

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, February 6, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mike Mucci, John Duval, Mike Henault, Regina Hill, Adam Emerson, Bethany DeMarco

ABSENT: Erin Milne

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104015 Call to Order

Chairman Mike Mucci called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

104016 Public Comment or Questions - Kathy Foster introduced herself, lives in Adams, was questioning the drama at the elementary school - the drama at the school was posted on facebook not sure if the committee is aware of it about police getting called on a child. How often does this happen? From private conversation with a school employee, it is fairly regular. Why are they calling the police on a 10 year old child? If they need police to be involved they probably shouldn't be in school. Concerned not only happening, but happening regularly. Aaron: That's the problem with facebook and the telephone games, they take them to a whole other level. If the police are in the building, it doesn't mean it's always for something serious. In this situation, I cannot get into details or why the police were there. As far as services and getting out placement, there is a process. In general, it is not a common situation. Kathy: Someone from your school contacted her and stated that it happens regularly. Aaron: this is an isolated incident. Kathy: why are we calling police on little children? If you really need the police for a 10 year old child, then they shouldn't be in school. Aaron: not going to engage in this situation, every situation has its own set of circumstances and can't get into those details. Kathy also questioned how meeting postings are done, hard to know where to go? and the content on the agenda.

104017 Approval of Minutes - January 9, 2023

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by John Duval:

VOTED: to approve the January 9, 2023. The vote was unanimous.

104018 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager - None

104019 Report of Sub Committee -

A. Policy - Aaron: covered a lot of ground in the policy meeting. First piece was technology updates. A lot of redundancies in the policies we have, shoring up some of those pieces. Making sure there is a clear use policy that delineates staff and students. We have become part of the Mass. data consortium since last year and this is a group that helps us have alternate agreements with all the companies we work with regarding student data. This is an added layer, all companies we do business with have agreements that all that data stays confidential as it's supposed to. Mike Henault: have you identified the software that you currently use, have you identified any places where it's not in compliance with the data security protocols. Aaron: Everything meets the standards. Student Attendance: Coming out of the pandemic, attendance is a large concern, looking at shoring up what we have as far as district policies and reporting and looking at our practices in the handbook. Look at having school based teams, looking at attendance on a regular basis. Looking to standardize our practices and get handbooks better aligned across the district. Booster club management: really don't have any policies on the books, looking at having regular financial statements, so we know how those groups are doing. Discussion about what they should be supporting and us as a district. This came from our new A.D., just communicating with the school as to who the officers are so we can communicate with the groups. Will arrange a meeting to discuss with the booster clubs to get some feedback. Mike Henault: Looks like a good time to talk about a unified booster club, which some districts have done quite successfully. With our numbers declining, it might be time to bring an umbrella booster club that brings all of our sports together. It is a very heavy lift. John Duval: Is it other clubs as well or just athletics? Mike Henault: not sure, Mt. Anthony has a district wide,

which he believes includes all clubs. Mike Mucci agreed that this is a very very heavy lift. Social Media -couple of updates - around managing our facebook pages - will bring something forward. DEI Committee: assembling a DEI SJ committee - time to dig deeper into this work. We started looking at practices in the classroom and what we can do as a school. Time to do something larger. We want the community to know that we are an organization about equitable experience. The Advisory committee would have various stakeholders, students, families, school committee, staff, to look at what we are doing. We are going to get a consultant to work with this committee. We need someone with an eye towards the policies and the things that we are doing as a district, to make sure that we don't have the wrong intention unknowingly. This is something we would need the committee to vote on. Mike Henault: Would this be a DEISJ Committee? Was there any talk about belonging as opposed to social justice? Adam Emerson: there was talk about it, it was originally going to be JEDI, but there was some negative connotation to that. Can't speak for the other sub committee members, but the name is as important as the work that is going to be done. Mike Henault: All of the DEI work, nationally, the work seems to be going towards centering of belonging, when we talk about DEI, it all really centers about a sense of belonging. Worry about some of the political responses to DEISJ or JEDI. The name and what we call it is really important and how it's publicized, maybe bring it back to the sub committee and look into other organizations where they are moving around centering of belonging. It's too important of work to get skewed by the name. Aaron: It seems to make sense to make it an advisory committee so they can report to the school committee on findings and on different things. Enlisting a consultant is the smart thing to do, otherwise we can go into so many directions that we don't want it to go. List of things this committee will be doing, statement of values and commitment, districtwide goals and measures, P.D. around DEI principles, etc. Mike Henault: If you are going to include social justice in the name, there should be specific social justice work in the school around the code of practices or restorative responses that match so we are not just throwing in the social justice piece without actually putting some teeth behind. Aaron: This is what Erin Milne put forward coming out of that meeting, there is nothing that says we can't amend it when it comes up for a vote. 2022-2023 Other policies for review - prioritizing: Homework, failure policy, DEI playbook, animals in school, Title IX updates - had a robust 2 hours meeting regarding DEI, so didn't get into depth on these items. Adam Emerson: Are we looking to approve tonight? Aaron: We can table until we can get further feedback. Mike Henault: If we are going to use social justice as the DEI that the social justice piece should be as well represented in the committee's purview so that we know what we are focusing on as the group, as a district. The advisory committee would report directly to the School Committee twice yearly. Mike Henault recommended to amend it to "at least" 2x yearly (page 2); Do we want to include social justice in the Motion? Or should we keep it DEI advisory? Adam Emerson agrees to keep it DEI advisory. Mike Henault: if the advisory comes back and wants to include social justice and have reasoning behind it, we will support it.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by John Duval.

VOTED: HVRSD School Committee will establish a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion advisory committee to the School Committee on matters related to DEI according to the perimeters outlined (membership, length of term, Advisory Committee Assignment; Resources Provided to the Advisory Committee, Reporting and Authority) The vote was unanimous.

104020 Communications - None

104021 Report of Superintendent -

A. Establish of DEI Advisory - See Above

B. Budget - a lot of unknowns, doing the work on laying out the knowns and unknowns regarding the budget. Our focus area is investing in student support, students are struggling with mental health/social emotional, making sure students have spaces to process things. Middle and High school both have student support centers also at the middle and high school have optimal health healing; Investing in high quality curriculum resources - began the work through ELA and currently looking at Math and adding science next year updating the curriculum; assessing and adjusting special education programming models - what are areas we can improve outcomes and how to efficiently use staff; Investing in our pathways programs at the high school to provide our students with opportunities to prepare for college and explore career opportunities - important work, looking for HVRSD identity, robust internship, dual enrollment opportunities, great programming for our students and come through Hoosac Valley; Investing in our staff by providing high quality professional development opportunities and competitive pay - we are not going to attract and retain staff without competitive pay, we need to build this into our budget; Investing in our buildings through annual maintenance and larger projects to improve our facilities - a lot of work to start that process - we are about to embark with some work at the elementary, making sure we keep our facilities the best we can.

What we know about the numbers: The current starting point with the budget is an overall 3.8% increase; If Chapter 70 remains flat this could result in a 9% increase for Adams and a 7% increase for Cheshire - subject to change, this is our starting point, we really

don't number what the numbers are going to be. There are savings in the areas of capital and transportation our re-negotiated transportation agreement has proved beneficial.

Key drivers behind the increase: Adams Retirement - increase of \$90,000 this number we can't control; curriculum expenses - additional \$150,000, looking at science and number of other things; District Office Lease/ moving expenses: we ball parked \$32,500, we don't know where we are going to be so we need to have a plan; Salary increases/Contingency - \$350,000 we are negotiating all of our contracts, we need to be responsible and plan for that; Special Education Personnel - \$150,000 a lot of this is paraprofessionals and also added a coordinator at the elementary because a large number of referrals. Instructional software - \$35,000 back into the budget.

What we know about the numbers: other resources we have for funding: HVAC grant - \$231,000 which will help us to do some considerable maintenance; SEL & mental health grant - \$150,000 help us support the program Optimal Healing; ESSER - \$400,000 (personnel) - paraprofessionals, teacher of department, dean of students at elementary and instructional coach at the middle school - all currently in ESSER; Rural Aid - \$70,000 (currently used to fund our family and community coordinator) has been a key position for a lot of work we are doing, making better connections with our families; Pre-school grant - awaiting decision, multi year grant. - will actually add another preschool class and help us support preschools in Cheshire and Adams, a huge win if we get that, gets more students in the door and will help with enrollment; Teaching and learning grant - waiting decision.

What we know about the numbers (budget shifts) Utilities - (reduced) some credits from our solar panels. Insurance - (reduced) -benefited from new hires that haven't taken insurance; Positions previously funded by ESSER - 3 FTE Added - started to migrate into the budget, the AP of teaching and learning and curriculum director as well will be in the operational budget. Building repairs/ maintenance increased - fortunate to have a lot of resources, doing a lot to these buildings. Athletic Director - added - revenue from North Adams we share 50/50.

What we don't know: Actual Cherry sheet numbers (Chapter 70, Municipal Minimum Numbers, School Choice, Charter Reimbursement) - done a best guess in terms of where those numbers will fall but won't know until March; Contractual Increases - Para/Teacher Negotiations - biggest driver beyond personnel lines; Special Education Staffing/Tuition - Increase needs and we have to meet those needs, we plan the best we can, but there is always the unknowns; District Office Move - Costs and potential increase in lease amount; Potential increase in Rural Aid - this is something that could be a reality and could get some significant funds, but might not know that for some time and can't base anything on that - looked at the numbers and did conservative guesses.

FY2024 as it stands today \$21,422,181 and overall increase \$796,741 (3.86% increase) - a lot to work through and a lot of unknowns.

Next steps: A & E will meet to review expenditures and provide input on priorities and allocation of resources; we will go line by line and do that work - this will include Adams/Cheshire Finance so we can all be on the same page; we will await the numbers from the state and continue to look at our revenue resources and make adjustments; we will finalize a budget for initial review in March. Wanted to let the committee know where we stand so far in our initial stages.

Mike Henault: best guess that Chapter 70 will increase? Erika: by our hold harmless- \$30.00 per student - which is factored in there, if we get anymore it would only be to the benefit of the Towns to reduce their assessment Not including that in here as an option. We did have the tools to put a projected best guess forward, also got an email from DESE stating do not present these to your Towns. Not a number to be alerting to our Towns at this point. Our enrollment between the 2 towns have only shifted slightly in that respect things aren't changing a lot. Aaron: We have to be mindful of building a core budget. Adam: 6 focus areas, assuming if the budget numbers don't come back, some of those focus areas aren't going to be in focus anymore. Are those decisions already being thought through? Aaron: Ideally we would get more of our curriculum expenses in our budget, but historically anything curriculum is in grants. Trying to start the process of including the work that Kristen has done - these are your consumables, never had consumables in the budget so this is just a first step in trying to sustain all the work everyone is doing. Could it be paid by another source? Sure but when it goes away we want to be able to do the work and reap the benefits of all the work that's been done. All of those pieces, we have supplement funds, but they can't drive it forever, we need to start building some of these in the budget. Met with principals and have a starting point so we can move forward - we have to be respectful to our communities as well. Feel comfortable with a 3.8% increase moving forward.

C. District office space - Looked at a couple of spaces, in the Town of Adams - one being the visitors center, council on aging are currently in there, we don't know the timeline when they will be moving... started looking at the one other area that could be potential space is the Jones block to see what they have, will look at space and what the funding might be for that. Hoping to secure where we are going to go by late spring. We have to be vacated by August 31st. Adam: a staggered move or pack up all in

one day? Aaron: hoping for a staggered move, getting phones, internet, etc. and probably keeping simultaneous offices until we can fully move in.

104022 Chairman's Report - None

104023 Unfinished Business - None

104024 New Business: - None

104025 Action Items - None

104026 For the Good of the Order - None

MOTION: On Motion of Bethany Demarco and second by Mike Henault

VOTED: To adjourn the regular meeting at 7:41 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Bethany DeMarco:

VOTED: To go into executive session at 7:45 p.m. for the sole purpose to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. The Committee will not reconvene in open session. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary