



HAMILTON-WENHAM
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
5 SCHOOL STREET, WENHAM, MA 01984 · TEL. 978-468-5310

School Committee Meeting: Workshop

Buker Multipurpose Room

Meeting Recorded and available via HWCAM & YouTube

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Present:

Michelle Bailey, Chairperson
Michelle Horgan, Vice Chairperson
Dana Allara, Secretary
Anna Siedzik, Vice Secretary
Peter Wolczik
David Polito

Also Present:

Mary Beth Banios, District Superintendent
Vincent Leone, Assistant Superintendent to Finance and Administration
Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary (remote attendance)
Thomas Geary, Director of Maintenance, Facilities, and Operations
Dorothy Presser, MASC Representative
Chris McGrath, New Superintendent Induction Program Coach

1. Call to Order

6:00 PM

With a quorum present, Ms. Bailey calls the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. This meeting is being held in-person, however, it is also being broadcast live via HWCAM, and will be made available for later viewing via [HWCAM](#) and the [YouTube channel](#).

2. Pledge of Allegiance

All in attendance rise for the pledge of allegiance.

3. Norms, Protocols, and Procedures of Effective School Committees

[Exhibit](#)

Dorothy Presser, MASC Representative, provides an introduction and overview of her presentation and work with the School Committee this evening. She reviews the major themes found throughout the sample *School Committee/Superintendent Operating Protocols* document, as shown in the attached [exhibit](#). Ms. Presser also reviews the operating protocols previously adopted by the Hamilton - Wenham Regional School Committee for the 2020/2021 school year. Ms. Presser comments on some of the qualities of effective School Committees that may require additional focus from this particular School Committee.

There is a brief discussion regarding the process of researching, deciding, and implementing changes to the district's Remote Learning Platform.

Ms. Presser asks members of the School Committee to write down the two changes they believe are most instrumental in becoming a more effective School Committee. Responses are read aloud and a discussion follows centered around common overarching themes and strategy to further develop and refine the qualities discussed. Ideas include:

- Clearly developing and defining shared goals;

- Trust between Superintendent and School Committee;
- Assuming positive intent;
- Communication (including transparency, collaboration, developing trust, consistency, showing respect, allowing dissenting/minority viewpoints)
- Honor individual member perspectives;

There is a lengthy conversation surrounding the barriers that prevent the School Committee from functioning effectively in a collaborative and mutually respectful manner. Analyzing the past few months of School Committee meetings, members dissect the interactions and situations that demonstrate the barriers in place. School Committee members agree that the majority of issues result from work needed in communications. The School Committee agrees to:

- Work on improving communication between meetings;
- Develop a communication strategy with the public;
- Develop a procedure for the Superintendent to inform the School Committee of issues they need to know about.

There is discussion regarding the concern that School Committee members are not heard when they suggest further discussion around certain topics. There is ongoing discussion surrounding the process involved when requesting that an item be added to a future meeting’s agenda.

Ms. Presser recommends that the *Policy Subcommittee* review the protocols and present any revisions to the School Committee. The Policy Subcommittee (Ms. Siedzik, Ms. Horgan and Mr. Wolczik) agrees to review the samples provided and present their feedback/recommendation at a future School Committee meeting. If School Committee members have specific feedback they would like to include, that will be emailed to Ms. Presser, who will then bring it before the *Policy Subcommittee*.

4. Superintendent’s Initial Entry Plan Findings

[Exhibit](#)

Superintendent Banios reviews the information detailed in her 10/06/2020 *Initial Entry Plan Findings*, as detailed in the [exhibit](#). She cautions School Committee members that the district is fast approaching crisis status, both through a “disconnect among adults in the district” and through “the operational organization of the HWRSD.” The four (4) goals detailed in [exhibit](#) and discussed at the meeting are detailed during the meeting discussions and summarized below:

Focus

- Action Item 1: The superintendent will identify a process, funding source, and timeline to develop a 5-year strategic plan for the district.
- Action Item 2: School committee workshops will be scheduled approximately every six weeks and an annual work plan will be developed and implemented.

Capacity

- Action Item 1: Employ an HR consulting group to design efficient processes and procedures to effectively hire, on-board, and support the employees of the district.
- Action Item 2: Establish a team of educators, led by a facilitator knowledgeable about local districts and best practices in curriculum and instruction, to visit/survey five high-functioning schools at each level (elementary, middle, and high) in order to learn how curriculum, instruction and assessment (CIA) leadership is structured in these districts. Once the study is complete, the team will make a recommendation to the superintendent around a CIA model to be funded in the HWRSD budget for FY ’22.

- Action Item 3: Employ an HR consulting group to define current responsibilities of central office positions and to work with the superintendent to recommend revisions to the central office structure that improves efficiency, addresses capacity issues, and is responsive to the financial constraints of the district.

Superintendent Banios explains that action items 2 and 3 need to occur before budget development.

Professionalism

- Action Item 1: Identify a clear process and procedures for additions to school committee agendas..
- Action Item 2: All school committee meeting agendas and exhibits will be published in final form by the Friday prior to the regularly scheduled Wednesday committee meetings by the superintendent after consultation with the chair and vice chair.
- Action Item 3: School committee members create and adhere to clear operating protocols.
- Action Item 4: Clear processes and procedures for resolving concerns will be identified and communicated to parents, faculty and staff, and school committee members.

There is discussion regarding the appropriate manner by which to raise issues in School Committee meetings. Superintendent Banios stresses the importance of communication with the School Committee's Chair and Vice-Chair in order to ensure both are adequately informed about the future meetings' agendas.

Foundational Literacy

- Action Item 1: The special education director will work with the team to ensure clear criteria for placement on an IEP and various programs within the department.
- Action Item 2: During the 2020-21 school year, district educators will explore best practices and successful models of Tier 2 reading intervention programs which will inform an implementation of an enhanced Tier 2 reading intervention program for the 2021-22 school year.
- Action Item 3: All K-3 educators will receive training on the foundational skills and instructional strategies related to reading acquisition.

Superintendent Banios explains that a strategic plan will likely take no less than a year to finalize, however the School Committee and the District as a whole cannot go for a full year without clearly defined goals. She notes that the document is a very rough draft, but should give a sense of how to structure the Superintendent and School Committee collaboration going forward until such a Strategic Plan is finalized.

Superintendent Banios reviews four specific requests she has made of the School Committee, included at the bottom of page 3 of her *Initial Entry Plan Findings* and detailed below:

1. Follow a work plan model for agenda building and participate in on-going workshops.
2. Direct any concerns that you may receive to the appropriate district personnel.
3. Work with the board of selectmen in Hamilton and Wenham to provide town CARES funds to the school district to offset substantial COVID costs to the district and to free up needed funding.
4. Vote to approve a .5 elementary special education teacher to address testing backlog due to COVID. This position will be formally presented to the Committee at 10/21/20 meeting.

There is discussion regarding the previous district layoffs and the need to hire additional personnel and contractors to fill that gap now. Discussion regarding Superintendent's request for approval of a .5 elementary special teacher on assignment, including past School Committee motions¹ and Superintendent's

¹ See 09/02/2020 School Committee meeting minutes, where a motion was made and passed unanimously, to approve the one-year high school special education position as described by Superintendent Mary Beth Banios.

action after such a motion. Superintendent Banios explains that the teacher initially selected for this position was moved back to the classroom; a priority determined and agreed upon by the Leadership Team. There is ongoing discussion regarding the communication surrounding this position specifically, and the wider concerns surrounding communication that it represents. A lengthy discussion follows surrounding School Committee members feeling heard; addressing and acknowledging community concerns; best practice in professionalism and effectiveness to communicate community concerns; etc.

Mr. Polito notes his concerns surrounding the Superintendent's **Professionalism** Goal and associated action items, as detailed in the 10/06/2020 *Initial Entry Plan Findings* ([exhibit](#) and detailed above). Mr. Polito notes that the professionalism goal is pointed directly at the School Committee members, and such pointed criticism and direction from the Superintendent is a backwards approach. In addition, Mr. Polito states that he and Dr. Harvey developed a website tool to direct visitors to the appropriate party to contact, a tool that is now absent from the District's website.

Discussion regarding legal and professional guidance surrounding the timeliness of publicly posting the School Committee meeting agenda. Ms. Presser confirms that it is not an Open Meeting Law violation to add items to the agenda after the agenda has been posted.

Mr. Polito inquires as to why the work plan model is being presented as a new idea, when he has observed this plan in place for the School Committee and District on a number of past prior occasions including within the last six months. There is discussion regarding obstacles the district faces, including the emergency orders, budgeting concerns, staffing shortfalls, etc. Superintendent Banios explains that it is in the District's best interest to move from crisis mode to a clear, concise and purposeful planning mode. Further discussion regarding what the work plan enables the district, School Committee, and Superintendent to accomplish.

There is discussion regarding development and implementation of the goals Superintendent Banios has outlined, with a discussion also surrounding the formatting of those goals as they relate to the Superintendent Evaluation process. There is a discussion regarding the feasibility of the timeline outlined, with Superintendent Banios explaining that the document is in draft form, and will be finalized with more accurate dates in the future.

There is a brief discussion regarding the use of the Town's Care Fund acts, as referenced in the Superintendent's request #3 to the School Committee. Further discussion regarding Towns' intentions; budget season; budget concerns; tax-payers' concerns; conflict and/or alignment between towns and District; etc.

Superintendent Banios will work with the *Policy Subcommittee* in order to incorporate the changes discussed this evening. The *Policy Subcommittee* will present the 2nd reading of this document at the next School Committee meeting, 10/21/2020 at 7:00 PM.

5. ~~School Committee Workplan 20-21~~

6. Select Delegate to MASC Conference

Ms. Bailey explains that the MASC Conference will be held virtually on Saturday, November 7th, 2020. A delegate appointed to represent the Hamilton - Wenham Regional School District will attend the conference and represent the School Committee in voting for the proposed MASC resolutions.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE NOMINATE DAVID POLITO TO SERVE AS DELEGATE FROM THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT DURING THE SATURDAY, 11/07/2020 MASC CONFERENCE.

**MOTION by Dana Allara; NOMINATION ACCEPTED BY DAVID POLITO.
MOTION PASSES unanimously through vote of six (6) members present.**

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE NOMINATE MICHELLE HORGAN TO SERVE AS ALTERNATIVE DELEGATE FROM THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT DURING THE SATURDAY, 11/07/2020 MASC CONFERENCE.

**MOTION by Dana Allara; NOMINATION ACCEPTED BY MICHELLE HORGAN.
MOTION PASSES unanimously through vote of six (6) members present.**

7. Vote on Upcoming School Committee Meeting Schedule

[Exhibit](#)

Discussion regarding the changes to the 2020/2021 School Committee Meeting Schedule (*revisions as of 10/04/2020*) which are primarily based on accommodating school breaks and the Annual Town Meetings of Hamilton and Wenham.

Ms. Siedzik notes that the School Committee needs to meet twice a month in order to comply with current policy. The changes to the meeting calendar will lengthen the time between meetings, and in some cases, move the School Committee out of compliance with such policy. Though Ms. Siedzik is uncomfortable with the changes, and believes the changes are a disservice to the community, she concedes to the changes in the interest of effective and efficient meetings.

Discussion regarding the scheduling of both the *Policy/Legislative* and *Negotiations Subcommittee* meetings. Discussion regarding scheduling School Committee meetings (will typically occur Wednesdays at 7:00 PM), School Committee workshops (will typically occur Tuesdays at 6:00 PM), and keeping a somewhat consistent schedule moving forward.

Discussion surrounding the importance of all 7 members attending the School Committee Workshop meetings, with Ms. Siedzik asking that Ms. Metternick confirms her availability when she is available to do so. There is brief discussion regarding the structure of meetings, and how to host meetings (virtually versus in-person). School Committee members agree that holding meetings over Zoom allows a significant increase in public participation.

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPROVE THE 10/04/2020 REVISION OF THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED IN THE [EXHIBIT](#), WITH THE FOLLOWING CHANGES, AS DISCUSSED THIS EVENING:

- **MOVE THE WEDNESDAY, 02/10/21 MEETING TO THURSDAY, 02/11/21**
- **ADD A REGULAR SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 04/28/21**

FURTHER, THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE WILL HOLD ALL SCHEDULED SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS REMOTELY VIA ZOOM, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETINGS DESIGNATED AS SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOPS, (CURRENTLY SCHEDULED: 10/06/20, 11/10/20, 01/12/21, 06/16/21), WHICH WILL BE HELD IN-PERSON WHILE OBSERVING SOCIAL DISTANCING AND ALL OTHER HEALTH/SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS.

**MOTION by Dana Allara; SECONDED by David Polito.
MOTION PASSES unanimously through vote of six (6) members present.**

The next School Committee meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Wednesday, October 21st at 7:00 PM. An agenda and link to this 10/21/2020 School Committee Zoom meeting will be circulated as soon as available.

8. Vote to Adjourn

I MOVE THAT THE HAMILTON - WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE ADJOURN THE 10/06/2020 SCHOOL COMMITTEE WORKSHOP MEETING AT 9:44 PM.

**MOTION by Michelle Horgan; SECONDED by Anna Siedzik.
MOTION PASSES unanimously through vote of six (6) members present.**

Respectfully submitted November 22nd, 2020 by Mahala Lettvin, Recording Secretary.

**Public access will be available through HWCam. This meeting will be available on our local cable channel, HWCam, and HWCam.org, for review a few hours after the meeting has ended. Members of the public can access the meeting via YouTube HWRSD live stream link the next day.