

**Hopedale School Committee
Minutes of the Meeting of
Tuesday, September 8, 2020**

Members Present: Alysia Butler, Chair
Lori Hampsch, Vice Chair
Lisa Alberto
Jennifer McKeon
Kristi Brytowski

Also Present: Karen M. Crebase, Superintendent
Lynne Davis, School Accountant
Katelynn Brunt and Madison Sullivan, Student Council Representatives
Derek Atherton, Jr-Sr High School Principal
Karen Cosgrove, Pupil Personnel Services Director
Brian Miller, Memorial School Principal
Kristen Poisson, Bright Beginnings Center Principal
Brian Keyes, Board of Selectmen
Diana Schindler, Town Administrator
Mimi Kaplan and Kelly Brown, Green Communities Program Representatives

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law, GL chapter 30A, section 18, and the Governor's March 15 and August 7, 2020 Orders imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, the regular business meeting of the Hopedale School Committee was conducted via remote participation. Members of the Committee and the Superintendent participated in-person in the Media Center at the Jr-Sr High School. The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm under these provisions with a quorum present. She invited members of the public to monitor the meeting by using the information provided on the Town's website and announced that the meeting was being recorded and streaming live. A video of the meeting will be available on the Town website.

The Superintendent welcomed Selectman Brian Keyes and Town Administrator Diana Schindler for the discussions regarding the Green Communities Designation Program and FY21 budget.

1. Agenda Items -

Green Communities Town Designation Information and Discussion: The representatives from Green Communities provided an overview of the program, the grants that are available to designated towns, the timeline for Hopedale's application for acceptance into the program, and how the schools would be impacted if Hopedale is awarded the designation. With regard to the requirement that Hopedale reduce energy consumption by 20% in five years, a third party would conduct an energy audit at the schools to determine a baseline and offer recommendations for reducing energy use. Schools would also be subject to a fuel efficient vehicle policy which would require new purchases of non-exempt vehicles to meet fuel efficiency guidelines. It was noted that large vans and buses are exempt and that our current non-exempt smaller vans are grandfathered. The Superintendent and Town Administrator will collaborate on the submission.

2. Committee Reports -

Committee on Budget: Update on School Budget- The Superintendent briefly reviewed the FY21 budget process to date and the current status of the Reopening Plan, including purchases, hiring, upgrades, and other COVID-related expenditures which are being funded with CARES Act resources or federal and state grants. Ms. Schindler sought the school's and community's support for Open Space and Master Plan initiatives that are being undertaken by the Town.

Override Vote for the Town- The Superintendent reminded voters of the override ballot being held on September 15th and emphasized the critical challenges that the school system will face without approval.

3. Minutes of August 25, 2020 - Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. McKeon, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of August 25, 2020.

4. Student Representatives' Report – Jr.-Sr. High School: Katelynn Brunt and Madison Sullivan reported that several fall events have been postponed until the spring rather than being cancelled, including Homecoming, Teacher Tea and the STUCO Lock-In. Class officer elections for Grade 7 and the first STUCO meeting of the year will be held virtually.

5. Superintendent's Comments – The Superintendent reported that staff returned to the school buildings on August 31st and that she held her traditional opening day meeting virtually. She reviewed the safety and health protocols that are in place, including social distancing signs, PPE, plexiglass desk shields, hallway protocols and the hiring of temporary staff to replace staff who requested to work remotely. Work is being completed on staffing plans, class lists, and schedules in preparation for the students' return to the buildings on September 17th. Technology devices for staff and students are being received, configured and distributed. The Superintendent reported that 20% of staff have requested to work remotely and 84% of students have chosen to return to in-person instruction through the hybrid model.

6. Response to Superintendent's Comments – A brief discussion followed regarding the anticipated delivery dates for devices that are on backorder. The Chair thanked the administration for their efforts and asked families to remain patient and flexible.

7. Financial Items/Budget -

- **Monthly Report of Accounts Payable Warrants:** The Committee reviewed the recent warrant report for FY 19, FY20 and FY21 as presented by Mrs. Davis. Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. Brytowski, the members unanimously voted to ratify the payment of one FY19 accounts payable warrant dated August 13, 2020 in the amount of \$1,517.83; one FY20 accounts payable warrant dated August 13, 2020 in the amount of \$436.23; and three FY21 accounts payable warrants dated August 4 and 6 (two), in the amount of \$145,007.33.
- **Monthly Reports of Payroll Warrants:** Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. McKeon, the members unanimously voted to ratify the payment of one FY20 payroll warrant dated August 13, 2020 in the amount of \$160,680.85 and two FY21 payroll warrants dated August 13 and 27, 2020 in the amount of \$150,239.59.
- **Monthly Budget Reports:** Mrs. Davis presented the monthly budget reports for August 2020. There was a brief discussion regarding the deficit in the long-term substitute account which will be rectified as soon as those expenses are allocated to the appropriate grant.
- **Warrants for Signature:** There were no warrants distributed for signature. Mrs. Davis will prepare a rotating schedule for members to approve warrants on a bi-weekly basis in the office.
- **Acceptance of Donation for Ventilation Upgrade:** Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. McKeon, the Committee unanimously accepted the anonymous donation of state-of-the-art GPS ionization units that will be installed at Memorial Elementary School and the Jr.-Sr. High School to insure clean air in the classrooms.

8. Committee Reports (continued)-

- **Committee on Policy:** The Superintendent presented a first draft of Policy **EBCFA-Face Coverings** as recommended by the Policy Committee. It provides guidance on the requirements for face coverings on school grounds and in the buildings and has been aligned to the Reopening Plan. The term “guardian” will be incorporated into the final draft to be presented for adoption at the next meeting.
- **Committee on Public Relations:** The Chair offered a proposal for the Committee to establish an official Twitter account to share information with the community. A discussion followed regarding other available communication methods, including Facebook, the district website, and email; and whether

comments should be permitted. By consensus, the members agreed to create a Twitter account and to review its effectiveness going forward. At this time, it will be managed by the Committee Chair.

9. Agenda Items (continued):

- **Opening of School Reports:** Mr. Atherton, Mr. Miller and Mrs. Poisson reported on the return of staff to their buildings on August 31st. All shared the enthusiasm, spirit of collaboration, and emphasis on safety throughout the buildings as staff prepared for the return of students and the beginning of instruction. Protocols for exiting, entering and travelling through the buildings were reviewed, as well as professional development opportunities, the planning for parent meetings, and the availability of PPE, outdoor spaces, and the introduction of new technologies.
- **Board of Health Joint Meeting Update:** The Chair reported on the joint Board of Health/School Committee meeting on September 2nd which served as a public forum for public questions and comments.
- **Bus Fees Discussion:** The Superintendent recommended a revision to the current school bus fee structure to reflect the reduced days of in-school instruction for students under the hybrid model and the financial challenges facing many families. Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. Brytowski, the Committee unanimously adopted the recommendation of Ms. Crebase and set a school bus fee of \$80, with a family cap of \$160, for the period from September 16th through December 31st which represents 40% of the school year. At the November meeting, members will consider the fee for the balance of the school year. Families will be invited to request a reimbursement if they have already paid the previously established fee, but need not do so.
- **Superintendent Goals:** The Superintendent began an initial discussion of her goals based on those which were carried over from the previous year. In addition, she will add a comprehensive goal based on the Reopening Plan. She will submit her final goal statement in October.
- **School Committee Goals:** The Chair presented the Committee's goals from the previous year and recommended that the October meeting include a workshop session to set their goals for the upcoming school year.

10. Correspondence –There were no items of correspondence to review.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 6, 2020.

Adjourn to Executive Session- The Chair announced the need to enter executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation since an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto and seconded by Mrs. Hampsch, the members voted by roll call vote to enter executive session for the stated purposes as follows: Mrs. Alberto-yes; Mrs. Brytowski- yes; Mrs. McKeon-yes; Mrs. Hampsch-yes and Mrs. Butler-yes.. The Chair stated that the Committee would not be reconvening in public session and declared the meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne McGuane, Recording Secretary
APPROVED: October 6, 2020