are getting several things priced. Aaron: At the middle and high school updated and retrofitted spaces to better accommodate our special education programming, performed annual maintenance on all

our rooftop units, refreshed and painted a number of areas, and began the process of upgrading lighting to LED in the building, starting with the gym. At the elementary school we completed the cycle of AC installations by installing units on the first floor, installed new shades in rooms that needed updated blinds, tiled several rooms that were in need of upgrades, painted and refreshed several areas throughout the building, contracted a company to balance our HVAC system, added maintenance access to our gym HVAC unit, and performed electrical upgrades needed in some areas. We are well prepared for school. Looking at some projects as we delve into the ESSR funds. We had an opportunity to get things done that we typically wouldn't have been able to otherwise. The custodial staff really stepped up and did a great job for us.

103827 Communications - None

103828 Report of Superintendent

A. Summer Updates - Looking at preparations for the upcoming school year. Wanted to acknowledge the success we had in the past year. Staff stepped up tremendously in a lot of ways to meet the needs of students and families. 2020-2021 School Year Successes: Average daily attendance was near 80% and increased 9-% by end of year; passing rates also increased, focused more on project based learning, reduced homework and added core extension classes; HS credit recovery: offered a 4 week, 2 hour day summer school/ credit recovery using Edgenuity - approximately 15 students took advantage of this and received course credit. Offered Cadence Institute to middle school students, at the elementary school, extended year program for special education students - more than 30 staff work with students in July. We provided 700+ chromebooks and 100 hotspots to those in need; we implemented BiNax testing and other health and safety protocols;

Preparation for 2021-2022 school year: Challenges: early literacy data - students did not make the typical growth compared to a normal school year, more students need intervention; student engagement at the secondary level was a challenge; curriculum updates in ELA, Math intervention; Delta variant is presenting unexpected rise in cases and facilities needed to be prepared to accommodate all students.

The following is what we have done to address our challenges: reading specialist at the elementary school; special educators at the secondary level; teacher of department added at the elementary school; PBIS Academy at high school, continued use of advisories to build SEL skills; expansion of TEAMS training to develop and refine staff use of data; implementation of ELA curriculum grades k - 12; implementation of math readiness - staff training in assessments and practices; Kristen Palatt is our new Director of Curriculum, Instruction and P.D. She comes to us from Pittsfield and will meet with the school committee next month; summer programming and after school programming at elementary and middle school; Maintained BiNax testing. Geoff Kondel is now our Director of Technology - inventoried and carted over 1000 chromebooks; inventoried and set up 150 new staff machines; performed upgrades to networking; rollovers and software integration; added department specialist to provide support and P.D. for staff (J.W. Keplinger); implemented a new inventory system; moved the technology department to district offices and restricted. We inventoried over 10,000 books and delivered to classroom spaces; updated district office spaces and meeting room; processed over 30 new hires (and counting); revamped new teacher orientation; implemented CPI training for staff (restraint, de-escalation); preparing for TFM site visit in March; ILT's engaged in strategic planning - DIP/SIP, data driven work; we have a "back to school" page on our website which houses all information in one place. We have all worked hard over the summer to prepare for the return of our students and will continue to address any needs that come our way.

103829 Chairman's Report - None

103830 Unfinished Business - None

103831 New Business None

103832 Action Items

A. Nurse's contract - - reworked the salary schedule, beyond that nothing strikingly different, in line with what we did with the other units. We have a step schedule and language around union representatives which is allowed to them by law. Mike Mucci stated that this has gone through the negotiation subcommittee.

B. MOA - leave of absence - See Attached

C. MOA - Speech/Language - See attached

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Nannette Reid:

To approve the nurses contract, the leave of absence MOA and the speech and language MOA. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

103833 For the Good of the Order

Adam Emerson: wish all the students and staff coming back good luck and look forward to a productive school year.

Bethany DeMarco: wishes everyone luck during the school year.

Nannette Reid: Knows that Aaron has been very busy and thanked him for all his hard work.

Erin Milne: Thanked everyone for all their hard work over the past year.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second Adam Emerson:

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting at 7:40 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary

Place: Per Governor Baker's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting G.L. c. 30a, Sec. 20, the public will not be allowed to physically access this School Committee Meeting. Members of the public can access this meeting via live stream by calling +1-408-650-3123 ; Access Code: 681-412-093 or <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/681412093>