

MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

April 6, 2020

1. **Call to Order** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Michelle Ayer. Chair Ayer opened the meeting and announced the School Committee was meeting in a virtual setting, fully remote via teleconferencing, practicing social distancing and in accordance with the Governor's suspension of certain provisions of the open meeting laws. The meeting was recorded. She stated that there has been an incredible effort to make sure that remote learning is happening during this extraordinary time and thanked the Central Office leadership team, principals, assistant principals, resource teachers and department heads. She thanked the faculty, especially Caroline Farris and Lauren Ciocca, for all their work on professional development around remote technology. This amazing team has worked tirelessly and selflessly over the past three weeks to develop a comprehensive learning plan under incredibly trying circumstances. No one can imagine the amount of work that went into the development, while dealing with the physical and emotional strain of a global pandemic. She thanked parents, on behalf of the District, for their caring, passion and drive. Chair Ayer noted that it is not easy to manage work and home and school all under the same roof, but in spite of that, families are making the best of it. She thanked Hingham K-12 students and noted that the Committee understands how much has been lost and how much they miss your friends and teachers; while remote learning cannot replace being in the classroom and what has been lost cannot be replaced, the Committee hopes that what they have found, a common purpose to slow the spread of a deadly virus, will be one of the greatest accomplishments of their generation.

Members Present: Michelle Ayer, Nes Correnti, Carlos Da Silva, Libby Lewiecki Kerry Ni, Liza O'Reilly and Ed Schreier.

Central Office Present: Paul Austin, Jamie LaBillois, Suzanne Vinnos and John Ferris.

Visitors Present: June Gustafson, Monica Matthews. Cynthia Galko, Jen Benham, Sara Abbott and others who were not identified.

2. **Approval of Minutes**

2.1 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting with the Education Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee held on March 3, 2020.

Nes Correnti – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Ed Schreier – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Carlos Da Silva – aye

Michelle Ayer - aye

2.2 On a motion by Carlos Da Silva and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee meeting held on March 23, 2020.

Nes Correnti – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Ed Schreier – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Carlos Da Silva – aye

Michelle Ayer - aye

3. Questions and Comments. None. Chair Ayer invited anyone with a comment or question to email her at mayer@hinghamschools.org.

4. Superintendent's Report

Dr. Austin reported that he misses seeing everyone. He reported on the District's response to COVID 19. On behalf of the administration and support staff he thanked the Hingham School Committee for its unwavering support during this historic and unprecedented time. Dr. Austin noted that the closure, which began on March 13, 2020, has been a long and difficult period for our students, family, staff, and administrators, as they navigate territory that has never been explored, during a time of great uncertainty, fear and unrest. Despite these difficult days, we have seen the very best of our district, students and community. On the recommendation of the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, Jeff Riley, the district provided optional academic enrichment activities to students during the first three weeks of the closure. When Governor Baker subsequently closed all schools in the Commonwealth until at least May 4, 2020, the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided additional guidance and asked districts to provide remote learning to students. Central Office administrators, school administrators, resource teachers and faculty worked together to create Hingham's Remote Learning Plan, which rolled out today. The Administration believes that this plan will best meet the needs of all students during this challenging time. The district leadership team continues to meet multiple times per week and will continue for the duration of this closure. Faculty and staff have been engaged in preparing for new delivery of instruction, and many faculty members have actively participated in professional development in the use of our online presence and providing instructional material to students. Teachers are juggling families at home while staying connected to their colleagues and students. Dr. Austin expressed gratitude for the professionalism and communication of the HPS staff. He also thanked Dr. LaBillois for communicating regularly with families and staff. He noted the importance of providing timely and meaningful communication to all stakeholders and expressed his commitment to provide these updates regularly for the duration of the closure. He thanked the staff for staying positive and connected to each other, their students and their families and noted that he is honored to work with such competent individuals. Finally, he thanked students and families, noting that they are enduring so much at home, and yet many find time to reach out to administrators and staff with words of encouragement that are much appreciated. Those words are greatly appreciated. Dr. Austin noted that he is certain that we will make it through this difficult time as one unified unit, and that he looks forward to seeing families, students and staff together in our schools very soon.

Dr. Austin noted that the Committee received an updated Facilities Report and thanked all members of the facilities and maintenance departments who have been cleaning the buildings and maintaining the facilities for when school resumes.

5. Communications

- 5.1 Communications Received by the Superintendent: Dr. Austin noted that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) inquired about Hingham's readiness to move forward with the Foster School project during this unprecedented time. The Town and School Department are prepared to go ahead as planned; some of the work will be done remotely. Members of the Board of Selectmen, Town administration, Building Committee, and School Committee met last week for a kickoff meeting.
- 5.2 Student Communications: None
- 5.3 Other Communications: None.

6. Unfinished Business

- 6.1 John Ferris gave the Committee an update on the operating budget for FY'21. There have been no changes since the last update for FY'21. The Federal, State and local closures will have an unknown impact on all budgets. The FY '20 budget will be negatively impacted by refunds for Kindergarten and Kids in Action, and loss of revenues from food services and athletic fees. Mr. Ferris will quantify these numbers and update the committee at a later meeting. Dr. Austin added that the Administration has heavily scrutinized every expense and is managing expenses tightly. The department has not frozen expenditures, but is very aware of the current financial situation. Chair Ayer stated the Committee will vote on the budget number. Town Meeting will be held on June 22, 2020 so the Committee will adjust the meeting schedule to include a brief meeting before Town Meeting.

7. New Business

- 7.1 Dr. LaBillois provided an update on the District's Remote Learning Plan, which was launched today. The communication notes that DESE has instructed districts to develop plans to remotely provide as much continuity of education as possible, while recognizing equity issues around accessing technology and taking into account the variety of issues in the homelife of students. The regular education and special education remote plans are complementary and were developed simultaneously. The plan is based on four guiding principles:

- 1) A Focus on the Holistic Needs of the Educational Community (Health, Equity and Community Engagement)
- 2) Development and Implementation of Remote Learning (Learning Through Remote Mediums, Instruction and Equity)
- 3) Components of a Remote Learning Schedule (Frequent Contact, Specialized Contact and Enrichment)
- 4) Feedback to Students (Feedback, Grading & Assessment, Positive Behavior Supports)

Instruction will be asynchronous but there will be live synchronous opportunities for students to check in. Elementary students will be provided with the work for the following week on Friday and Secondary students will receive it on Monday morning. Teachers are preparing carefully structured lessons that will add up to approximately half the time of a normal school day. The District is mindful of confidentiality concerns surrounding videoconference technology.

Chair Ayer acknowledged Cynthia Galko who asked whether secondary work was due on Friday or Monday each week. Dr. LaBillois replied that the work will be due on Friday but that students are able to get an extension until Monday from their teacher if needed.

Dr. Vinnes presented the Special Education portion of the Remote Learning Plan, detailed in the Manual for Provision of Special Education Services During COVID-19. She noted that her team was involved in the development of all the plans so that Special Education was well represented especially for students who are able to access grade level curriculum with minor modifications. She noted that the Special Education Plan was developed to give faculty a common and clear message. She noted that they are being tasked with trying to change a teaching methodology that has been in practice for hundreds of years, altering the feedback loop that Special Educators rely on, through asynchronous learning. The manual addresses that a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is not the same as it was when school is in session. Teachers are expected to communicate frequently but respect the family wishes for contact. The manual also makes clear that there is no ability for one on one teaching, whether synchronous or asynchronous, because families are sharing office spaces and devices. Expectations for the types and frequency of remote meetings with colleagues is also addressed. The Remote Learning Plan is expected to evolve as feedback is received, learning progresses, and as the district receives additional guidance from the DESE. Families may request non-IEP virtual meetings and are expected to follow very specific social norms during those meetings. The manual also notes that IEPs will likely not be adjusted during the crisis and instead, students will be reassessed once this crisis is over. The next phase of work will be to address Extended School Year, compensatory services and how paraeducators are being utilized during remote learning.

Kerry Ni asked whether Special Education teams are reaching out to all families to ensure that individual student needs are met. Dr. Vinnes replied that teachers are documenting family communications and the department has created a district-wide documentation folder.

Chair Ayer thanked Drs. LaBillois and Vinnes for their hard work and their presentations.

Dr. Austin thanked them as well as the whole team and noted that the amount of work they have done is remarkable.

- 7.2 The Committee discussed the FY'20 school calendar. Dr. Austin reported that the Commission of DESE decreed that schools must go until the 185th day on their calendars (June 23, 2020 in Hingham) but the cancellation of April vacation would add four days to the calendar, allowing schools could close on the 181st day, or June 17, 2020 for Hingham. The administration recommends cancelling April vacation in order to continue the momentum of remote learning. The committee discussed that students are just starting to learn in a new way. Additionally, asking kids to attend school until June 23, 2020 could be challenging, and agreed that it would be more productive to have students attend to work during this time as the Governor has requested that citizens stay in.

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Nes Correnti,

It was

Voted: To amend the FY'20 Hingham School Calendar to continue learning on April 21 through April 24, making the final day June 17, 2020 if no further cancellations occur,

Nes Correnti – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Ed Schreier – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Carlos Da Silva – aye

Michelle Ayer - aye

- 7.3 The Committee received and discussed a draft FY'21 School Calendar. The new format was noted and

questions were asked about graduation, early release days and conferences. A minor change reflecting that Secondary professional development will take place on certain days, not conferences, as noted. The committee will vote on it at their next meeting.

- 7.4 The Committee received a proposal of recommended rates for FY'21 Pre-school. John Ferris explained the chart that includes historical rates as well. The Administration proposed a 2% increase in fees. A new full day preschool class will be added, which will meet for 4 ½ days, allowing pre-school teachers to do assessments, have family conferences, and attend professional development. The committee discussed whether having a 4 ½ day week would deter enrollment. Dr. Vinnes believes it is absolutely necessary.

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Carlos Da Silva,

It was

Voted: To approve the FY'21 pre-school rates as proposed in the charts and to include the 4 1/2 day rates.

Nes Correnti – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Ed Schreier – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Carlos Da Silva – aye

Michelle Ayer - aye

The committee received a proposal of recommended rates for Kids in Action fees for FY'21. John Ferris recommended adoption of the proposed rates as they are reasonable and commensurate with similar programs in other towns. He noted that there may be an impact on enrollment if people lose their jobs over the next year. There is a revolving account balance. He hopes that the enrollment numbers will remain high next year.

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Kerry Ni,

It was

Voted: To approve the FY'21 Kids in Action rates as proposed in the charts.

Nes Correnti – aye

Libby Lewiecki – aye

Liza O'Reilly – aye

Ed Schreier – aye

Kerry Ni – aye

Carlos Da Silva – aye

Michelle Ayer - aye

- 7.5 The Committee discussed the next meeting date that was scheduled for April 27th at 6:30 P.M., before Town Meeting. Since that meeting will now be held on June 22, 2020, there could be a normal start at 7:00PM. A brief School Committee meeting before Town Meeting on June 22, 2020 will be needed, and that is not on the current schedule. The chair polled all members and administrators and all agreed to make these two changes. Liza O'Reilly asked whether the Committee could still receive Program Reviews via Zoom. Dr. Austin responded that it would be overwhelming to do them remotely and recommended that they be pushed out until the summer.

8. 48 Hour Items: None

9. Subcommittee reports:

Kerry Ni noted that the Policy Subcommittee will meet to review Section B of the new Policy manual.

10. Adjournment

On a motion by Liza O'Reilly and seconded by Libby Lewiecki,

It was

Voted: To adjourn to Executive Session at 8:21PM, not to return to Open Session, for the purposes of:

- a. Discussing Memorandum of Agreement with HEA Unit A regarding online learning and operating during State of Emergency, the public discussion of which may be detrimental to the Committee's bargaining position, and act as appropriate;
- b. Discussing matters related to the HEA Unit A collective bargaining contract, the public discussion of which may be detrimental to the Committee's bargaining position, and act as appropriate;
- b. Discussing matters related to the HEA Unit A collective bargaining negotiations, the public discussion of which may be detrimental to the Committee's bargaining position.

Nes Correnti – aye
Libby Lewiecki – aye
Liza O'Reilly – aye
Ed Schreier – aye
Kerry Ni – aye
Carlos Da Silva – aye
Michelle Ayer - aye

Respectfully Submitted by:
Kerry Ni

Documents Included:

[4-6-20 Agenda.pdf](#) 

[4-6-20 Annotated Agenda](#) 

[4-6-20 Annotated Agenda.pdf](#) 

[Item 2.1 3-3-20 SC Minutes.pdf](#) 

[Item 2.2 3-23-20 Minutes.pdf](#) 

[Item 4 Facility Dept March & April Report.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.1 Manual for the Provision of Virtual Special Education Services During The Covid-19 Outbreak v.1.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.1 Remote Learning Plan - Hingham Public Schools--Guidelines for Teachers \(FINAL_4_2_20\).pdf](#) 

[Item 7.2 School Calendar 19-20 Final.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.3 Draft fy21 calendar.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.3 Jewish Holidays.png](#) 

[Item 7.4 FY20 Approved KIA Fee Schedule.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.4 FY21 Proposed KIA Fee Schedule.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.4 Preschool Rates 2020-2021.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.5 SC Meeting Calendar19-20.pdf](#) 

[Item 7.5 Special SC Reports 19-20.pdf](#) 