

**Hopedale School Committee
Minutes of the Meeting of
Tuesday, February 2, 2021**

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

Also Present: Karen M. Crebase, Superintendent
Adam Banayan, School Committee Student Representative
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

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. The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 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. Members of the public are welcome to email questions to schoolcommittee@hopedaleschools.org. A video of the meeting will be available on the Town website.

1. Minutes of January 5, 2021 - Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto and seconded by Mrs. Hampsch, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of January 5, 2021.

2. Student Representatives' Report – Jr.-Sr. High School: Katelynn Brunt and Madison Sullivan reported on general council meetings, fundraising, a food drive, Spirit Week and an upcoming virtual retreat.

3. Superintendent's Comments – The Superintendent reported that there have been seventy positive COVID-19 cases among students and staff since September. She invited the community to view the chart on the district webpage which reflects current positive cases and total cases for staff and students at each building. With regard to spring MCAS testing, Ms. Crebase reported that assessments for grades 3 through 8 will be reduced and that competency determinations for the Class of 2021 will be modified. As a member of the Hopedale Master Plan Committee, the Superintendent reported on recent meetings and recommended that interested residents visit envisionHopedale.com. Information will be provided in the future as the Board of Health finalizes plans for school staff vaccinations and as new stimulus funding is received to supplement operating costs.

4. Response to Superintendent's Comments – Mrs. Hampsch expressed her appreciation for the Superintendent's participation in developing the Town's master plan. With regard to questions regarding the spring MCAS, the Superintendent stated that she will share additional information when it is finalized by DESE.

5. Financial Items/Budget -

- **Monthly Report of Accounts Payable Warrants:** The Committee reviewed the warrant report. Upon a motion by Mrs. Hampsch which was seconded by Mrs. Brytowski, the members unanimously voted to ratify the payment of three FY21 accounts payable warrants dated January 7 (two) and 21, 2021 in the amount of \$306,294.00.

- **Monthly Report of Payroll Warrants:** Upon a motion by Mrs. Hampsch which was seconded by Mrs. Brytowski, the members unanimously voted to ratify the payment of two payroll warrants dated January 14 and 28, 2021 in the amount of \$900,682.50.
- **Monthly Budget Reports:** The members reviewed the monthly budget report for January 2021.
- **Warrants for Signature:** There were no warrants distributed for signature.
- **Approval of Donation:** Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto, which was seconded by Mrs. Hampsch, the Committee unanimously approved a donation in the amount of \$970 from RJ Gallerani and Son Building and Remodeling for the purchase of girls basketball uniforms.
- **Declaration of Surplus:** Upon a motion by Mrs. Alberto which was seconded by Mrs. McKeon, the Committee unanimously voted to accept the recommendation of Mrs. Davis to declare the school's 2006 Ford Freestar van as surplus.

6. Committee Reports-

- **Committee on Policy:** Mrs. McKeon reported that policies ID, IKE, GCA, JRA, IHBG, EEA, EC and JLC have been reviewed with no recommendation for revisions. She also presented eight policies for a First Reading:
EBC-S Policy on COVID Related Issues; IC/ICA School Year/School Calendar; JIE Pregnant Students; JLCC Communicable Diseases; ECA Buildings and Grounds Security; IIB Class Size; EEAG Student Transportation in Private Vehicles; and IHBF Homebound Instruction
 The revisions include updated language and, with respect to Policy IIB, the addition of administrative flexibility. By consensus, the members agreed to move the policies forward for a Second Reading.
- **Committee on Budget:** Mrs. Hampsch reported that the members of the subcommittee met on January 19, 2021 to begin analysis of the proposed FY 2022 budget. They also attended a Board of Selectmen/Finance Committee meeting on January 21, 2021 at which potential salary increases and health insurance cost increases were discussed.
- **Committee on Public Relations:** This item was passed over.

7. Agenda Items:

- **School Highlight- Preschool Teacher Martha Gosselin:** Bright Beginnings Center Principal Kristen Poisson introduced Mrs. Gosselin. Mrs. Gosselin teaches in a full-day in-person pre-kindergarten integrated classroom and serves as the building mentor. Her foundation for providing successful instruction for her students is to build relationships, connections, trust and shared positive experiences. Mrs. Gosselin shared photographs and videos of typical activities at the preschool including tent-time, centers, outside play, circle time, and social skills development.
- **Presentation of FY22 Budget:** The Superintendent reported that the district has successfully worked within the constraints of the FY 2021 two-percent budget reduction (-\$252,898) due to no cost-of-living raises, savings for out-of-district remote learning, grants, participation in BICO, and transportation savings. She reviewed the benefits of a Hopedale education and noted the comparatively low per pupil expenditure while providing programs that are recognized on the national and state levels. An explanation of the district's revolving accounts, including school choice funding, and a 5-year historical review of the school budget were presented. The Superintendent explained that the FY 2022 budget will require an increase due to contractual obligations, special education mandates, reorganization of the technology and transportation departments, general needs, building staffing additions and the restoration of cuts due to the Town's FY 2021 deficit. The increase is anticipated to be 6.13% which equates to an increase of \$759,372 for a total request of \$13,145,372. A discussion followed regarding the increased team chair position and the impact reliance on school choice funding can have on the budget.
- **Strategic Plan Input and Update:** The Superintendent presented a timeline for reviewing and developing the 2021-2024 Strategic District Plan which will be completed in August 2021. The Committee reviewed the current Mission, Vision, Core Values and Theory of Action. They also reviewed the Massachusetts Planning and Implementation Framework for developing a multi-year plan. Specific strategic objectives will be discussed at upcoming meetings. The Superintendent noted that the Committee may schedule a workshop session to allow more detailed discussion of the plan as it develops.

- **Greener Community Designation and Update to Vehicle Efficiency Policy:** The Superintendent reported that a modified version of the Greener Community's Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy required approval. Action was temporarily passed over while the specific language was located. The Committee reviewed the proposed language and voted unanimously, on a motion by Mrs. Hampsch and seconded by Mrs. McKeon, to adopt the revised policy.
- **Mid-Year Superintendent's Progress Report:** The Superintendent reported on the progress made to date on her goals for the current school year: to oversee contract negotiations for Unit A and Unit C [Professional Practice], to develop and implement a Reopening Plan that allows students to return to school for in-person learning and develop a Remote Academy for staff and students who are unable to return to in-person learning [Student Learning], and to revisit the district strategic plan and make updates [District Improvement]. Ms. Crebase provided an update on Unit A collective bargaining negotiations and preliminary Unit C collective bargaining discussions. She also reviewed the details and current status of the reopening plan, including the reopening memorandum of agreement with the union, the availability of PPE, technology distribution and upgrades, staffing, professional development, the Remote Learning Academy, and the implementation of the hybrid model. Also, as reported earlier in the meeting, the process for updating the strategic plan has begun.
- **Mid-Year School Committee Progress Report:** The Chair shared members' comments on each of seven goals which focus on the areas of professional development, policy, community outreach, collective bargaining, budgeting, strategic plan development, and evaluations. Professional development opportunities have been available through the Massachusetts Association of School Committees; the Policy Committee has been working diligently to update and review the policy manual; a Twitter account has been created to increase outreach; and negotiations, budgeting and strategic planning are in process. A final evaluation will be submitted in the spring.
- **Review of 2020-2021 School Calendar:** The Committee reviewed the current school calendar, as updated on December 4, 2020. No additional revisions were recommended at this time. The Superintendent shared her intent to balance traditional snow days, which will be made up as in-person days, with remote learning snow days. An analysis of each cohort's instruction modes will be conducted by the end of the year to insure equity.
- **School Year Calendar Review for 2021-2022:** The members reviewed a draft calendar for the upcoming school year which assumes full in-person learning will begin on August 31, 2021. It has been shared with the union leadership and administrators and will become a monthly agenda item for discussion until approved.
- **Enrollment Projections:** The Superintendent presented charts reflecting the district's projected enrollment by grade for the upcoming school year, as well as historical data reflecting school choice and resident enrollments for kindergarten. She noted that registration for the 2021-2022 kindergarten class is being held this month.
- **Enrollment Data:** The Committee reviewed a chart of all enrollments by grade level for the current school year.
- **School Choice Data:** The Superintendent presented charts by grade and by town indicating current incoming and outgoing school choice enrollments, a graph from DESE showing Hopedale's school choice enrollment trends from 2011 through 2020, and data for receipts/expenditures for incoming and outgoing school choice students from 1996 through 2020. Currently, Hopedale is receiving 171 students and sending 36 students to other districts under the school choice program. Applications for next school year will be available on the district website on March 1, 2021.
- **Winter Sports Coach Update:** The Superintendent presented the updated list of winter coaches as follows: Boys Basketball- Varsity Coach, Tony Cordani; JV Coach, Ed Healey; JH Coach, Tim Johnson.
Girls Basketball- Varsity Coach, Corey Phillips; JV Coach, Shelley Hynes; JH Coach, Josh Euglow.
Ice Hockey- Varsity Coach, Mike Macquarrie; JV Coach, Mike Snyder.
- **Pooled Testing Initiative for Schools:** The Superintendent presented DESE's pooled testing initiative which funds a 6-week in-school COVID-19 testing program for districts that choose to participate. The program can be continued at the district's expense. Tests are administered to specific pools of students and staff each week to determine positive cases within each pool. Positive results require additional

testing. Schools are responsible for testing logistics, test administration, data entry and software management. A discussion followed regarding program costs, implementation challenges, manpower needs, consent of families, and benefits. The Superintendent reported that she has filed the district's interest in the program with DESE but has not yet committed to participating.

- **Update on Reopening Plan:** The district continues to review data on in-school virus transmission, student and staff positivity, staff availability, student attendance, town positivity rates and state positivity rates. As decisions to increase in-person learning are evaluated, major areas of focus are a staff vaccination plan, expansion plans, and collective bargaining. Consideration will be given to the ongoing safety needs of the school community and impacts on services such as transportation and providing lunches. A discussion followed regarding the decrease of cases in the community, the frequency of administrative meetings to review reopening, negotiations for a memorandum of agreement, the availability of PPE, and the Board of Health's preparations to distribute vaccines to staff when received. Reopening plans had been stalled during the rise of positive cases in the community but are being revisited in light of recently improved data. The Reopening Advisory Board will meet on February 23rd.
- **Revisit Annual Review and Approval of Fees for BBC:** The preschool fee proposal from the previous meeting was revisited for approval. Mrs. Poisson recommended that tuition fees remain at their current level after a comparative analysis of rates in neighboring towns. A discussion followed regarding the program's anticipated deficit and the need for supplemental funding due to limited enrollment during the pandemic. Upon a motion by Mrs. McKeon and seconded by Mrs. Hampsch, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the fees as presented at the previous meeting.
- **Discussion of Agenda Format:** The Chair opened a discussion on changing the format of School Committee meetings and referenced suggestions submitted by a resident. Proposed changes include adding topics for Old Business and New Business, moving Audience to Citizens earlier in the meeting, separating discussions on major issues between consecutive meetings, and allowing constituent contributions during discussion of agenda items. Members discussed the benefits of considering resident viewpoints during deliberations while also recognizing the purpose of the monthly meetings to conduct the business of the Committee. A suggestion was offered that community forums be used to address issues of interest to the public. By consensus, the members determined to leave the agenda format in its current form and recognized that each agenda's structure and topics are at the discretion of the Chair.

8. **Correspondence** – There were no items of correspondence to review.

9. **Audience to Citizens** - The Recording Secretary was asked to read public comments submitted via the School Committee's email account. Public comments were submitted by Kate Guertin, Paul Poisson, Aubrie Rojee, Alyssa and Anthony Spavento, and Melissa Rogers-Obal. After the comments were read, additional questions were submitted by constituents. It was determined that questions submitted to the Committee during the meeting would be answered in writing by the Superintendent at a later time. Each submitted public comment has been added to the official record of the meeting.

Adjourn to Executive Session- The Chair announced the need for an executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Hopedale Education Association since an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining 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 purpose 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 8:37 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne McGuane, Recording Secretary
APPROVED: March 2, 2021