

Hastings-on-Hudson Regular Board of Education Meeting (Monday, December 7, 2020)

Generated by Melissa DeLaBarrera on Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Members present

Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Meeting called to order at 7:31 PM

## 1. OPENING OF MEETING

Procedural: A. Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Lauren Berman at 7:31 pm

Lauren Berman:

- Welcomed all and offered well wishes and speedy recovery to community members and staff members that are struggling with COVID.

Procedural: B. Announcements

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- December 3rd was the first [Book Study](#) on 21 Lessons for the 21st Century by Yuval Noah Harari
  - Discussed the influences of artificial intelligence and disruptive technologies and what the workforce will look like for our students in the future
  - Next Book Study scheduled for January 6th, 2021, 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
- [Student Focus Groups](#) are meeting to support the Youth Committee associated with the Hastings Police Reform and Reinvention Task Force
  - First focus group is December 8, 2020 from 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
  - Next is December 14th from 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
  - Students are encouraged to participate and have their voices represented in the feedback to the task force
  - Thanked Joann Reed-Stokes, Dave Gunton and Det. Sgt. Robert Gagliardi - for participating and facilitating in the task force with her
- This Wednesday (December 9, 2020) - Superintendent's PTSA/SEPTA Chat starts at 4:30 pm
  - Questions for the chats are submitted by parents in advance
  - During the chat feedback and responses are provided for as many questions as possible
- Thursday, December 10th, Amy Cazes and John DeKams at Hillside, will host a Hillside Huddle to discuss the plans for integrating first grade full day at Hillside
- Thursday, December 10th, Valerie will be a panelist for the Westchester Putnam School Board Association conversation with two other superintendents discussing teaching children to talk about race
- Valerie stopped in on a Courageous Conversations Course at the high school was happy to see the students are drawing upon what they've learned in 6th, 7th & 8th grade to not be bystanders but to know how to address a situation if another person is being disparaged due to race, ethnicity, gender etc.
- December 16th, Policy Committee will meet to continue to discuss the compliance audit and will be presenting that information at our December 21 board meeting
- At the December 21st Board Meeting we will review the calendar for the 2021 school year and discuss religious holidays not currently represented on our calendar
- Reminder - we are not in the Yellow Zone, but we are prepared if we are notified and have to begin testing
- Thanked all nurses and everyone involved

## C. Administrative Comments

Melissa Szymanski:

- Presented the following report:  
Board of Education Administrative Comments  
Melissa Szymanski  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction  
December 07, 2020  
Civics Unplugged

Thanks to a recommendation from Doug Sundheim, we have been working with [Civics Unplugged](#) around a potential fellowship opportunity for high school students. The mission of this organization is to "empower the leaders of Generation Z to build the future of American Democracy." Accepted fellows will participate in a five-month civic leadership program that is focused on providing resources, training and a community. There will be a student information session tomorrow, Tuesday, December 8th at 3:30pm. Currently, we have had three students apply.

[Diversity Committee](#)

During this week's Diversity Committee meeting, we introduced the [Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework](#) to the group and charged participants with determining how they could incorporate the Framework into the work they do in their various roles. This work began this afternoon with Chair Council members as well.

#### K-12 Mathematics Committee

The K-12 Mathematics committee met together last week. The focus of the session work was to engage in a collaborative inquiry, grounded in leadership, teaching, and learning artifacts, within small break-out groups. The session was designed to deepen understanding of the [Standards for Mathematical Practice](#), examine how they are currently brought to life, and consider opportunities to enhance student learning through shifts in practice.

#### Curriculum Hour

I have been hosting monthly Curriculum Hours, a voluntary collegial professional learning forum for faculty members. Our most recent session centered around assessment, and was attended by administrators, teachers from across the three buildings, and a teaching assistant. Themes of the discussion included iterative grading, involving students in the design of assessments, reducing fear of failure, and the design of authentic, interesting tasks.

Maureen Caraballo:

- Within the next month there will be an update presented to the board as well as the community to our district-wide safety plan.
- There is a requirement to have a section on pandemic planning, that we have been working on
- We will be required to have another public hearing to re-adopt the district-wide safety plan with the amendment before April 1st
- Recruiting additional nurses to both help us in preparation for testing as well substitute

D. Student Report

Sabine Hinkaty:

- National Art Honor Society craft kits should be coming out next week, art kits come with materials and video instructions from a National Art Society member
- Environmental Club is organizing an art contest in the middle school to raise awareness about endangered species and organizing an endangered species workshop for elementary schoolers
- Amnesty International will be hosting a letter writing workshop to politicians next week.
- The Student Union has organized a candy cane candy gram fundraiser, \$2 to have a candy cane and message delivered to another student

Sophia Mainiero:

- Students trying hard to make the best of things
- The past week, the school itself felt zombie like, several classes only had 2 or 3 students in the building
- From a student perspective, it feels as if there is a group who have COVID fears due to Thanksgiving or quarantining before break, while there is another group who don't want to come in to take a test or because none of their friends are going in
- Buzz of students asking why, if so few kids are in class, can't they go in every single day?
- Students that are currently in school are hoping more students will be returning to in school instruction after January

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Information: A. Public Comment

Sarah Walters:

- English teacher at Hastings High School since 2003 and Hastings resident since 2009
- Read letter that she sent to the Board last week asking the Board to consider allowing remote instruction for the district on December 21, 22 & 23rd to limit teacher's exposure to possible positive individuals prior to the holiday with their own families
- If teachers and staff work through December 23 and are exposed at school, they would spend their holiday break on quarantine
- Pointed out that just before the Thanksgiving break 45 teachers from Hillside went into quarantine and could not spend the holidays with others
- Teachers are not wanting to work less, nor would students experience fewer school hours
- Teachers who prefer to teach from the building could do so from their classroom without exposure
- Urges Board to seriously consider this proposal

Kefira Wilderman:

- Hastings Resident, comment addressing the hiring of additional staff at Hillside in order to bring first grade back in full time
- Requests that the Board examine the breakdown of COVID expenses that have been designated for each of the schools
- Last year decisions to not replace a retiring FMS Science Teacher and a HS language teacher resulted in cuts to language and science offerings, leaving students unable to register for electives
- Understands that our youngest learners are a priority, but asks that the districts limited resources be distributed equitably among our schools

Barbara Rizzo:

- Long time resident of the Village of Hastings and parent of a child at Hillside
- Wanted to also address the hiring of extra monitors at Hillside in anticipation of the first grade being brought back all in after the holiday

- With practically daily phone calls about positive staff cases at Hillside, doesn't feel now is the time to bring more children into building
- Will require more money to be spent to make spaces available in addition to hiring aides
- In August, students with IEPs were granted full-time full day schooling, this has been interrupted multiple times at Hillside due to staffing, yet now the district is hiring to accommodate the first grade all in, looking at the equity in that

Toby Linder:

- Commenting on how last year's budget negatively impacted the High School, particularly significant cuts to the science dept.
- The decision not to hire a replacement for retiring FMS teacher, resulted in two High School teachers being sent to FMS for five classes
- Full year and elective classes were cut resulting in students having to take study hall due to lack of electives
- Highlighted the importance of electives in keeping students engaged and helping students find their passions.
- Concerned that our limited resources are not being spent equitably across schools

Jennifer Destin:

- Hastings resident, surprised to hear about the hiring of additional staff as well as potential construction that will likely cost money, given the conversations we've been having since the budget last year
- Asks the Board to look at the additional price per child it will cost to bring the 81 first graders back into the building and consider whether those costs could be spent on other grades who may be experiencing something different
- District has limited resources, implores the board that before any decisions are made that they look in the broadest way possible

Erica Sersen:

- Understands all viewpoints and positions of parents of various different age students in the district
- Parent of a first grader, reiterated her comment from the last board meeting
- If our first graders continue in the AM/PM model for the rest of the school year, by the time they enter 2nd grade they will have been in school for only 8 months
- First graders unable to manager their work independently, putting a huge burden on parents and caregivers

Jaime Deklin:

- Wanted to echo what Sarah Walter's said in the beginning and ask that we consider going remote from from December 21st on to give our teacher and staff the best possible chance to be with their families for the holidays
- Feels they have already sacrificed so much and it is a small sacrifice for us to make for them for the holidays

Michelle Veyvoda:

- Hastings resident, parent of a 1st and 4th grader
- Advocating for bringing the first grade back full time
- Her first grader cannot do the work independently and has aversions to being on the screen, so on full remote days he refuses to do it
- On AM/PM days he doesn't have access to what is going on for half the day
- Reiterated the challenges for young children being expected to learn so much material on the screen, first graders have been having to learn this way since halfway through Kindergarten
- Voiced her support for allowing the opportunity for remote learning the few days before Christmas, since many district families will be taking advantage of the district's leniency for remote learning around the holidays, she feels the same opportunity should be given to the teachers

Peter Scotch:

- Was speaking with Sarah Walter's and wanted to read the last four lines of her letter to be included in the minutes of the meeting:
  - "Allowing staff to be virtual for three days since a clear message to teachers that you care about our physical and mental health. We're not lessening our resolve to be committed to our students, but we are asking to please let us, like our students be able to limit our exposure before winter break so that we may also have the opportunity to safely be with our loved ones, please seriously consider this proposal"
- She signs it by herself, but says that the grade level and department level leadership shared this letter with their departments and teams and there was unanimous agreement and support of the proposal

### 3. BUSINESS

Action: A. Business Items

Alison Andrus:

- Requested further clarification on Managed IT proposal

Maureen Caraballo:

- Explained how we currently have a management contract with BOCES that provides support with IT
- The model we had was a collaborative support model and provides IT support in house
- By moving to a Managed IT model for our tech support we will have more resources at a less expensive cost, because we are sharing resources more broadly across districts
- Provides the benefit of managing IT remotely by utilizing teams to support multiple districts
- More efficient model of support, allows for higher level of expertise around many areas of technology

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Further explained that we outgrew the last model - this is more aligned to our needs, since we don't have a director of technology

- Melissa Szymanski is involved from the instructional standpoint in terms of number of digital resources that we have and the management associated with that
- We need to be able to continuously look at resources we have and we know we don't have the resources for a director of technology
- We are looking at a way to have someone help us with oversight, development of a technology plan, long term plan for training for students in digital citizenship, Cyber security, project management related work etc.

Alison Andrus:

- Asked about Inclusive Schooling, asked how the professional development training for that over the summer went and if there are any tweaks for the upcoming training

Jodie Meyer:

- Asked what the feedback was from the teachers on inclusive schooling training

Melissa Szymanski:

- Has been working with Laura Sullivan and Tesfa Stewart on this
- The timing of the training last year was tricky and feedback was mixed
- From feedback we learned what would be helpful to have more specialized differentiated training
- Cross-contract request is specialized so that for the upcoming school year it's specific to the ICT Teams

Jodie Meyer:

- Asked if we get input from the trainer or from the people who will be in the training about what their needs are or what would be helpful

Melissa Szymanski:

- Yes, that is the plan, with the Inclusion Facilitator specifically, it is crafted around working directly with her so that it is personalized and will be based on what she is experiencing
- The role of Inclusion Facilitators is new to our district, it is one of the recommendations that came out of Inclusive Schooling
- Kristen Kumar is the Inclusion Facilitator and she will be interfacing with the organization to talk about her needs, what is working and what is not working, receive some coaching feedback and to make sure she's receiving the support she needs to be successful and grow in her role
- In terms of ICT teams, that is also the intention to make sure that there is some inclusive schooling

Alison Andrus:

- Asked if it was appropriate for core teachers in the middle school to attend along with the inclusion facilitator

Melissa Szymanski:

- This is really specific to working with the inclusion facilitator with the ICT Teams that is where we see general educator and special educators and how they are bringing different co-teaching models to the classroom

Alison Andrus:

- Asked if general education teachers could choose to participate if they wanted to

Melissa Szymanski:

- Something she can explore with Laura and Tesfa
- If they are interested in addition to the ICT Teams we will figure out a way to do something to help with that

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- There will be multiple opportunities, this is the first time and is a continuation of the work that ended in June
- We had the Why Inclusion Workshop which included every teacher at Farragut, out of that came the recommendation to have an Inclusion Facilitator
- The focus is getting Kristen Kumar functioning and comfortable in the new role of Inclusion Facilitator and working with co-teachers, there will be opportunities if other teachers are interested that we can include them in the future

1. Warrants. (Enc)

2. Capital Region BOCES cross contract for GASB 75 services.

3. Ardsley UFSD tuition contract.

4. Amend rate of Substitute School Nurse-RN, to \$50 per hour, effective December 8, 2020.

5. Hastings Administrators Association agreement on unused vacation.

6. Hastings Administrators Association side letter of agreement.

7. Gender Spectrum Professional Learning, proposal.

8. PNW BOCES, Inclusive Schooling agreement.

9. LHRIC, Managed IT Services, proposal.

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the business items.

Motion by Jeremy Galland, second by Doug Sundheim.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: B. Placement and/or Services for CSE and CPSE

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Committee on Special Education and the Committee on Preschool Special Education, the Board of Education accepts the classifications and arrangements for the placement and/or services.

Motion by Jodie Meyer, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

#### 4. PERSONNEL

Action: A. Appointments

Lauren Berman:

- Requested clarity on the appointment of aides and Joseph Vacarro

Maureen Caraballo:

- Monitors and aides listed on agenda are for FMS and not related to Hillside first grade
- Substitute nurses are being appointed district wide to prepare for potential yellow zone testing and as nursing substitutes for full time nursing staff

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Thanked Melissa Shandroff for keeping in touch with Joseph Vacarro and making him aware of the leave replacement position
- He will take over the responsibilities of leave replacement for Dan Brownstein in January
- Possible Earth Science Interventionist if his schedule permits him to serve in that role to further provide for the needs of our earth science students
- He will be here through June

Jeremy Arnon:

- Asked if we will need to hire additional aides in order to open up first grade full time

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- We won't know until we see Amy's presentation
- Having additional students in the building will require movement of spaces and monitors and aides
- We have been hiring them across the board district wide since reopening

Maureen Caraballo:

- Typically if we increase the amount of students time students are in the building, we will have to increase the amount of hours for the monitors to provide supervision

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Added that as weather changes and there are more FMS students indoors there may be a need for additional staff to monitor social distancing during lunch
- Whenever there is an increase in density we need staff to support social distancing and manage where our students are

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the appointments.

Motion by Alison Andrus, second by Jeremy Galland.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: B. Amendments

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the amendments.

Motion by Doug Sundheim, second by Jeremy Galland.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

Action: D. Leaves of Absence

RESOLVED, that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education approve the following leaves of absence.

Motion by Silvia Robles, second by Alison Andrus.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

## 5. MINUTES

Action, Minutes: A. Approval of Minutes

RESOLVED that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools, the Board of Education accepts the Minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of

Motion by Jodie Meyer, second by Silvia Robles.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus

## 6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report: A. Finance

Maureen Caraballo: [Finance Committee Meeting Presentation](#)

- Provided a brief update of Finance Committee Meeting
- Discussed Tax Cap projection
- Looking at projection models for revenues and expenditures
- Valerie and Maureen discussed starting budget process and developing the [Budget 101](#) - meetings, first meeting is December 14th
- Discussed Five Year Plan in terms of tax cap, fund balances and the need to develop future budgets
- Encourages everyone to review the slide deck and to join the Budget 101 meetings

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Reviewed last year's budget and began to talk about what we do have control over and what we don't in order to develop a comprehensive multidimensional strategy that is long term
- Administrators have no room to cut anything from their budgets

Lauren Berman:

- Reminder if you are unable to join the Budget 101 meeting live, they will be recorded and available on our website

## 7. OLD BUSINESS

Information: A. Construction Project Update

Maureen Caraballo:

- We received the building permit for the work at Hillside
- Bid already out in the newspaper
- Will be accepting bids in January
- Hoping to begin work during February break
- Auditorium and music suite in further development, will have an update next board meeting

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion: A. First Read of Policies

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte:

- Explained the strategy being used to work through the NYSSBA policy audit
- First reviewed policies recommended for rescission relating to the school board
- Next set of policies to be addressed will be the new policies being brought forth, such as pandemic policy
- New policies to be presented for first read at the December 21st Board of education meeting
- Valerie went through each policy presented on the agenda and explained the changes being made and decisions to keep or rescind as noted

## 9. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

Information: A. Second Public Comment

Jennifer Destin:

- Hastings Resident
- Parent of a daughter with an IEP that has the benefit of going into school 5 days a week
- Heard a lot about the challenges for young students, asks that we not forget the older students they are affected by pandemic as well
- Asks board as we seek to spend the small bucket of funds we have that we consider the needs of children in all grade levels
- To have a truly least restrictive environment, having general education teachers receive inclusive schooling professional development is key

Barbara Rizzo:

- Spoke in support of teachers request to teach remotely the three days before Christmas
- Reminded of the staff member in Hillside who tested positive before Thanksgiving
- Asked that before the district spends any money that they make sure they have the financial capability to keep the promises of the current model previously agreed upon

## 10. BOARD OF EDUCATION COMMENTS

Jodie Meyer:

- Offered her spot on the Diversity Committee to any board member that is interested as she cannot make meetings at the time they currently meet
- Hopes the board can provide some type of response to the request the teachers have written and submitted to the board and Valerie

Jeremy Galland:

- Heard a lot of comments about keeping balance between the schools
- Pointed out how the administration has prioritized students with special needs
- Hillside has had a lot of interruptions but priority remains on special education students
- High school has some classes with 4, 5, 6 students compared to Hillside 20-22 students, it's universally understood the elementary age are in more need
- Supports the way this administration and board has prioritized kindergarten and now 1st grade and would like to see it continue to 2nd grade

Jeremy Arnon:

- Brought up Sophia's comment about having so few students in class
- If we really have 4 or 5 kids showing up to in person classes, raises the questions is this an elective, are more students calling out or are more students opting to be all remote
- Why can't they come in every day?

Melissa Szymanski:

- We monitor daily the amount of students who are in and who are remote
- Valerie submits a daily attendance report to the state
- Recently we are seeing more students remote, could be due to the holidays we would have to wait and see and have a firm commitment of who is going to be in or out before we could make any permanent decision
- Important to have advance notice as the teachers planning is predicated around knowing what resources they will need
- We are not experiencing attendance problems, students are joining remotely

Alison Andrus:

- Acknowledged members of staff who are out on quarantine or tested positive, thinking of them and hope everyone has an easy course with the virus
- Let the teachers know that they have read the letter and certain considerations need to be discussed, the board hears their concerns and will have to look further into

Lauren Berman:

- Also, acknowledged that she received and read the letter from the teachers that is being taken into consideration and noted that since the pandemic the board has not made such decisions they are up to the superintendent
- We are seeing higher than anticipated sales tax revenue in Westchester County this quarter, we are up \$35,000, encouraged everyone to shop local because it will provide direct income for our schools and students

Jodie Meyer:

- Acknowledge all those in the District who have been affected by COVID and wanted to let everyone know that we are thinking of them and appreciates Valerie keeping everyone updated

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

Action: A. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Jodie Meyer, second by Doug Sundheim.

Final Resolution: Motion Carried

Yes: Jodie Meyer, Doug Sundheim, Jeremy Galland, Jeremy Arnon, Lauren Berman, Silvia Robles, Alison Andrus