

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, March 28, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mike Mucci, Bethany DeMarco, Mike Henault, Regina Hill, Nannette Reid

REMOTE: Erin Milne, Adam Emerson

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

I. Call to Order

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

II. Public Comment or Questions -

High School Teacher Tammie Shafer - teachers have a concern about the number of staff being allocated at the elementary level for the next fiscal year in regards to the budget. Is there wiggle room for additions of staffing on either current needs of students and future needs of students in the classroom for success?

Aaron: In terms of the allocation of staff, the last budget hearing meeting we had we discussed enrollment and class size, it was based on getting the class size to a reasonable number. In terms of kindergarten the projected enrollment is approximately 80 students. Last year, we also projected around 80 students. During the summer we ended up with 92 students, so we added another class. We are lucky we have ESSR funds that we can add if need be, there is flexibility in terms of what we do. Tonight the committee will vote on a number, but the plan can change based on our needs. As far as the group going into grade 2, looking at class size at 15, but if something changes, we can take a look at that. We are looking at our intervention specialists to use as well. These are things that are not finalized especially when talking about the budget in March. This can change in June or over the summer.

Mike Mucci stated that most class sizes, as of now, are under 18.

Elementary Teacher Kim Trimarchi - thank you for sharing that information. There has been a lot of talk about class sizes at the elementary level. The one thing that is quite variable is the makeup of students. One class of 15 cannot be compared to another class based on the social/emotional/academic needs. This year in-person learning, returning from remote learning and COVID restrictions, the students that we have in front of us are very different students, speaking about 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade. These students are not a typical class of 15 students. Current class of 1st grade students have pretty severe needs and disrupting learning and it's a safety issue. Our administration at the elementary level has been phenomenal. They stepped in as adjustment counselors, supported and helped in any way and there are not enough of them to go around. We do not have enough certified trained personnel to meet the needs. A lot of concerns are how are we going to adjust to the new reality of our classrooms? The academics have been addressed with the new curriculum, but we are not seeing typical behaviors and it is affecting the safety in classrooms. How do we start a conversation on how to meet those needs, with limited staffing. This is taking its toll on students, families and teachers. We often deal with families and students who are leaving our district. Would like to have conversations with families to retain them at a much earlier age. What grade level do we start? Is it middle, is it high school or does it start at the elementary level?

Mike Mucci stated these definitely need addressing. Aaron: We have an SEL committee who are working on strategies regarding these concerns. We are also piloting a program at the middle and high school to have therapy provided in the schools to free up the SAC to address other needs. This is not unique to us, there is staffing shortage all over the place. We are working with these issues and trying our best, part of our issue is we could not find licensed certified staff. We have reached out with MASS hire, school spring,

etc. We made adjustments in our staffing and utilizing our BCBA's in the cornerstone programs. We are looking at ways we can leverage staff. Many of these are not necessarily budget related, it's just shortages.

Kim Trimarchi: The elementary school has been hard hit with lack of certified SPED teachers - looking over your guiding questions, from the last meeting, one being are we legally obligated to provide these services? Is there any way we can get in trouble with the state with not having enough certified teachers? Aaron: We met with the state, we are prioritizing services first, this is statewide, they understand what the issue is. Conversations are happening at multiple levels with multiple people. Wish there was an easy answer, but there isn't. We will not get in trouble with the state. We are going to be chipping away and I know on the tier focused monitoring review, we have been very open about our shortages.

Cheshire Selectboard Member Michele Fansceconi: A little disheartening, Kim tried to ask a question at the last meeting, there was an attempt to ask those questions at the last meeting and was told the questions came too late Mike Mucci stated that's not what was said. That meeting was to discuss the budget numbers and it was made clear that they could attend this meeting and ask questions during comment/question time. Michelle: Did the School Committee receive a 3 page letter and did they review it? Asking if the S.C. reviewed the discussion points? Mike Mucci: not positive what document you have or how you got it and what's in it? Michelle - just budget concerns believe that it was sent to the S.C. it did state "discussion points at the school committee" Michelle won't disclose her source. Was told that two JMLC meetings were canceled. Why? Aaron: Our Director of Student Services had resigned and I had a tired monitor review and had to be in those meetings and last week I was out due to testing positive for COVID. I don't know what relevance it has? Why are you bringing up this joint labor meeting regarding teachers? Michelle: Bringing it forward because teacher's have concerns and tried to go through the School Committee and are not getting any answers. Aaron stated that is inaccurate.

Mike asked if there are any other budget questions?

Tammie: Regarding our special education department, we recently had someone leave. Is the plan to rehire replacement for that position or are we going to keep the current staff to date? We started with SPED director, associate director and secretary, are we replacing the director that left. Aaron: There is a plan to replace every special ed that we have a vacancy for. The issue is getting certified candidates. Not unique to HVRSD, it is a state and nationwide problem. We had postings up most the entire year. We reached out to our network, reached out to retirees, and yes there is a plan to replace them and there always has been.

Mike Henault: wants to make a clarifying statement - an email was sent to the entire School Committee which was received on Saturday afternoon regarding some concerns. After reading the document, it was building based operations, personnel issues, etc. and it was not appropriate to be sent to the entire School Committee. It put us in a position where we could have violated an open meeting and this should have been sent to Aaron and it was not. Aaron stated that this was not shared with him and if it was, he could have had discussion and address the concerns. Met with the President and VP of the Union today and informed them that this needs to be brought through the proper channels.

Tammie: Thought Aaron was going to meet with each school last week regarding the budget. He only met with the high school The concerns were more at the elementary school and teachers wanting to have a voice. The committee/Aaron did a good job answering the above concerns. Aaron stated that he was also planning to meet with the elementary and middle school to discuss the budget.

Mike Mucci asked if there were any other questions/comments? None: Public comment closed.

III. Approval of Minutes - March 7, 2022

MOTION: On Motion of Nannette Reid and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to approve the March 7, 2022. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

IV. Budget Vote:

Mike Mucci asked if there was any new information from the last meeting? Aaron discussed the portion of the budget regarding the 2 parts of the foundation budget that get assessed to the two towns - the minimum contribution (per DESE) and the over minimum required contribution (per enrollment) The minimum contribution is \$249,748 (Adams: \$132,485 and Cheshire: \$117,263) The amount above minimum is \$59,033 (Adams: \$32,867 and Cheshire: \$26,166). We are coming in under 2% and believe that this is a solid responsible budget. Erika stated that we had a 8% increase in health insurance and we are able to find a way to fund that and to strategically get our numbers where we thought was responsible for the towns.

Aaron: We have done a solid job with the administrative team in working with values to dollars. In terms of looking for people for positions, that is another case where there is never enough.. We took steps to organize our departments, update curriculum.

Erin Milne: is there any room in this budget or contract to raise the salaries to attract people? Aaron: that would have to be negotiated with the union.

MOTION: On Moton of Regina Hill and second by Mike Henault:

To Approve SC Order 2203 - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2023 School Committee Budget totaling \$20,625,439. The FY2023 Budget consists of:

Foundation Budget	\$18,721,481
Transportation Budget	\$ 979,158
Capital Budget	<u>\$ 924,800</u>
Total:	\$20,625,439

VOTED: Be it hereby ordered that the FY2023 School Committee Budget be adopted as submitted above. The vote was unanimous. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Regina Hill and second by Mike Henault:

To Approve SC Order2204 - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2023 Assessment to the Town of Adams for its portion of the Adopted FY2023 School Committee Budget in accordance with the Hoosac Valley Regional School District Agreement. The assessment is as follows:

Foundation Budget	\$ 5,143,209
Transportation Budget	\$ 459,179
Capital Budget	<u>\$ 696,702</u>
Total FY2023 Assessment	\$6,299,090

VOTED: Be it hereby ordered that the FY2023 Assessment to the Town of Adams be approved as submitted above. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Bethany DeMarco and seconded by Mike Henault:

To Approve SC Order2205 - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2023 Assessment to the Town of Cheshire for its portion of the Adopted FY2023 School Committee Budget in accordance with the Hoosac Valley Regional School District Agreement. The assessment is as follows:

Foundation Budget	\$ 2,582,368
Transportation Budget	\$ 145,263
Capital Budget	<u>\$ 215,735</u>
Total FY2023 Assessment	\$ 2,943,366

VOTED: Be it hereby ordered that the FY2023 Assessment to the Town of Cheshire be approved as submitted above. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Regina Hill and second by Mike Henault:

To Approve SC Order2206 - Submitted herein for your approval is a request to appropriate \$275,000 from E & D as certified by the Department of Revenue for the purpose of reducing the FY2023 Foundation Budget assessment to the member towns.

VOTED: Be it hereby ordered that \$275,000 be appropriated from certified E & D for the purpose of reducing the FY2023 Foundation Budget assessment to the member towns of Adams and Cheshire. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous

MOTION: On Motion of Nannette Reid and second by Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:10 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary