

Approved

**Hudson School Committee  
Open Session Minutes**

**Meeting Date:** March 24, 2020

**Location:** 155 Aspley Street

Members present: Glenn Maston, Steven Smith, Nina Ryan, and Michele Tousignant Dufour

Members Participating Remotely: Adam Tracy, Matthew McDowell, and Rebecca Weksner

Members absent: none

Others present: Dr. Marco C. Rodrigues, Superintendent

**I. Call the Meeting to Order: 7:03 p.m.**

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chair, Glenn Maston. Mr. Maston asked for each member to state they were present. Mr. Maston asked that members state their name before they speak. He also said that each vote would be roll call.

**II Approval of Minutes: None**

**III. Public Participation:**

Mr. Maston stated there would be no public participation due to the current Covid 19 situation and its impact on gatherings. He went on to say if this situation continues, they would find a way to include public participation. He said there were a number of communications received with feedback regarding the enrichment activities and communication from the staff to families. Dr. Rodrigues would provide more information later in the meeting. There has also been some feedback related to the budget. Mr. Maston stated he would bring this feedback up when we got to the discussion and approval of the budget later in the meeting.

**IV. Reports and Presentations**

**Report of the Superintendent: COVID19 Update**

Dr. Rodrigues gave a summary of the COVID19 pandemic's impact on the closing of schools.

He stated that there has been an impact on all of us. One of the reasons for confusion in protocols is the fact that the education system is one of the most regulated entities. There are a large number of federal and state regulations. Even though local control is with the district, there are regulations we must follow. Additionally, there has been a wait to get answers to what we have in terms of flexibility.

Hudson has a wide range of students and services. These services are bound and cannot be changed without approval from agencies. There are consequences to districts for breaking these rules. The feedback we have received from parents consist of 9 emails. The recurring themes are communication from teachers to students and families, and that the enrichment activities are not enough to keep students engaged. The guidelines we currently have for material given to students during this time include no new learning and equity for all students. At the elementary school level, the coaches looked at skills learned thus far and created activities where the students could practice those skills. At the middle and high school levels, we looked at resources that are more internet driven since the students have

chrome books. There is another batch of activities currently being created. Additionally, the state has released a large number of internet driven resources.

There have been conversations and disputes about what other districts are doing. Each district is doing what they believe is best. Some districts have done more than others and this is causing conflict. The fact that we need guidelines for work and a platform for communication of teachers with students and families was a major point of conversation with the commissioner. MASS, MASC, MTA and AFT are in conversations with the commissioner. They are discussing the best way to complete this platform. Once we have the new guidelines, we will incorporate them into the way teachers connect with students and families. Dr. Rodrigues went on to say that we continue to work internally on what we believe is appropriate given the boundaries of what we are allowed to do. Within Special Education, many parameters are now put on hold. Additionally, we also have ELL and AP students to consider. Dr. Rodrigues stated that his job is to protect the students and the district. He stated the need to make sure that the district does not implement anything we can become liable for later. He made note that it has been a week and currently we have a couple of more weeks of closure. He stated that the district is talking about what things look like if this ends on the 6<sup>th</sup> and if it is extended beyond that date.

The principals and curriculum directors are working with teachers on a variety of work related to the District Improvement Plan and the potential extension of the closure.

The Governor filed legislation today on flexibility on the following areas that affect us:

- Extends the filing deadline for the Student Opportunity Act
- Allows the commissioner to waive the high school competency determination for seniors
- Allows the commissioner to have flexibility to delay or cancel MCAS testing

We are still waiting for decisions on other things including paying vendors, hourly employees not providing services, and educator evaluations.

With respect to food service, we are a district that falls into the cohort of less than 50% eligible free and reduced meals, so we are not eligible for reimbursement at this time. The commissioner is working with the USDA for flexibility to support districts. He has said to start providing meals. We are offering meals for pickup at Quinn Middle School to our free and reduced families. We have asked Safe Routes to Schools to plot the locations of our free and reduced families and have added three new locations for meal distribution, Robinsons Hardware, Cherry Street Field, and the First Methodist Church. We will have busses travel to each of these locations for distribution. We are currently preparing another communication for families.

The district buildings are closed with the exception of Quinn Middle School and Apsley Street. Len Belli and his department have shut off those buildings. Additionally, the buildings have been completely sanitized and there is no access.

The nursing staff has donated all their masks to hospitals and thermometers to first responders.

The NEASC visit to the High School is currently scheduled for May 3. Mr. Medeiros, principal at Hudson High School, has been in contact with NEASC and has been told that if there is an extension beyond April 7, the visit will be postponed to the fall.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that he understands the frustration but affirmed we are doing the best we can with the regulations we have at this point.

Mr. Maston asked about the status of Kindergarten registration. Dr. Rodrigues informed the committee that we have contacted all of the families with appointments scheduled. We have sent registration packets to them and will complete the registration through the mail and with follow up phone calls.

Mr. Smith expressed thanks to Dr. Rodrigues for how he is managing this with the changing parameters in this unprecedented time.

Ms. Ryan asked where parents are able to find the student enrichment activities on the website. Dr. Rodrigues stated there is a link on the home page that brings them to a page with the activities and links to outside activities including the WGBH and PBS activities created for this purpose. Ms. Ryan stated that parents often go to their individual school and asked if we could mirror this information prominently on the individual school pages as well. Dr. Rodrigues stated he would check with Ellen Shuck and the technology department. Discussion ensued about additional activities located on various pages on each school websites. Dr. Rodrigues stressed the importance of a central communication plan so we have equity. We are working on it but we do not have the guidelines at this point and the major struggle is the platform for teacher communication. Discussion ensued about the process and having a central repository. Ms. Ryan stated that the one demographic that she has not heard about is the DCF population. Dr. Rodrigues reiterated that teachers are still mandated reporters and in the communication with families, staff needs to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that there needs to be protocols and parameters for teachers accessing students through various means, facebook, google meet etc.

Ms. Tousignant Dufour expressed that she would prefer to take our time in order to do things legally. She does not want to see the district hurt by litigation and having an increase in legal fees next year.

Mr. Smith asked if there has been any talk about whether the date will be extended. Dr. Rodrigues said there have been conversations with the commissioner about this. He went on to say that with the new restrictions ordered by the governor yesterday and the fact the numbers will escalate, he is waiting for an extension to be announced. He said parents are asking about MCAS, grades, GPA but we have no answers yet.

Dr. Weksner noted that there has to be an increased tolerance for uncertainty and it is important for us to provide as much certainty as possible. Additionally she stated that she thought the district should develop a robust social emotional connection. Dr. Weksner left the meeting at 7:45 pm.

Mr. McDowell asked about building the social emotional connection particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. He asked about virtual morning meetings. He asked if we are waiting for 100% of the population to have internet. Discussion ensued about what this looks like. Dr. Rodrigues stated we are still waiting on the parameters for teacher platform from DESE. Discussion ensued about zoom and google meet and frequency of meetings.

**Subcommittee Reports**

**Budget Subcommittee**

None

**Policy Subcommittee**

None

**Strategic Goals Subcommittee**

None

**Superintendent's Evaluation Subcommittee**

None

**Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee**

None

**Student Report**

None

V. **Matters for Discussion:**

- a) Old Business
- b) New Business

VI. **Matters for Action:**

- a) Old Business
- b) New Business

1. **Approval of FY21 Budget**

Dr. Rodrigues stated he was very happy with the budget and it reflects the needs of the district. He stated it is important to note that in current FY20 budget there were no cuts. He stated that this is unprecedented and a huge accomplishment. This was achieved through the stabilization plan and the District Improvement Plan, which focusses our priorities and actions. Dr. Rodrigues stated that resources next year will include the expenses for the Dual Language Program and additional staff where needed. We are adding staff while not increasing the budget very much. The expectation is whatever we budget in FY21 will be able to be spent and there will be no cuts. We are also expending \$480K before June to support FY21 expenses. Dr. Rodrigues complimented the budget team in terms of process and collaboration. The team looked critically at what is needed in the general expense line in order to provide funding for more staff.

Dr. Rodrigues spoke on the subject of expenditures for Out of District Special Education programs. He stated that this has decreased over time because we have been able to increase our internal capacity and have the ability to retain these students internally. Ms. Patricia Lange, Executive Director of Finance and Operations, made note of the increased investment on Professional Development and the Instructional Leadership Teams.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that the budget book includes all the data that was presented in the budget subcommittee meetings.

Dr. Rodrigues addressed questions on the Dual Language Program. Teaching staff for this program is cost neutral. The costs incurred are in professional development, instructional materials, and transportation. Transportation is an unknown at this time and we will not know what this looks like until we identify the cohorts. The worst case would be to add two busses, one to serve students from the Mulready district and the other to serve the students from the Forest district. Another opportunity would be to place students on busses that already go across elementary districts.

Discussion ensued about the benefits of learning two languages and potential improvement on student achievement.

Mr. Maston asked for clarification of funding sources for positions, in particular the difference between resource allocation and resource reallocation. Dr. Rodrigues stated that the resource allocation is new and a resource reallocation is moving the funding from one thing to another.

Mr. Smith asked about the English Language Learner and Special Education teachers that were originally to be determined but are now in the budget. He asked what when in to the decision. Dr. Rodrigues stated for the EL teacher, tbd at this point is where the teacher may be assigned based on a shift in student needs because of access testing and reclassification of students. The Special Education position is based on the language based program needs. This position could be based at 1 school or 2 schools depending on where the needs are.

Mr. Smith asked what went into the decision about the lunch monitor positions. Dr. Rodrigues stated that we looked at how we use our resources. When students have lunch, their teachers also have lunch. The cafeteria needs to be staffed so we are using other staff including paraprofessionals, school psychologists, and adjustment counselors. This staff could be running lunch bunch groups. If we have monitors, we can use the skilled personnel for other services.

Mr. Smith observed that we are addressing the larger Kindergarten classes we had this year with an additional grade 1 class next year. He also commented on the more collaborative process this year and thanked the budget team for their work.

Mr. Maston stated that there had been comments about the potential of an imbalance in the kindergarten classes with students moving over to Farley for the dual language program. Dr. Rodrigues said based on the numbers in the census we are projecting lower enrollment in kindergarten. Dr. Rodrigues stated at this point we do not know the impact yet. We will know once we have the 40 students in the dual language cohort.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that this is the first year with an increase in the October 1 number. This aligns with the fact that fewer students went to AMSA or Assabet.

Mr. Maston asked how we project the number of students we may lose to Assabet Valley or AMSA. Dr. Rodrigues stated that these projections are in alignment with the NESDEC report. We also look at the number of applicants to Assabet Valley. The state also provides us with numbers of students that have applied to charter schools.

Ms. Tousignant stated she is happy to send this budget book to the Board of Selectmen and stand behind it. She expressed her thanks to Dr. Rodrigues, Ms. Lange and their teams.

Mr. Tracy asked if we had any markers on what to watch for next budget due to the uncertainty of the Covid 19 virus and its economic impact. Dr. Rodrigues stated one of the things we are expecting is for more families will be reaching out to apply for free and reduced meals.

A motion to approve the FY21 Personnel Budget in the amount of \$33,361,014 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms.

Tousignant Dufour. The vote was taken by roll call

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|-----------------------|-----|
| Mr. Maston            | yes |
| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

A motion to approve the FY21 General Expense budget in the amount of \$ 6,719,446 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour. The vote was taken by roll call.

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| Mr. Maston            | yes |
| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

A motion to approve the FY21 Transportation budget in the amount of \$2,300,000 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by MS Tousignant Dufour. The vote was taken by roll call.

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| Mr. Maston            | yes |
| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

2. **Approval of contract with N&T Mechanical Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$244,256 for boiler replacement at Hudson High School.**

A motion to approve the contract with N & T Mechanical Contractors, Inc., in the amount of \$244,256 for the boiler replacement at Hudson High School was made by Ms. Tousignant Dufour and seconded by Mr. Smith. The vote was taken by roll call:

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| Mr. Maston | yes |
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Approved

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| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

3. **Approval of Reclassification of Funds**

A motion to approve the reclassification of funds as presented was made by Ms. Tousignant Dufour and seconded by Mr. Smith. The vote was taken by roll call:

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| Mr. Maston            | yes |
| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

VII. **Items of Interest to the School Committee**

Ms. Tousignant Dufour made note of the fact that the Methodist Church is looking for donations to food drive program.

Ms. Ryan expressed her thanks and made note that the district is doing its best to help all families and if families need help they should reach out.

Mr. Maston thanked Dr. Rodrigues and his staff for all the effort and hard work navigating this through all the unknowns.

VIII. **Executive Session**

Not needed

IX. **Adjournment**

At 8:39 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Tousignant Dufour and seconded by Mr. Smith. The vote was taken by roll call.

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| Mr. Maston            | yes |
| Mr. Smith             | yes |
| Mr. Tracy             | yes |
| Ms. Ryan              | yes |
| Mr. McDowell          | yes |
| Ms. Tousignant Dufour | yes |

On a vote of 6-0, the motioned passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Tousignant Dufour, Secretary  
Hudson School Committee