

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, May 8, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.
Cheshire Elementary School
191 Church Street, Cheshire, MA

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

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104051 Call to Order

Superintendent Aaron Dean called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

104052 Reorganization of Committee

A. Election of Chairman (by voice vote)

Superintendent Dean stated that we will take nominations and a vote for Chairman. Are there any nominations?

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

VOTED: to nominate and appoint Bethany DeMarco for Chairman. The vote was unanimous

B. Election of Vice Chairman (by voice vote)

Chairman Bethany DeMarco stated that we will take nominations and a vote for Vice Chairman. Are there any nominations?

MOTION: On Motion by Adam Emerson and second by Mike Henault:

VOTED: to nominate and appoint Mike Mucci for Vice Chairman. The vote was unanimous.

C. Election of Treasurer

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

VOTED: to appoint Richard Jette as Treasurer. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

D. Election of Assistant Treasurer

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by John Duval:

VOTED: To appoint Bethany DeMarco as Assistant Treasurer. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

E. Election of Secretary

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Adam Emerson:

VOTED: to appoint Aaron Dean as secretary. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

F. Election of District Counsel

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

VOTED: to appoint Dupre Law Office as District Counsel. A roll call vote was taken. The vote was unanimous.

G. Appointment of Sub-Committees - Aaron Dean stated that if any member has a preference for the sub-committee send it to Aaron and he will meet with Bethany.

104053 Public Comment or Question - None

104054 Approval of Minutes April 10, 2023

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

VOTED: to approve the April 10, 2023 School Committee minutes. The vote was 3-0-3

104055 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager - Aaron Dean reported that he received word via email from the Cheshire Town Administrator that the Board of Selectmen voted to not recommend our budget because we are too administrative heavy. No indication this was coming our way. Met with them for an hour and half going over the budget and was clear in terms of why we were prioritizing it in our operating budget at this point, we will need to deal with that. May 16th will be meeting with the board of selectmen and would like the committee to be there. It is a minimal increase of \$19,000 to the Town. Mike Henault stated that we did extend invites and we went through the budget line by line and nobody showed up. It is important for people to know, this late in the game this does not go well. Adam stated that in years past, he would get calls from people asking questions, this year he didn't. This came out of left field, it is important for us to be there on the 16th to support Aaron, this is a sound budget. Mike Mucci: Last year, the resounding message from Cheshire was to make them more included in the process, this year we did, and they didn't show up to any of the meetings. Aaron: we need to drum up support to make it clear to people what our priorities are and how it is a minimal increase. The Town Administrator stated that she wasn't sure where the finance committee stands on the budget. Would encourage the committee to hold the line on this and if we have to go to the commissioner then that's what we will do.

104056 Report of Sub Committee - None

104057 Communications -

A. Grade 3 field trip to Mystic Aquarium - Nicole Crane and Laura Cantarella - 3rd grade class has learned about the sea and the creatures that live in there. The opportunity to visit the aquarium will allow for students to have hands-on experience. Asking for approval for this opportunity as it aligns with the curriculum. We have a budget from years past and would like to use money from that Asking that parents/families if they can, cover half the cost - the cost is \$20.00. Anything to offset because we didn't do any fundraising for this trip. This trip is scheduled for June 1st from 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. - Dufour will not transport, because of the distance, but will use Yankee Trails - need 2 buses. The \$20.00 is just the admission to the aquarium, bussing is extra. Erica Snyder stated that we have the opportunity to cover the cost of the trip. Adam Emerson: will any behavior or academic issues prevent them from attending? Laurie stated that they are working up a contract on behavioral issues. The hope is to bring every child. Adam: is the business administrator stating that it will not cost anything? Erika: correct. Mike Henault: Can we clarify that it will be no cost for the students? Erika: We have funding to cover the entire cost of the trip.

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

VOTED: To approve the grade 3 field trip to Mystic Aquarium, Connecticut. The vote was unanimous.

B. Lindsay McGinnis - field trip - running the outdoor leadership. Last year we did an overnight camping trip at Mt. Greylock. This year we would like to do an overnight camping trip to Savoy State Forest. Can hold up to 25 people. The next day would be a very technical hike. The date is June 8 - 9th. Bethany DeMarco: Carrying their own packs of food, etc. Would have bigger camping tents and we would bring in things we need, don't need to carry anything but lunch and water. Adam: cost? Has

some funding left in the stem budget that will be used for some tents that will fit a large group, other than that no costs, Adam: weather? No wiggle room, if bad weather, we would have to cancel the trip. Mike Henault: how many students and tents? We have 5 to 6 person tents, depending on how many actually sign up to go, not all go, usually 4 - 5 per tent. Mike Henault: mixed gender? chaperones in tent? Lyndsay: No mixed genders, appropriately staffed for male and females. Andy: first aid in case of accidents? Lindsay stated she is CPR and First Aid certified. She will see if we need a nurse on the hike, with her certification, should be ok. She has a behavioral contract for them to attend the trip. Adam: if someone doesn't have the proper footwear they would be provided footwear? Lyndsay: yes, if she needs to supply things she will and will also send out a list ahead of time, so they are prepared.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval:

VOTED: to approve the overnight field trip to Savoy State Forest. The vote was unanimous.

C. Erica Girgenti - Signature Experience presentation - been a few months since we had this experience. Well attended. What we hoped to accomplish in this particular event was to connect our pathways with our business community and create a feedback loop. We provided hands-on experiences in student competencies and skill development; solicited feedback on relevant student options to support the economic development of Berkshire County; made connections in order to build meaningful placements for our students and collaborate annually.

Attendees were: college and career readiness team; portrait of a graduate team; selected educators; municipal leadership and school committee members; local business owners and large employers.

The feedback: participation in future business events is recommended to other businesses; 100% of responses thought it was a valuable use of their time; 90% of businesses were willing to sit on an advisory board to pathways committee; willing to take interns, job shadow experiences, participate in a speaker series and career fairs.

Quick takeaways: local emergency responders are willing to do an internship to hire track; A strengthened partnership with BIC; Overwhelming response that there is a need for a pathway or student opportunities in various trades; Participating students felt empowered and respected. #1 takeaway is that our community is willing to be involved and wants to be a voice at the table.

Our next steps: share opportunities offered through MassHire; Promote opportunities with our school counselors and the college and career readiness team; utilize those willing to be advisors; continue to pull in community partners

100 invitations went out - received about 30 people - manageable size.

John Duval: Do you have a list of businesses that participated? Erica: Yes, she will send it to John

Mike Mucci: was a positive evening, nice to see the local businesses, providing honest feedback and how they can help the school and the students. Aaron: This is a first step for us, more information coming, Colleen is excited about the direction we are going with the high school. We are designated as a pathways high school. We are working on ways to get information out there and working on 6 or 7 different pathways that have clear connections to internships, college courses, providing really exciting opportunities for our students. A lot of students are looking for career and technical education and we weren't able to provide that, but now we can be a viable option for students. Some students will still choose McCann, but others that are looking for job ready opportunities can stay with us. Adam: What can we do to help as a committee? Erica: If a night like this comes out again, would like to get the list out if anyone knows someone and to personally call them and encourage them to come to the next event. Promote it, make personal connections. Bethany: MASS Hire paying for internships? Erica: They have a lot of opportunities, one is for the employer to pay the student and they get reimbursed for through a grant. Continued additional work: meet with families, provide tours for families interested in the school, meet and see our student support staff in the middle school and connect with the students to make them feel welcomed. Supporting families in crisis, a lot of work around homelessness and hunger.

D. Portrait of a Graduate update - Student: Richelle Carr to present- Kristen Pallet introduced Richelle to the committee. Portrait of a Graduate is a community driven vision of what students should know and be able to do as they move into college, career, and life after education. We share a central belief that a better and more meaningful experience is possible and that all students must be engaged in a rich education that supports their unique development. By working together, we can intentionally design our schools to meet the needs of every student to help them move confidently towards their next steps in life

Berkshire County Team: Pittsfield, Drury, Taconic and BART - working with them all year.

Portrait in-house team is: Colleen Byrd, Regina Diesz, Kristen Palatt, Erica Girgenti; Tammie Shafer, Abby Ruble and Students Trinity Greer and Richelle Carr.

Year 1 we had a ton of experiences that have taken us out of Hoosac to see high school elsewhere, able to school site vision and cross district collaborative planning in Colorado, School site visit in Carver, MA which is a pathways high school, the principal had a similar to Colleen, and they are 2 years ahead of us; Northern Berkshire County school walkthroughs, partnered with BART and Drury; Facilitated planning and coaching around the competencies; school site visits cross district collaborative planning in Stratford, CT;

We are looking to create a high school experience that promotes the competencies and engages 100% of the students at Hoosac, regardless of their interest and strengths, it makes us a more intentional community;

Spring Convening: in Stratford, Connecticut, April 3rd - 5th - The Convening Objectives: Observe practice in action to develop transferable skills in classroom observation and consider implications for our own work of moving from Portrait to Practice; Spotlight: accomplishments and work products from the 22-23 POG Community work; Build: community and leverage student voice through interactive co-design activities and protocols; Plan: forward for 23-24 by connecting takeaways to next steps planning. What we did: Richelle reported they visited 2 high schools in Stratford - the highlight was meeting new people, making some good friends, seeing a different way of high school.

Kristen: the highlight was watching Hoosac students stand up in front of district administrators and share their vision from high schoolers across the northeast - it was an unbelievable experience - Richell and Trinity represented our district beautifully. Richelle: saw a conservation focus zoo, ate at a food truck for the first time, visited the ocean for the first time.

Takeaways from Richell and Trinity: Every student deserves a primary person - staff member/trusted adult in the building who is a confidant, ambassador, to help them navigate high school; We need to utilize our students to help move our vision for the high school from poster - to practice - to action - Need to better market our accomplishments to our students and our community; need to settle on a schedule that allows time and space for students to find their primary person and cultivate their interests; This convening gave us hope because it showed us that the adults in the building are working behind the scenes to make high school better for everyone.

Richelle highlighted pictures from her trip.

Kristen - some pretty amazing and powerful takeaways that validates the work we are doing.

Mike Mucci: thanked Richelle for being here - great for our community to hear these stories from people most impacted by them. Wish you luck in spreading that message to your classmates. Continually working with peers and adults and all professionals to keep this moving forward. Learn from it, looking at Carver that is 2 years ahead, is that where you want to be? Stick to your vision

Mike Henault: really important work - students were able to share their vision at the convening and one question is: we are different from BART, Drury, PHS, do you think that Hoosac's vision or your vision for what Hoosac should be is in line with the county portrait competencies - the competencies match the community very well one worry is that we are taking countywide competencies and making them fit Hoosac - do they fit what Hoosac should be? Richelle - yes, overall mindsets are pretty similar, to graduate and get out. Our competencies are pretty similar. Kristen: spent a lot of time at the beginning of the year questioning if this is the right fit, as a Portrait Team internally we spent the first 4 months making sure this is a fit for us. We did that by surveying students and staff. We did a ton of work around that. Aaron: is this a match? and decided that we could take this and make this ours. We knew the high school needed something like this. What are we providing, what are we missing? And also, what are we doing well? Colleen has done a lot of work to make things happen and move in a direction and now we have the ability and tools to make this happen.

Colleen: We have so many ideas for next year that are going to take off - one of those is to create a CREW - where every student gets that support staff on a daily basis. The CREW, is going to be wrapped around a lunch, the CREW, depending on what the teacher offers for the students, using the competency rubric as a way to check ourselves by using that rubric to see how those students are doing in those competencies. The survey that we gave to the students regarding the competencies, they had no idea, we haven't really rolled this out yet, fully to the students, they were asked questions around areas of the competencies what they are seeing in their classes, that's how we discovered what's making the biggest impact on them is the project based learning, which is why we are moving in the direction of project based learning.

Adam: Excellent job Richelle, your vision, your takeaways, what are the challenges, and secondly tell us about Taco Trucks - Greatest challenge: a lot of students don't have a teacher, some students graduate without knowing that one teacher - if they did, maybe they would figure out they both have the same common interest. The food truck was amazing - Taco truck was amazing!

Kristen - on behalf of the Portrait Team - thank you for supporting this work - first field trip with high schoolers, the experience for these students was priceless.

Adam: how long will it be when we are the destination? Kristen: The next portrait convening will be in North Adams with the Berkshire Collaborative at their site in October.

104058 Report of Superintendent -

Aaron thanked Ian Capiello and Chloe King, members of the student council for attending tonight.

A. Shared Services - In discussion with North Adams on shared positions/services - next month bringing 2 agreements to the committee - 1. Facility Director - could bring a lot to us - he has the capacity to take on elementary and high school a lot of knowledge around assessing buildings - he can also find ways to handle things in house, which we are contracting out. He can look at our custodial workloads, what they are doing, how long it should take. Overseeing our 2 head custodians and helping them. Over summer, we will spend quite a bit of time getting to know the buildings, custodians. Looking like \$25,000 per year, getting a highly qualified person. Mike Mucci: for the investment, it is money well spent.

Data Specialist - tech department had 3 people, one left, which left us with an open position, looking at tasks, one thing that we battle is data and powerschool in particular. North Adams has a very skilled powerschool administrator. Talked about splitting that position 50/50 - had a good meeting today, feel pretty good about moving forward with an agreement, haven't talked numbers, taking a huge weight off our Technology Director -

Erin Milne: Hoping to expand powerschool responsibilities? Aaron: She does have experience in helping clean up data and help us make better use of it with additional tools that they offer.

Andy: cliff notes on what powerschool is? Aaron: our student data information system - keeps, names, grades, contacts, database for all student information.

Mike Henault: sees the cost savings with data specialist and replacing with tech - will facilities save money? Who currently oversees the custodial staff? Aaron: We will see very quickly how this is cost saving. Aaron oversees the custodial department.

Adam: this could lead to cost savings - will identify issues and things we can handle in house, the value is that it frees up educators to educate and the administrators can do what they need to do. Aaron: when we see areas that we need to systematize - and get processes around, having qualified people doing the work and being able to share some of those services is a real benefit. There could be a few more opportunities down the road for more shared services.

Aaron: once he gets the agreements in place, he will share them with the committee for the review.

B. Lease Agreement - Aaron had counsel review the agreement, initial agreement was not acceptable, he has added protection into the agreement. First agreement is for 5 years, and the costs won't change in the first 5 years, after that it will be 4% per year- the landlord has been very accommodating, allowing us to use the subcontractors to finish the office - looking for approval to get signed.

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

VOTED: to approve the lease agreement. The vote 6-0-1.

Aaron announced the new principal for the middle school next year, Lisa Lesser - has been with us the past 2 years as AP at the elementary. Background is middle school curriculum. Very excited to promote from within. Lisa: very excited about the opportunity and to work with amazing teams.

104059 **Chairman's - None**

104060 **Unfinished Business - None**

104061 **New Business** - Mike Henault: the season for Superintendent evaluation at some point, put on next agenda - set up some dates and go through the same process that we had in the past.

104062 **Action Items - None**

104063 **For the Good of the Order**

Bethany DeMarco: thanked Andy for taking the leap and representing your town and it's residents - Congratulations to the graduating seniors. Adams Lions club hosted a wonderful dinner at Bounti Fare for the National Honor Society.

Adam Emerson: Congratulations to the seniors - congratulations all the good work this district is doing and seeing all the good things that Hoosac is doing.

Mike Mucci: echoing the communication items - some negative things we deal with on s.c. and to come here and hear about great field trips. Having them come to fruition and having that being reported on here tonight. Commend everyone.

Mike H. - thanked Erica Girgenti - doing a mixed method study to complete Doctorate's work - key to setting up representation - work with students who choice out and why they are leaving - gave an opportunity to have open conversation - from students who home school, or attend McCann, BART - Shout out to Lisa Lesser - interaction on a personal level - her leadership style in the way she is proactive, is exactly what a lot of people are looking for. A really good match for middle school Principal

John Duval - a lot of positive stories that are happening at the district and also welcome Andy to the Board.

Erine - this group authorized the DEI advisory committee - had a few meetings, and hopeful about the work we are doing and happy to be a part of it.

Andy P. - thank you so much for the warm welcome and positive momentum - really excited to keep that going.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary