

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, December 9, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School - Resource Room
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Adam Emerson, Mike Henault, John Duval, Andy Przystanski, Robert Tetlow, Fred Lora,

ABSENT: Erin Milne

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean

104265 Call to Order

Chairman Adam Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

104266 Public Comment or Question - Lynn Melchori - resident of cheshire - noticed honors courses available to students - but noticed when subbing that only certain students within honors classes are honors students - Adam asked that she seek more information from Mrs Byrd - Superintendent was able to address it and stated that it is situation and numbers based. Many districts are having blended classes due to numbers and logistics. Second question - DESE mandates - specifically discipline - do districts have any discourse to complain to DESE about their regulations & mandates. Are we legally bound to them or are we able to say they are not working and we need to deal with them in our own way. Superintendent responded by saying yes, we are bound to the regulations and audited in our ability to meet them but there is leeway. Mike Henault spoke about working directly with legislators to propose new or modify current legislation to make change. This is a multi year process to get it on the floor to a vote. MASC and MASS are lobbying for changes in order to have more flexibility within the regulations. No headway has been made yet. Superintendent spoke about how our district is handling the current discipline issues with the rise, rest and ACE rooms new to this year. Ms Melchori is most concerned about the "student who wants to learn" and wanted to bring up these issues to the whole committee - in the future she will bring issues up ahead of time so that any topic of conversation can be added to an agenda and openly discussed

104267 Approval of Minutes - November 18, 2024

MOTION: On Motion of Bob Tetlow and second by Andy Przystanski

VOTED: to approve the November 18, 2024. The vote was 5 yes - 1 abstained (Adam Emerson)

104268 Report of Business Manager - None

104269 Report of Sub Committee - None

104270 Communications -

A. Approval - School Improvement Plans - Superintendent outlined changes as proposed at the previous meeting. (See handout) Metrics were changed as requested by the committee. Mike Henault noted that one should read "social emotional data" and the other will read "behavior data" instead of them both having the same wording.

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

DISCUSSION - Adam asked when would we be able to see performance points / benchmarks to see progress - Superintendent said January would be when they look at the data.

VOTED: to approve the School Improvement Plans. The vote was unanimous.

104271

Report of Superintendent

A. Calendar Review - See Powerpoint from Superintendent for upcoming events and dates to note in December and January - Fred Lora asked to have a listing of who is attending the career fair as employers and also wondered why some events did not make it on the calendar such as the leo club and the williams college trip.

B. Absenteeism - See Superintendents Powerpoint for data points and percentages by school - High School is trending in the right direction for grades 9-11, grades 8 and 12 showed a small increase but it was noted that even one or two students could create a large change in data. There was some discussion about what the numbers represent and how the students are coded and how that translates to the type of absenteeism. Superintendent discussed the threshold for when a student becomes automatically withdrawn based on absences or required to make up days. Middle School - grades 4&6 improved, grades 5 & 7 did not. Bob Tetlow asked about the process a student must take if they are automatically withdrawn at the High School and then want to return. The new ACE program in addition to summer school addresses this issue and gives students a place to recover credits and get back on track. The Superintendent spoke to the 8th grade specifically in that the placement of that grade in the High School has not been a good fit and this can contribute to the absenteeism in that grade. Elementary School is the most successful in terms of attendance improvement. Kindergarten was the only grade to increase but was noted that it is not a mandated grade to complete and this could contribute to the reason it remains to have an increase in absenteeism. Bob Tetlow revisited the senior class numbers - currently 46 students - inquired as to whether we will see this number hold through to graduation. Continued discussion about pathways at the high school and grade structure in each of the schools. Vision for the future would be to move another grade back to the elementary, 8th grade back to middle school and move preschool to the highschool to incorporate Pre K into the education pathway. This could help address issues in enrollment and retention. Continued discussion about restructuring of district grade levels and how that would be accomplished. Also discussion around regionalization with surrounding schools. This would involve both policy and A&E committees once a decision is made to begin a study for any of these changes.

C. Budget Calendar & Outlook - See letter from Cheshire Selectboard & budget timeline handout - Discussion about starting points and lack of state numbers in reference to the town's request and our ability to meet it. Superintendent addressed the current tuition out situation and if we had used reserves as requested by the town we would have no means to cover these unanticipated costs nearing 1.3 million dollars. Superintendent has had a conversation with the Cheshire Selectboard chair and will continue to have monthly meetings with both town's chairman so we continue to be on the same page. Mike Henault addressed this initial letter and conversation as being a step in the right direction in terms of communication and hopefully this will aid us in working collaboratively this budget season. Budget calendar was discussed and will be adjusted accordingly once budget development is under way. Mike Henault spoke about a session he attended at the MASS / MASC conference where 2 ½ overrides were a topic of conversation and about how towns have been able to successfully pass overrides - the key being the towns and schools coming together with a common goal so that both parties can benefit from the override. Take away was that a joint effort of town and school can be extremely impactful and both parties can benefit if handled as a united front. Superintendent also got the idea of a Chair meeting from this conference and it has already proved to be beneficial as a means of being on common ground and uniting. Continued to discuss logistics of a single town requesting a specific increase and how a rolling average could address the issues both towns currently face when enrollment impacts assessment.

104272

Chairman's Report - None

104273

Unfinished Business -

A. Superintendent's Evaluation - Mike Henault discussed methodology for this evaluation and recommended we do future evaluations in a reduced rubric format moving forward. See Power point for metrics and narratives . Overall rating Standard 1 Instructional Leadership - Proficient, Student Learning Indicator - Needs Improvement. Standard 2 : Management & Operations - Proficient , Exemplary in Fiscal systems , previously marked as growth area: HR Mgmt & Development . Standard 3 - Family & Community and Engagement - overall Proficient , but concerns growing in each indicator. Standard 4: Professional Culture - Overall Proficient , area of growth : cultural proficiency. Overall Rating: Proficient. Mike H again discussed his compilation of data and comments included in the evaluation. Asked the committee to comment or add if they felt something was missing. Superintendent Dean addressed some of the areas of weakness identified and asked for any feedback as to how he can improve and also stated that these areas are not new to him and have been an ongoing focus over the years and there is always room for improvement.

Conversation surrounding superintendent increase - Mike Henault would like to align the Teacher increase to be aligned with what was granted to that Unit.

MOTION: Setting the superintendents increase to 3.5% retroactively to July 1, 2024.

On Motion of Mike Henault and second by John Duval

VOTED: to approve the Superintendent FY25 increase to be a 3.5% increase retroactively to July 1 2024. . The vote was unanimous.

104274 **New Business** - Mike Henault announced that he will be resigning from the Board. He noted that in his absence he hopes we continue to pursue shared services and means to collaborate. Eliminate the current grade structure, continue to pursue the rolling average in the regional agreement and wanted to address that him being on the board while his kids do not attend the district and that he is here to represent every child that is in our district without a voice and that has always been his mission on the board. Adam noted that we will now need to post for this opening and the committee will decide who fills this void through the end of May when the position will be put out to ballot as Mike's term was up this may. Fred asked that Aaron bring forward next steps for the regional agreement amendment committee to take shape and begin the process of making the changes discussed tonight in regards to regionalization and changes

104275 **Action Items** - None

104276 **For the Good of the Order** - Bob Tetlow spoke about how he will miss Mike on the board and his knowledge has been an asset to our board - Fred Lora repeated the sentiments to Mike in regards to his time on the board. He is also going to be reaching out to General Dynamics to see what other opportunities there are to expand our relationship and focus within their organization. Andy - thanked Mike for his wisdom, knowledge and questions that helped the whole board to learn. John thanked Mike for all he's done to help move the district forward. He will be missed. Mike Henault - after sitting through many school committee meetings, it's great to be able to disagree within a committee, it's done in a respectful civil way that puts kids first and that is important and should be continued. Adam thanked Mike and understands the obligations he is currently needing to prioritize. Adam also wanted to note the article about athletics and behavior and changes that are being made to ensure respect.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:17 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Erika Snyder, Recording Secretary