

# MINUTES OF THE HINGHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE

December 19, 2016

## 1. Call to order.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Liza O'Reilly at 7:32 p.m.

Members Present: Aylene Calnan, Carlos Da Silva, Carol M. Falvey, Cynthia Galko, Liza O'Reilly, Kay Praschma and Ed Schreier

Central Office Present: Dorothy Galo, James LaBillois, Elizabeth Kurlan, John Ferris

Visitors Present: Dan Coughlin, Diane DeNapoli, Richard McManus, Aisha Oppong, Kevin Quilty, Kerry Ni, Alec Porter, Ted Hirsch, Carolyn Bianchi, Helen Bias, Bryna Rogers, Chris Denning, Sharon Burnett, Adrienne McGarr

## 2. Approval of Minutes.

2.1 On a motion by Aylene Calnan and seconded by Carlos Da Silva,

It was

Voted: To approve the minutes of the School Committee Meeting held on December 5, 2016.

Liza O'Reilly noted that the committee will review the minutes of the 12/7/16 joint meeting of the Long Range Planning and School Committee at the next meeting.

## 3. Questions and Comments. None

## 4. Superintendent's Report.

- Dr. Galo noted that she attended the METCO 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Luncheon at the Quincy Marriott. It was a great event and Dr. Galo expressed her pride in Hingham's participation in the METCO program.
- Dr. Galo noted that a copy of the December 1, 2016 enrollment report was included in the School Committee packet; enrollment remains consistent with November enrollments.

## 5. Communications.

5.1 Communications Received by the Superintendent.

- Dr. Galo noted the district had received a communication relative to the behavior of coaching staff at a recent tournament contest by an MIAA official. Dr. Galo noted that a copy of the communication and the coaches' response were included in the packet.
- Dr. Galo noted that the most recent update from the Hingham High School post-secondary planning office was also included in the packet.
- Dr. Galo shared a document outlining the Governor's 9C cuts. Included in the cuts is a reduction of \$95,000 to a security grant Hingham was awarded (initial grant award of \$111,500 – reduced to \$15,929). This is a loss of real dollars to the district. The money was funding the district-wide security training, cameras on the new school busses, and additional cameras in the schools. The Committee questioned whether the district had incurred expenses that were greater than the reduced grant award. Dr. Galo noted that the training was completed and costed approximately the amount of the grant, but cameras are on order. Dr. Galo noted that the district will notify the state of the expenses incurred and the Committee suggested that Dr. Galo copy our state senator and state representative on the letter.
- Dr. Galo shared that the district is in receipt of information and guidance relative to the changes in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that will take effect on 1/1/2017.

5.2 Student Communications. Brad Patterson was not in attendance.

- 5.3 Other Communications. School Committee Chair Liza O'Reilly noted that Commissioner Chester will be presenting to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education tomorrow evening and will be requesting changes to the high school competency determination with an additional history or civics assessment in grade 11 or 12. The Board will be discussing it in December and January, with a vote in February. Ms. O'Reilly suggested that the School Committee may want to consider opining on the issue and possibly encourage others to do so as well.

## **6. New Business.**

- 6.1 The Committee heard a pre-budget Financial Forecast and Town departments budget requests from Town Administrator, Ted Alexiades. Chair Liza O'Reilly introduced Hingham Town Manager, Ted Alexiades, who was in attendance to provide the Committee an update on the Town financial forecast. Mr. Alexiades opened by explaining the Town Budget process and noted that the Town is currently looking at an approximate shortfall of roughly \$700,000. This number, however, doesn't include the school department's request. In the fall, the Town heard budget requests from all other town departments. Mr. Alexiades noted that the town has about 20 departments and, out of all requests, he will be recommending three additional personnel positions to the Advisory Board (a grant writer, an affordable housing coordinator, and a health benefits coordinator). Mr. Alexiades also reviewed four building projects, two that were included in the budget forecast documents, and two that were not. Mr. Alexiades went on to explain how the Town is now tracking unused non-excluded debt in an attempt to creatively fund capital projects.

Mr. Alexiades also provided the Committee with a report of balances in all town accounts. Town policy suggests a fund balance of between 16% and 20%, and that balance is currently at 20.92%. Mr. Alexiades commended the School Department for returning \$297,265 to the Town at the end of the last fiscal year. He then concluded the information portion of his presentation and requested questions from the Committee.

Carol M. Falvey asked an unrelated question relative to the mitigation funds from the Alliance project and the Town's unilateral decision to put the money toward the Plymouth River Elementary window project. Ms. Falvey noted that, in the future, it is hoped that the Committee will be consulted before the Town unilaterally assigns money to a specific area within the school department. Mr. Alexiades acknowledged that a decision needed to be made quickly due to time constraints, and noted that the funds have to be used at Plymouth River School since the elementary students living in the Alliance housing will attend PRS.

Edward Schreier asked Mr. Alexiades to clarify the difference between excess overlay and overlay. Mr. Alexiades explained that all town properties need to be assessed. If the owner and the town disagree on the assessed value, they have the ability to challenge the town's finding. Overlay covers bad debt expense for real estate property tax. If the appeal is successful, town assessors have to turn back overpaid funds from overlay. Excess overlay is from years of overlay that is accumulated and isn't used.

Mr. Schreier asked whether the Town's move to GIC (Group Insurance Commission) and all of the required paperwork needed to enroll would affect retired town employees. Mr. Alexiades noted that the enrollment process is going to be onerous as it requires a lot of paperwork, and that retired employees may be more challenging to enroll as they're not in as frequent contact with the Town as current employees.

Carlos Da Silva asked a question about the Linden Ponds development and whether they are no longer building 55-plus communities. Mr. Alexiades noted that Linden Ponds is not changing their business model, will continue to build 55-plus housing units, and the development is simply entering into phase two of the initial development.

Chair Liza O'Reilly asked if the newly proposed grant writer position would be able to be utilized by the school department. Mr. Alexiades responded that the school department would be able to use the position to find grants related to educational matters. Ms. O'Reilly went on to note that the increase in the Harbormaster expenses are likely due to an increase in participation in rowing and sailing. Mr. Alexiades noted that yes, there has been an increase in both the number of people on the water and the period of time that they are using the Harbor, and the Town needs to ensure the Harbor remains safe for everyone.

The Committee thanked Mr. Alexiades for his presentation.

6.2 The Committee received a draft of proposed revisions to Section 3.7.5 (Public Involvement) of the School Committee Policy Handbook. Policy Subcommittee Chair Aylene Calnan noted that the only change before the Committee was adding phrasing that would say, "Anonymous communications will be disregarded" in section 3.7.5 third paragraph that talks about written communication from the public to the Committee. Ms. Calnan noted that this was always the Committee's practice – but now would be their policy. The Committee will take a first reading vote on the change at the next meeting.

6.3 The Committee discussed the process for acknowledging and sharing emails received by individual School Committee members. This agenda item was taken out of order. This item was addressed after item 6.4. Chair Liza O'Reilly noted that School Committee email addresses have been posted to the website and, now that they are, constituents have been reaching out to members relative to a variety of topics. Due to the constraints of the Open Meeting Law, the Committee will need to establish a procedure to ensure someone responds to individuals who have emailed. The Committee agreed that if all seven members of the school committee were addressed in the email, then the School Committee Secretary would respond. If the email is addressed to an entire subcommittee, then the Chair of the Subcommittee would respond. Further, if the email is relative to a specific issue, and there had been a School Committee representative on the working group for the issue, then that individual would respond. Any email requesting action will be forwarded to the Chairperson for possible inclusion on the agenda. All agreed that the initial response would be to acknowledge the email and inform the party that the email will be forwarded to the Chairperson. Any email communication that asks the Committee to take any action must be discussed in open session and cannot occur in email. The Committee agreed to give this new structure some time to examine what works and what doesn't. The Community Outreach Subcommittee will discuss the issue in depth at their January 3, 2017 meeting.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Committee that the Committee is in receipt of two emails regarding the Hingham High School GPA presentation asking when it would be posted. Ms. O'Reilly noted that the presentation is posted to the Hingham High School Guidance Website. Two emails were received regarding rowing and Ms. O'Reilly noted that she will respond. Four emails were received in follow-up to a recent SEPAC meeting and the Committee will be discussing those issues in item 6.6.

6.4 The Committee received a preliminary draft of proposed revisions to Section 6 of the School Committee Policy Handbook. This item was taken out of order and followed item 6.2. Policy Subcommittee Chair Aylene Calnan noted that the Policy Subcommittee was reviewing the part of the policy manual that deals with students. Ms. Calnan explained that extensive changes are being proposed and while the language is still being revised, it is being shared with the Committee so the members can get some sense of the changes before the official first reading. The changes will be discussed again at the January 13, 2017 meeting of the Policy Subcommittee.

6.5 The Committee received information from the SSEC Board meeting held on December 9, 2016. Dr. Galo explained that subsequent to each board meeting of the South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC), each member School Committee receives a summary document of items

discussed at the board meeting. Dr. Galo reviewed the notes from the SSEC Board meeting, noted that Milton has become a formal member of the SSEC and briefly reviewed the Collaborative Annual Report.

There was a question relative to the property at 40 Pond Park where the Road to Responsibility program was housed. Dr. Galo noted that the Collaborative's new building was designed to house all SSEC programs under one roof. The Road to Responsibility Program was allowed to stay at the property at 40 Pond Park until the lease expired. The Program will stay in its current location, but will no longer be under the jurisdiction of the SSEC Board.

Mr. Chris Henning, a parent and audience member, asked the Committee the number of students served by the SSEC. Dr. Galo noted that 19 out of the 51 total students in Out of District programs are served by the SSEC.

- 6.6 The Committee received information from the SEPAC meeting held on December 14, 2016. Chair Liza O'Reilly noted that the SEPAC meeting of December 14, 2016 was posted as a full School Committee meeting so that any member of the School Committee could attend. In attendance were Edward Schreier, Carlos Da Silva, Kay Praschma, and Liza O'Reilly. The Committee members were there to listen, learn, and hear the concerns expressed by parents. The Committee heard Dr. Galo and Ms. Kurlan's presentations and the reports of the three SEPAC subcommittees.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that School Committee members in attendance at the meeting have identified next steps and begun to address the issues raised by parents. The Special Education Evaluation conducted by Walker and Associates (the "Walker Report") has also been distributed.

Edward Schreier, Chair of the Special Education Subcommittee, thanked those who attended the SEPAC Meeting and explained that one of the next steps outlined is to assign School Committee members to be a part of the SEPAC subcommittees to hear the discussions. Cynthia Galko will liaise with the Best Practices Subcommittee, Kay Praschma will liaise with the Transparency Subcommittee, and Edward Schreier will liaise with the Finance Subcommittee.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Committee will need to work with SEPAC to establish meeting schedules, tasks, deadlines, etc. to ensure that there is a productive dialogue and that everyone works within a transparent public process. Ms. O'Reilly reiterated that the School Committee remains committed to addressing these issues and involving the staff in the process.

Apart from the assignment of liaisons to SEPAC subcommittees, Ms. O'Reilly noted that Dr. LaBillois will make a revised Accountability Presentation focusing on the high needs/special education population and will work with SEPAC to explain the big picture relative to budget and share the process that the budget will go through.

Ms. O'Reilly shared that four correspondences were received. One correspondence was from Evan Sheehan and the Finance Subcommittee who sent materials from their presentation. Ms. O'Reilly noted that the email and materials were received and the Committee will respond in the future. The Special Education Subcommittee also received correspondence from Bryna Rogers, Jaime Kenney, and Holly Pilotte. All individuals received confirmation that their email was received.

The Committee received a question from the Ms. Jaime Kenney regarding the Walker Report and Ms. O'Reilly read an excerpt from a story in Sports Illustrated regarding Theo Epstein. Ms. O'Reilly noted that we can have a sum greater than the parts and remained hopeful that the SEPAC board, its members, the School Committee, and School Administration can work together as a team moving forward.

- 6.7 The Committee received notification of the overnight field trip of the HMS Grade 6 class to Camp Wing in Duxbury, MA from May 17 through May 19, 2017. Edward Schreier noted that there is a typo to be corrected in the date of the trip.
- 6.8 The Committee received notification of the appointment of Mark Mitchell, custodian at Hingham High School, effective December 6, 2016.

**7. Other items as may not reasonably be known 48 hours in advance of the meeting.** None.

**8. Subcommittee and Project Reports.**

Special Education Subcommittee: SPED activities reviewed

Community Outreach Subcommittee: Meeting coming up on January 3, 2017.

Long-Range Planning Subcommittee: Met earlier this week to discuss Capital Budget requests and will meet again 1<sup>st</sup> week in January.

Salary and Negotiations Subcommittee: Just kicked off negotiations with Unit A and the next meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2017.

**9. Adjournment.**

On a motion by Carol M. Falvey and seconded by Cynthia Galko,

It was

Voted: To Adjourn to Executive Session not to return to Regular Session, to discuss matters related to collective bargaining with HEA Unit A, the public discussion of which may be detrimental to the Committee's bargaining position.

Respectfully Submitted by:  
Cynthia Galko