

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, August 26, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: John Duval, Mike Henault, Adam Emerson, Robert Tetlow, Erin Milne, Fred Lora

ABSENT: Andy Przystanski

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104215 Call to Order

Chairman Adam Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

104216 Public Comment or Question - Elizabeth Green questioned why the meeting isn't posted on the website? She was informed that the meetings are posted on our website, under school committee, and also posted with the Town of Adams and Town of Cheshire.

104217 Approval of Minutes - June 17, 2024 & June 27, 2024

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

VOTED: to approve the June 17, 2024 minutes. The vote was unanimous.

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

VOTED: to approve the June 27, 2024 minutes. The vote was unanimous.

104218 Report of Business Manager - None

104219 Report of Sub Committee -

A. Audit & Evaluation - districtwide meeting update - Mike Henault: A & E committee met today and discussed the information request that came from the Town of Cheshire, requesting documentation of our grant funding and revolving accounts. Did review the grants/accounts in open meeting. The chair of Cheshire Select Board along with Michelle Francesconi participated in the meeting, went through line by line all current grants, discussed limitations of spending through the grants. There were no questions asked after we reviewed the grants. Also reviewed the revolving accounts. Went line by line with every revolving account the district has. Aaron gave that information to Cheshire last week. Discussed the formality of how to get the meeting scheduled for the district wide meeting. Discussed 2 motions that we have in front of you today. Aaron discussed the next steps - the 2 towns will meet as a joint selectboard - and select a moderator, looking for a site that is large enough, Hoosac Valley auditorium looks like the logical place, centered between the 2 communities. Had discussions with district counsel, reached out to other superintendent's who went through this process. At this point, it makes sense to aim for a September 30th district wide meeting.

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

VOTED: Be it resolved that the Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee, by warrant, sets a district-wide meeting for Monday, September 30, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at Hoosac Valley High School (Auditorium), at which the budget shall be placed before all voters eligible to vote at said meeting, pursuant to M.G.L. 71, Section 16(b) and 603 CMR 41.05, Section 3 paragraph (f). The vote was unanimous.

Fred Lora: Your intent is to have a meeting where all eligible voters of both towns will attend the meeting on the 30th and at the conclusion of that meeting we have a vote? Mike Henault: Pass or Fail. That state law is in a 2 Town Regional agreement, the next step after a failed budget is to go to a district wide meeting, we are following state law by doing that but it is a popular vote, our budget can get voted in as presented or it can get voted down, if it gets voted in, it becomes our budget for both towns, if it gets voted down, we have until December 1st to either come up with a new proposed budget or let DESE come in and dictate what the budget will be which would likely be our proposed budget, given that our budget is sensible and within the limits. We would be on a one twelfth budget until December 1st. Discussions on how the meeting would run. We need to approve the place, date and time of the meeting.

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

VOTED: Be it resolved that the Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee adopts an official stance that we continue to support FY25 Budget as unanimously approved by the Committee on March 25, 2024 and reaffirmed on June 27, 2024 and recommends that this budget in the amount of \$22,481,719 be adopted through the district-wide meeting scheduled for September 30, 2024. Adam Emerson asked if there are any discussions?

Erin: we have restrictions based on how we can and cannot talk about this vote. What this allows us to do, is the school committee, as a body, recommends this budget goes through. Encourage the committee to look up the conflict of interest laws, on what you can and cannot do. You can do things in your personal capacity that you can't do in your s.c. capacity and things you can do in s.c. capacity that you can't do in your personal capacity, a little tricky, recommended that you brush up if you are planning to do any kind of advocacy.

Mike Henault: We can't advocate voting one way or another, we can publicize and give information, we looked into the state law, we can provide the information which is the budget information. What's at stake if we don't pass the budget? Voters should know factually, how it will affect students. When we look at prioritizing budget items that could get cut, a series of positions, staff losing jobs, students not having access to athletics, it will be even deeper than that. Asked Aaron to talk about potentially what the cuts could look like. It is important for the public to know what is at stake, we can communicate that but we still can't say we want you to vote yes. This resolution allows us to be able to say that the S.C. has an official stance that we support this budget. Aaron: the cuts would have to be a combination of things, resulting in larger class sizes, resulting in less access to interventions that aren't mandated, social emotional learning and mental health services, areas we would have to look at. We would have to put a number of things on the table and look at the least impactful combination of those. There are also a lot of laws that we have to abide by. We have to keep in the budget things that are mandated by state law.

Fred Lora: does the committee have the ability to produce a position paper with the facts? Something we can bring to the masses?

Mike Henault: we are on a timeline, if we pass this motion and put together a position paper that has factual information about the budget we could bring to the A & E committee, approve and give Aaron a directive through the sub-committee to then use the position paper to communicate to district families, would be legal and would be beneficial to get the word out. Erin: Should be posted publicly as well. Discussion on distribution of the position paper. Erin: suggest a small tweak to the language of the resolution to state that: we adopt **and may communicate** our official stance that we continue to support the budget. Does that give us more flexibility? Erin Milne made a motion to amend the resolution.

Robert Tetlow: Robert asked about how DESE would look at the budget if it came to this? Aaron: DESE will look at where we invested our resources. One key piece, the increase for Cheshire is the minimum increase that the state assessed for Cheshire, we didn't go beyond that.

Amended Motion: VOTED: Be it resolved that the Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee adopt **and may communicate** our official stance that we continue to support FY25 Budget as unanimously approved by the Committee on March 25, 2024 and reaffirmed on June 27, 2024 and recommends that this budget in the amount of \$22,481,719 be adopted through the district-wide meeting scheduled for September 30, 2024. The vote was unanimous.

B. Policy - handbook updates - Erin Milne: most of the meeting was setting up logistics. Big project this year is going to be doing the comprehensive audit of all of our policies with MASS and MASC - already started work reviewing all of our documents, going to go through it in committee to see where we need updates. Ongoing process throughout the year. Bulk of the meeting was spent with Colleen Byrd and Regina Diesz who updated the high school policy manual. Mostly around clarity of the graduation requirements. Colleen stated we added the School Resource Officer at the high school. See attached policy updates.

C. Maintenance - project updates - Robert Tellow: toured the elementary and middle school and the fields. Making good progress, driveway, playground, looking much nicer, working diligently inside the building as well. One concern: the leaking ceiling in the middle school, dripping in the gym again. This is a leak around the drain, something compromised. Contractors will be here tomorrow to take a look at it, it is under warranty. Two gym roofs are brand new, not sure if this was something that was missed or if it's the drain. Concerned about the ice, snow, not the time of the year we want to address the issue. Other areas of the roof, down the road, probably about 5 years, we will need another roof. Mike suggested being on the look out for grant opportunities for solar. Neither town is not in the position of capital projects. HVAC system: done upgrades to controls, with upgrades comes finding other areas that don't work properly, different valves that weren't working properly. Elementary: looking at, down the road, gutters, diverting water from the building. Put 2 boilers in, need to bid out for one more boiler. Another building we are going to have to do roofing work.

104220 **Communications** - None

104221 **Report of Superintendent**

A. School Update - We are working to get information out to the families, today the final piece around transportation went out. All building principals sent out their communications with schedules, etc. Good shape to start the year. Every building has a great plan for moving their school forward. Robert: fully staffed? Aaron: almost, closest we've been in a long time. Today we brought in our new hires for the mentoring program.

B. School Resource Officer - we are going to have an SRO at the middle and high school. Dave Tarjick is a great addition. He is very excited to get on board. . He is a great fit, and knows the community well. He is really focused on building relationships. Will be a great partnership. Documents shared with the committee: Standard Operating Procedures and Memorandum of Understanding. Our District Counsel did review these documents. Mike Henault asked if Officer Tarjick would be armed? Aaron stated his understanding is that he will be. Adam asked about the Annual Review - Article IV, hard the first year to evaluate, is there going to be a way, you or designee, Chief Alibozek and Dave Tarjick concisely come to an evaluation? Aaron stated that they will look at several tools, somewhat like the teacher's evaluation, look at a rubric to give feedback, will work with Chief Alibozek. Erin had questions on the SOP. Aaron would bring concerns she has on the SOP to officer Alibozek. We don't need to vote on the SOP, just the MOU.

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

VOTED: to approve the MOU for the School Resource Officer. The vote was unanimous.

104222 **Chairman's Report** - None

104223 **Unfinished Business** - Mike Henault: Aaron will have evidence by the September meeting regarding his evaluation. Will have the evaluation complete by October.

Fred Lora: organizational clothing equipment for our custodial staff, do we need to address it in terms of policy or just let it ride until there is a problem. Erika stated that we are all set right now.

Fred Lora: Did we resolve the physical requirements for the outdoor leadership course? Aaron: we can utilize what we have with the school nurse. The nurse reviews all field trips regarding students with medications/limitations etc. Mike Henault: Title II, we have to be careful, specifically states that we can't discriminate in course offerings based on a physical disability, we cannot let someone enroll in a class based on a physical disability, we can add accommodations to it, but we can never tell a student they can't take a class because he didn't pass a physical, it's illegal. We can add a nurse and put supports in to make sure the trip is safe.

104224 **New Business** - Fred Lora asked if the school district ever supported academy day hosted by Congress Neal? Fred discussed with the committee what academy day is. Aaron stated that he would put this on Erica Girgenti's radar.

104225 **Action Items** - None

104226 **For the Good of the Order** -

Erin Milne: excited for the beginning of the school year, positive energy.

John Duval: good luck to students, staff, administration to start the school year.

Adam Emerson: thanked the group for all the work put in over the summer, good luck to students and staff for a great new year.

MOTION: On Motion of Mike Henault and second by Robert Tetlow:

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:49 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary