

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, August 28 2023 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Mike Mucci, John Duval, Adam Emerson, Mike Henault, Andrew Przystanski, Bethany DeMarco (Erin Milne: 6:40)

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104077 Call to Order

Chairman Bethany DeMarco called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

104078 Public Comment or Question - Aaron introduced our new ACTA President - Scott Balawender

104079 Approval of Minutes June 5, 2023

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to approve the June 5, 2023 School Committee minutes. The vote was unanimous.

104080 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager -

A. Authority 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, 2023, 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".

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Andy Przystanski:

VOTED: to approve the Authority to Borrow. The vote was unanimous.

B. Reclassify Budget: SC Order 2306

Submitted herein for your approval is a request to reclassify the FY23 budget to align with actual expenditures. Be it hereby ordered to transfer funds between various accounts as follows: See attached schedule

MOTION: On Motion of John Duval and second by Andy Przystanski:

VOTED: To approve "Reclassify Budget". The vote was unanimous.

A. Policy: Erin Milne: met on Thursday mostly discussed the update to cell phone and electronic policy. The high school would like to adopt the use of the Yondr pouches.

Aaron: Current Policy Limits use to before/after school, lunch, and classroom transitions - started out pretty well, but just eroded over time. Issues: Students would leave class to use phones in the bathroom, etc. - often times resulting in conflicts/issues with others during the day; Became unenforceable - students would argue with staff that they were just checking time, etc., arguments took time away from instruction and were non-productive with enforcement, became a big argument.

Local Data: During initial walkthroughs last year we saw little to no use - October/November data; During walkthroughs in January and March we observed use happening in 4/9 and 4/12 classrooms respectively; End of school year - saw use in most classrooms visited - National Data and Concerns: Teens who use social media more than 3 hours a day face double the risk of anxiety disorder; We saw a lot of anxiety around phones, it does not create a good situation in the educational environment; Colleen: every student, when they left class, were on their phone. Kids texting each other to meet up in bathrooms, etc. ; 95% of students use social media with 1/3 of them using "constantly"; Annual surveys from over 1,200 school partners, and after implementing the Yondr Education Program - 84% saw a change in student engagement; 72% saw a positive change in student behavior; 68% saw a positive change in academic performance

Of our most recent impact survey of over 370 of our school partners: 86% saw a positive impact in student safety and wellness. Pushing for this, it is the right thing to do for the kids and for our staff. We can track the data and see if this really does work.

Talked to teachers at Mcann and stated what a difference this has made. Talked to other superintendent's at conferences and stated it has made a remarkable difference.

Looking to adopt a policy that: prohibits use of devices during the school day; implement the use of Yondr pouches to house devices while students are in school.

Mike Muccu: National Data pretty impressive- which schools are implementing? Mike Henault: implementing in Central Berkshire in October. Aron: HVRSD - implementation date of September 25th. Starting with CREW prepared to talk about it, a lot of front end work making sure this is done the right way. There are a number of schools in the county that are going to go in this direction. Mike Muccu: Do we already have the pouches or on agreement to get them for the 25th? Aaron: We are on agreement and at this point in time, we have a grant from the state and we could do it as a pilot if the committee chooses. Bethany: Each student gets a pouch, do they leave it at night? Aaron: no they would unlock it when they are ready to go home.

Mike Henault: What happened in a district, not far away from us, they moved away from it because it wasn't affordable or sustainable, there are other companies that make cheaper pouches that are more affordable and do the same thing. In case we have to change course with Yondr or the pouch, is it enough in your policy to be really strict about no devices and leave the implementation up to the school on how you decide to manage it, or do we have to go the step to put the Yondr pouches in the policy? Aaron: thought it would be important to be clear about how the enforcement was going to happen at the high school. Some places have done that, some have not. Based on what direction the committee wants to go. We are prepared to go with the Yondr pouches. Erin Milne: What if we strike out all instances of "Yondr pouch" and just put "secured pouch" so we are not stuck for a certain brand? Mike Henault agreed that that would be better. Mike Muccu: What type of capital expenditures are we talking about in future years? If we do a 3 year it would be around \$19,000 which is covered by a grant. Adam Emerson asked what the life expectancy of a pouch? Aaron: not really sure, the majority of students will get through the year with it. Mike Muccu: we know we need to do something different. Adam Emerson: the F&Q letter, how are we going to manage this? What is the cycle and how frequently and what are we using as a baseline? Aaron: the baseline is the data we had from last year. Colleen: smartpass is daily, we will have a lot of information on that on a daily basis. Adam: are we meeting the norm, or are we better so we can say yes, this does work or we need to figure a piece of it out. Aaron: we do the survey several times a year anyway, we can do late fall and then spring, to get a sense of what is working, doing walkthroughs, doing benchmarks to see the academic data. Even staff surveys, are they engaging in the classroom, are they showing up ready to work? Mike H. : talked with the union and are they on board? Has there been thought about aligning both the membership on board so they are modeling the behavior before September 25th? Scott Balawender: not a topic that has come up yet, been can throw out there to see what the feedback is. Looking at certain positions that might need their phones. Mike Henault: adult pouches are not locked, they are velcro, but they don't lock. Aaron: have addressed cell phones with staff in the past. Colleen: the staff handbook, they are supposed to be silent vibrant mode during working hours, may be used during lunch or in a

private area. Erin Milne: any teachers using it as an instructional tool? Aaron: There may be but we have a lot of new technology, we have plenty of options for staff if they need something different. Colleen: if we are telling the students that they can access many things through the chromebook, then the staff can do the same. Scott: can bring up the policy we have in the handbook to the staff. Scott will encourage the staff. Erin Milne: would like to start with a place of trust first with the staff. Aaron: staff are coming forward saying they need help with this, feel confident with our administrative team to have discussions with our staff and to make sure we are being role models and that they do step up and we are a cell free environment during the day, the only way we are going to make progress on this. Mike Henault: at the core of this is to help the teachers, we want teachers to be able to teach.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Mike Mucci:

VOTED: to approve the cell phone and electronic policy by replacing the word "Yondr" with secured electronic pouch language. The vote was 6-1-0

104082 **Communications - None**

104083 **Report of Superintendent -**

A. Bids - Middle and high school gym roof bids: opened the bids on Friday, August 25th. The low bidder was Triumph Roofing, Inc. met all the marks in terms of the bid. Bringing it forward for approval. They are Massachusetts based. Both gyms, complete removal and replacement. 30 year warranty. This will come from ESSR funding. Adam Emerson asked what the timeline is? Aaron: start at the beginning of October and finish by 1st week in November. Each gym will have a 5 day period where we can't utilize the space.

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

VOTED: to contract with Triumph Roofing for the middle and high school gym roof. The vote was unanimous.

B. School Opening - Taking a lot of steps and positive shifts this year. We are an innovation pathway at the high school, finally getting our identity in Northern Berkshire. Portrait of a Graduate: - work that is a collection of skills that we want Hoosac graduates to have: communicators, global citizens, prepared individuals; lifelong learner; critical thinker and a responsible person. We have 2 pathways that are state designated, the environmental sciences and health sciences and working on 5 others. Committee discussed the billboard about the pathways..Aaron stated that they were looking to get a lot of foot traffic on the website. Mike Henault: 2 out of 7 are DESE approved pathways? The other 5 are we able to get them DESE certified? Aaron: we have a team of teachers working on this. Mike Henault: using the rubric or the criteria for the innovation pathways when we are designing the other ones? Yes - Erin Milne: do we have any that we are currently offering that DESE offers a certification for that we don't have a certification approval for? Aaron: yes, engineering is one of them. Bethany: how are we getting the 8th graders involved? Colleen: one of the goals in SIP is 100% of 9th graders will be enrolled in a pathway by the end of the year. 8th grade is going to be exposed to the pathways in similar vantage points as 9th graders, the counselors met with every student and started talking to them about the pathways. 8th graders are starting to take some courses that lead to different pathways. We have time to pull students out in every grade and talk them through what we are doing as a school. By the end of this year, have all the freshmen signing, and have a similar opportunity for 8th graders to choose their path for 9th grade. Erin: asking someone to choose in their early teens can be overwhelming, how flexible are the pathways? Colleen: multiple courses fit into different pathways, we also have our graduation requirements. Students will meet with counselors to make sure they are meeting their graduation requirements. Should a student decide they are not interested in bio medical, but would like sports medicine, the counselor will take a look to make sure these courses fit - it's an easy transition.

Welcomed 25 new teachers to the district. Aaron thanked Kristen Palatt for putting together the new teacher induction program. Received CPPI grant for 672,000 to continue pre-k expansion programming. This year we have 3 full days classes, one in elementary, one at magic seasons and at the Youth Center in Cheshire. Met with our ILT's last week and laid the groundwork for school improvement and PD plans this year. Strong focus on school culture; academic focus areas - pathway development at HS, Math instruction at middle school, early literacy at ES; prepare for implementation of new IEP in 2024-2025. Monica has put together a solid training program.

C. Ratify Teacher's Contract -

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Erin Milne:

VOTED: to go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's bargaining or litigating position. Also, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel; to actually conduct collective bargaining and contract negotiations with non-union personnel. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous. The committee will reconvene in open session.

Motion: On Motion of Mike Muci and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: To reconvene in open session at 8:05 p.m. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

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

VOTED: to approve the Teacher's contract. The vote was 6--0-1.

104084 Chairman's - None

104085 Unfinished Business - Superintendent's Evaluation - Aaron: shared a document with the committee. Going through a targeted review with DESE - great opportunity to see where we stand. Did take a significant amount of time to put together, and encompasses all the work done as a superintendent and is using it as his evidence as it hits all the standards. Shows the 5 years of work that has been done in the district. Mike Henault asked the committee to get the google forms filled out with the feedback a week before the next meeting. Will do the evaluation at the October meeting due to the fact that the next meeting is September 18th.

104086 New Business - None

104087 Action Items - None

1040788 For the Good of the Order

Erin Milne: Welcome back and best wishes for the new year.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Mucci and second by Erin Milne:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary