

Approved

**Hudson School Committee
Open Session Minutes**

Meeting Date: June 23, 2020

Location: Remote Participation: Google Meet

Members present participating remotely: Glenn Maston, Steven Smith, Adam Tracy, Nina Ryan, Matthew McDowell, Michele Tousignant Dufour

Members absent: Rebecca Weksner

Others present participating remotely: Dr. Marco C. Rodrigues, Superintendent

I. Call the Meeting to Order: 7:05 p.m.

II Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting June 9, 2020

A motion to approve the minutes of June 9, 2020, was made by Ms. Tousignant Dufour and seconded by Mr. Smith. The vote was taken by roll call.

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 motion passed.

III. Public Participation:

Ms. Shanna Weston, parent of two students at Quinn Middle School next fall, expressed her disappointment that the school committee did not support the amendment to not decrease the budget by 2% at the town meeting. She pointed out that not all departments would have a 2% cut. She went on to say in the fall there will be additional needs for PPE, transportation, and other things. She also said there will be additional costs associated with increased Social Emotional Needs for students after an extended period at home. She asked that the committee and the public reach out to state representatives Kate Hogan and Jamie Eldridge to have the state access the rainy day fund to have funds come to municipalities and schools.

Ms. Beth Langlois stated she appreciated everything the teachers, staff, and administration did to foster the student-teacher connection in a very difficult time. She said she echoed what Ms. Weston stated and was disappointed the town did not have the opportunity to support the schools holding on to the 2%. She stated she thinks there may be a bigger ask later but there may be less money and that there may be costs we cannot absorb.

Mr. Maston stated he agrees and is concerned about this year and future years and we need to do everything we can to prepare. He stated there is no guarantee that if the town had voted for the amendment they would be able to deliver. He went on to say we need to be a good team player with other town departments and try to minimize the impact later when we may need it more.

Mr. Smith stated that he supports more money for schools and we need to be a team player with the other departments. Requesting the funding could make it difficult for us long term especially if there are further reductions later in the year. He said he would want to have conversations about this before changing course.

IV. Reports and Presentations

Report of the Superintendent: Updates

Dr. Rodrigues introduced Mr. Dan Gale, the incoming Director of Finance and Operations.

Mr. Gale stated he is very excited to start in Hudson on July 1.

Dr. Rodrigues gave the following updates:

1.) Taskforce for opening of schools

The task force has met every Wednesday since May 20.

The working group meetings for the areas of Teaching and Learning, Behavioral Health: Social Emotional Learning, Learning Environment: Operations and Services, and Business and Finance are on Tuesdays. They will debrief in the Wednesday Task Force meeting. Dr. Rodrigues intends to provide a weekly summary page of the work of each of the working groups to the School Committee.

Dr. Rodrigues stated that additional guidance from the Commissioner has not happened and he thinks they will have this next week. The biggest issue is there is no state budget, so we are not able to know what relief we will get. He said that Hudson will probably not be affected if there are reductions due to the Chapter 70 formula. The work of the task force will not have answers right away. He asked for patience as we are working on parameters. The commissioner said there will be a refresher for the guidance at the end of July. He stated that we are looking at multiple options with full return the first priority. We are also looking at no return or an interruption. We will also have a plan for blended learning. Each working group has about 20 people.

2. Meals for families- USDA has granted reimbursement and we will continue food distribution throughout the summer

3. Families that we know of without internet access now have hotspots.

Mr. Smith asked if the task force summaries will be available generally. Dr. Rodrigues stated that they would be available for the four working groups and the school committee. Dr. Rodrigues stated that from time to time the district will create a document with updates for families.

Mr. Smith stated he had read a MASC newsletter, which had a section that broke out how different countries are handling closures and asked if we are looking at this. Dr. Rodrigues stated that the commissioner is looking at this and will generate a scenario based on medical data and facts. There will be one communication for families and one for school districts.

Mr. Maston asked if we could share with families that the first day of school will not change. Dr. Rodrigues responded that he could not say this. He said there may be a

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need to front-load professional development time depending on what school will look like in the fall.

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 Revision**

Ms. Patricia Lange, Executive Director of Finance and Operations, gave her final finance presentation to the School Committee. Ms. Lange thanked the committee for the support she has received over the years and stated how pleased she is to be able to hand the reins over to Dan Gale. Ms. Lange stated that they have been regularly working together in the last couple of months to ensure a smooth transition.

She gave the following FY20 projection and FY21 Budget Recommendation.

FY20 Projection

There are total savings of \$1,862,00 of which \$1.2M is from personnel, \$692,000 from transportation, and about break-even in general expenses.

Revenue consists of the town appropriation of \$39,043,303, circuit breaker of \$1,106,000, and school choice carryover of \$47,000 if we hit the projection.

This will leave a School Choice balance carry forward of \$3,120,00 to fund the FY21 budget.

Mr. Smith asked if the transportation savings stay with the school department. Ms. Lange stated that it did. She stated that the transportation savings include the contract amendment for First

Student as well as the Assabet Valley Collaborative transportation savings.

Ms. Lange presented an analysis of the town appropriation along with other revenue and expenses for next year. She showed a comparison of the original approved budget of \$42,380,460 with budgets that would include a 2%, 5%, and 8% and 10% reduction in town appropriation. The 2% reduction was approved at the town meeting. The school budget with the 2% reduction in town appropriation would be voted on tonight. The budgets with 5% and 8% and 10% reduction are drafts and for informational purposes should there be further cuts to local or state revenue. If deeper cuts are necessary, the budget team will reconvene and use the zero-based budgeting approach to determine where the cuts should be made.

Ms. Lange presented the following details about the budget with the 2% reduction in town appropriation.

Town Appropriation reduction of \$803K

Circuit breaker will remain the same

Host community mitigation will need to be made up as it was originally included in the town appropriation.

Additional Funding from the Cares Act

School Choice revenue increase

Revenue totals are \$43,148,925. To balance the budget, cuts of \$231,534 must be made. Ms. Lange stated that the way we are making up the \$803K is with a combination of budget cuts, an increase in school choice revenue, and additional funding from the Cares Act. The town appropriation has decreased by 2% but the school budget has only decreased by .55%.

Ms. Tousignant Dufour asked for clarification on the host community mitigation agreement. Ms. Lange said it was from the sale of marijuana.

Mr. Smith noted that the budget is going up slightly year over year even with the reduction in the town appropriation.

Mr. Smith asked about the vacancy factor and how many positions we are not able to hire. Ms. Lange stated that it is usually paraprofessionals and ABA. This is due to turnover in the year and fluctuation in students' needs. Dr. Rodrigues noted that the only other position not filled was the nursing coordinator. He said we are able to fill all positions except those that are in the high turnover areas.

Mr. Smith asked if we have the option to use some of the circuit breaker funding should we need it instead of carrying it forward. Dr. Rodrigues said this is possible but once we use it those funds will not be available for the next year. He went on to say being one

year behind allows us to operate with a real number as opposed to a projection.

Mr. Tracy asked if there a risk that school choice funding will be reduced. Dr. Rodrigues stated that he did not think so and we could potentially see an increase in school choice students. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Maston asked about where the reduction of expenses in the budget is coming from. Ms. Lange stated it comes from pre-paid tuitions and summer transportation.

Ms. Lange stated that the school committee will need to authorize any prepayments. Discussion ensued. The FY21 budget is still intact and there is no reduction in services or personnel. We have used transportation savings, pre-paid tuitions, increased school choice funds, and Cares Act funds to mitigate the decrease in revenue. Dr. Rodrigues stated that we will be conservative in spending in case there is action taken in November or January.

A motion to approve the FY21 School Budget Personnel line 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:

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 motion passed.

A motion to approve the FY21 School Budget General Expense line budget in the amount of \$6,519,446 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

A motion to approve the FY21 School Budget Transportation line in the amount of \$2,268,465.40 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

A motion to approve the pre-payment of up to \$565,000 of tuitions in FY20 for FY21 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

A motion to approve the pre-payment of up to \$120,000 of tuitions in FY20 for FY21 was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

1. **Vote to approve FY20 First Student Contract Amendment**

Ms. Lange stated that we had looked at paying the bus company something to keep them viable and prepared for us when school starts back up. We have jointly negotiated with several other districts that are First Student customers to pay First Student 30% of the contracted rate. This provides for the basics of running the bus company during this time. A motion to approve the FY20 First Student Contract Amendment was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

2. **Approval of revised FY21 School Choice**

Dr. Rodrigues has asked the committee to approve an increase in the number of school choice slots in kindergarten. He stated there has been a lot of interest and registration indicates that the numbers will not be high. As of today, there is a projection for Kindergarten of 155 which is much less than the typical of 198. He has requested that we increase the number of school choice slots at Mulready for kindergarten from 5 to 11.

Ms. Ryan asked where this would put the number per class. Dr. Rodrigues stated that he expects it to be about 17 or 18. Ms. Ryan stated she is not in favor of this because we do not know what types of social-emotional learning will be needed as these five-year-olds come to kindergarten. She expressed her concern that they need lower numbers and more supports. Dr. Rodrigues stated that his projection is based on interest and the fact that our enrollment is low. Discussion ensued about overcrowding at different grades with school choice students.

Mr. Maston asked about the influx last year in kindergarten. Dr. Rodrigues stated the influx last year was grades 1 through 4. He also brought up the travel limitations from Brazil may affect the influx of students.

A motion to approve the revised FY21 School choice was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed.

CONSENT AGENDA

3. Approval of FY21 Cares Act: Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief (ESSER) Grant in the amount of \$255,688 to support district and student needs related to COVID 19

4. Approval of Reclassification of Funds

A motion to approve the FY21 Cares Act: Elementary and Secondary Education Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant in the amount of \$255,688 to support district and student needs related to COVID 19 and the reclassification of funds as presented by consent agenda was made by Mr. Smith and seconded by Ms. Tousignant Dufour.

The following vote was taken by roll call:

Mr. Maston	yes
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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 motion passed

VII. Items of Interest to the School Committee

Mr. Smith welcomed Dan Gale to Hudson Public Schools.

Ms. Tousignant Dufour requested that with the school committee's recent statement on our commitment to diversity, that this summer we look at putting together something to look at the curriculum in Social Studies, ELA, and the Humanities that focus on authors that are more modern and increases the use of works by people of colors and minorities. She cited a recent conversation with a well-accomplished high school student that said she had read 40 books, three of which related to African Americans and one written by an African American. She went on to say her eighth-grader had read 2 books this year, *The Flowers of Algernon* and *The Outsiders*, and stated there must be something more modern written to teach the themes that we could look at. Mr. Maston pointed out there is an opportunity to make recommendations and adjustments of curriculum at the state level.

Mr. Tracy asked if we anticipated any changes in the school resource officers with the reduction across both the school and police departments. Dr. Rodrigues stated that he did not anticipate this.

VIII. Executive Session

Chairman Chair Glenn Maston stated that Executive Session was not needed.

IX. Adjournment

At 8:27 pm, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Tousignant Dufour and seconded by Mr. Smith. The following vote was taken by roll call:

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 motion passed

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Tousignant Dufour, Secretary
Hudson School Committee