

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, February 10, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School - Resource Room
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Adam Emerson, Erin Milne, John Duval, Andy Przystanski, Fred Lora, Robert Tetlow

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Superintendent Aaron Dean, Corey Charron, student representative

104289 Call to Order

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

104290 Public Comment or Question - None

104291 Approval of Minutes - January 13, 2025

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Fred Lora

VOTED: to approve the January 13, 2025 . The vote was 5-0-1 - Robert Tetlow abstained

104292 Report of Business Manager -

A. FY26 Budget Overview - See Superintendent presentation

Superintendent and Business Manager went through known revenue and expenditures - both gains and challenges as the FY2026 is being developed. An outline of assessments to towns as well as enrollment changes were discussed. Capital projects to be funded with E&D were outlined. Utilizing E&D to complete these projects is a way to maintain the buildings without impacting town assessments. Superintendent spoke about enrollment and the impact that has on assessments and projections. Compared a level service budget to a budget with some reorganization and restructuring and consolidation of some programs and staffing. Discussion around special education tuition for outplaced students. 4 additional students have been placed in private or residential settings and we are now fiscally responsible to cover those costs. Reserves in school choice will be required to fund these outplacements but puts the district in a position to re-evaluate funding in years to come as this is not a sustainable method to fund such high costs. Fred Lora inquired about additional capital expenditures that could be added to the elementary school list within the presentation and inquired about the hoop installation in the middle school.

104293 Report of Sub Committee - None

104294 Communications -

A. Overnight Adventure Skills course - Lindsay McGinnis

Outdoor adventure course - all excursion based. The first overnight will be March 11 and 12th in Bolton Valley VT. Focus will be Learning how to backcountry ski. There are 8 students slated to participate in the excursion. Funding is through the innovation Pathways grant. Students will miss one full day of school and return the following day mid day. Students need to have prerequisites in order to attend. Adam Emerson inquired about cost to students and is not aware of any one student who is not able to attend due to cost. Bob Tetlow inquired about transportation. Lindsay will be utilizing the district van.

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

VOTED: to approve the overnight trip to Bolton Valley VT. The vote was unanimous

B. Erica Girgenti - Pathways

Erica spoke about the pathways presentation made to families. Presentation was about an hour long and well attended. Postcards went to St Stans and surrounding schools in addition to being advertised internally with the principal's letters. Corey Charron spoke about his experiences within the pathways program. Lindsay McGinnis spoke about Corey's initiative to remap the nature trail and reinvent the signs that map out the trail head. Corey was given accolades as will be graduating with 3 pathways designations as a result of his hard work and self motivated ways. There was a discussion about the conference Corey will be attending and presenting at to further his pathways experience. Bob Tetlow inquired as to how the nature trail signs were funded and was told that the supplies were donated. More discussion around the other pathways and the work being done within each course. New to the program is a CNA class where HVRSD is partnering with Integritus Healthcare and will result in students graduating from this program with a CNA designation. The engineering pathway will again be participating in the general dynamics engineering competition for which HVRSD placed first last year. Erica spoke about the other pathways and the off site experiences the students enrolled in the pathways have been part of to date as well as the work study experiences being taken advantage of by some of the students. Fred Lora asked if there was a running list of those employers and agencies we are trying to maintain relationships with and keep students engaged with. Erica spoke about the process of placing a student with an employer and how it may or may not result in an offer of employment vs an unpaid experience. The duration of time for which a work study or employment experiment can be as long as a full school year or as short as a single semester but some pathways require 100 hours outside the classroom and these opportunities count towards that. Erin Milne asked about accommodations for placements with students that have after school or other activities / sports that may limit their ability to engage with employers.

C. John Duval - discussion on Rural Aid - John spoke about his role on the rural aid committee and the advocacy for full funding of the Rural Aid grant. If the grant was fully funded we would be receiving upwards of 1 million. We currently are slated to receive 320K with the current recommended state funding. John spoke about a letter being drafted and voted on by committees in support of fully funding this grant. We can sign in support if the group agrees. Adam asked if there was a reason why this has not been funded fully to date. The short answer is that it is due to priority.

104295 Report of Superintendent

A. Approval of DIP - Superintendent presented the DIP which includes additions based on recommendations from the DEIB committee.

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

VOTED: to approve the District Improvement Plan as presented . The vote was unanimous

B. Regional Agreement Committee Update - Fred Lora updated that the group was still in favor of moving to a 5 year rolling average. The group also continued discussion around the mechanism for voting in school committee members by town and be used in the upcoming elections to vote in new members. These changes will not impact FY2026 budget and will be implemented for the FY2027 budget cycle.

C. Regionalization Study - Superintendent spoke about the conversations that have been had between HVRSD, NBSU and North Adams in doing a regionalization study. John agrees that starting off with a study is a great idea given what happened in South County. Adam asked if any investments need to be made in order to get this rolling. Senator Barrett would be part of this process and we would be asking for financial assistance to cover the costs of this study which the Superintendent estimates to be in the 200K range.

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

VOTED: to approve the District's participation in a regionalization study with NAPS and the NBSU. The vote was unanimous

D. Athletics Update - See handout - Athletic Director Jeff Puleri spoke with updates on current athletics, the future of certain sports and a look back at fall sports. Jeff wanted to stress the reliance of our middle school 7th grade waivers. Currently using many 7th and 8th graders for JV. This causes disproportionate competitive balance within teams. Jeff also spoke about the committee that will be responsible for the reshaping of the Leagues with the PVIAC for which he is part of. This may result in a move back to geography as a means for shaping leagues. He spoke to the logistics of what this realignment will consist of. Discussion moved to the number of team sports we host given our small size and this creates challenges in fielding teams for each. Golf, skiing, track for example have small numbers and should be looking to engage in co-op teams. Jeff spoke about the safety concerns around younger students facing much larger, more experienced athletes. Jeff stressed the importance of getting the community to use our facilities in an attempt to get students to participate in our hosted sports. John Duval asked how we handle sports that we may cut - will they get picked up by another school and offered to co op. Jeff said that the answer is yes in most cases but each school will have their own strategies in what they offer and whether they will have the need to take in other schools as part of their program. Fred Lora asked for clarification in the method for which we are placed in a division and the teams that are within the PVIAC. There was a discussion around the integration of youth sports with our varsity teams. Fred mentioned the Basketball teams mentoring the younger athletes to foster the sport and get the youth in the building. Erin asked if towns had been engaged in regards to our process. The superintendent and Chairs of each selectboard have met and set expectations and groundwork for what challenges lie ahead.

104296 Chairman's Report - None

104297 Unfinished Business - None

104298 New Business - Fred Lora noted that the PR committee should backward plan how the full committee presents the budget to the public. Adam noted that the chairman meetings have discussed the outlay of information to the towns once a budget is approved by the committee.

104299 Action Items - None

104300 For the Good of the Order - Bob mentioned that he thanked the members of the Cheshire committee at their meeting for attending and being part of the regional agreement committee. Fred asked Corey Charron about the shadow day at General Dynamics and reiterated the opportunity to expand the number of students attending that day in the future. He mentioned he attended the career fair and was pleased with the turnout and positive conversations he saw taking place. Fred asked that all correspondence being sent to parents also be sent to the committee. Erin Milne thanked the superintendent for sending out the letter regarding ICE. John was happy to see a student representative at our meeting and commended him for all of his hard work and initiative. Corey thanked the committee for having him here and being part of the internal operations.

MOTION: On Motion of Erin Mile and second by Andy Przystanski:

VOTED: to go into executive session for the sole purpose: Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 21(a)(7) to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law (approval of executive session minutes for the session held on January 13, 2025). A roll call vote was taken. The committee will not reconvene in open session. The vote was unanimous.

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Erika Snyder, Recording Secretary