

**SPECIAL HOLLIS SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 23, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

A special meeting of the Hollis School Board was conducted on Tuesday, February 23, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Robert Mann, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present: Tammy Fareed, Vice Chairman
 Brooke Arthur, Secretary
 Amy Kellner
 Carryl Roy

Members of the Board Absent:

Also Participating: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
 Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
 Drew Mason, District Moderator

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's [Emergency Order #12](#) pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-04](#) (extended by Executive Order 2021-02), this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

As stated on the agenda, the meeting was aired live via [Zoom](#) (Mtg. ID: 983 1209 7441/Passcode: mD9LwZ).

Each member of the Board was asked to state, for the record, where they were, why their attendance in person was not reasonably practical, who, if anyone, was with them, and whether or not they were able to hear the proceedings.

Chairman Mann

Stated he was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, he was alone in the room he was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Roy

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Member Kellner

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

Vice Chairman Fareed

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, although not home alone, she could be alone in the room she was in, if necessary, and she could hear the proceedings.

Member Arthur

Stated she was participating electronically from home, attendance in person was not reasonably practical due to COVID-19, she was alone in the room she was in, and could hear the proceedings.

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

DISCUSSION

- Annual Meeting

The Selectmen have reached out indicating a willingness to combine the date of the Town Meeting with that of the School District Meeting, and splitting costs associated with the equipment necessary for an outdoor meeting.

Chairman Mann questioned if there would be any contractual issues were the Board to decide to move the meeting date out.

Superintendent Corey noted the district notifies staff members of contract non-renewal on April 1st, and issues contracts to returning staff on April 15th. Moving the date out would be a concern in regard to the timing of seeking candidates to fill positions that will be vacant due to retirements. If the District Meeting, and therefore approval of contracts is moved out to May, the district would be behind the curve in the hiring process. Most districts are SB2, will still have their voting on March 9th, and able to start advertising shortly after that. He believes the district will still be able to attract good candidates, but is cautious as it would be about a month after the time advertising typically starts. Under State RSA, contracts can be issued when a budget is in place.

Chairman Mann commented this year's warrant consists of articles solely related to the running of the operation, e.g., operating budget, continuing contract (3rd year of a 3-year contract). Given the nature of the articles put forth, it is believed the level of participation may allow for an indoor meeting.

Vice Chairman Fareed remarked although the May timeframe is likely to be more favorable for an outdoor meeting, there is no guarantee the weather will be accommodating. She is of the belief the meeting could be conducted indoors.

Member Kellner questioned if an electronic meeting in March remains an option, and was informed it is not. The legislation that permits that, has its own set of procedures/rules that must be followed. Superintendent Corey noted an electronic meeting would take away the debate that occurs at the annual meeting and input the Board receives from citizens, which he does not believe the Hollis community would want to forego.

Member Kellner noted that could be what occurs by holding the meeting indoors at this time. Superintendent Corey responded he does not disagree with that.

Member Roy stated if an in-person/indoor meeting is the option necessary because of contractual issues, if conducted at the gymnasium at the High School, the doors could be opened.

Vice Chairman Fareed stated the COOP has used the gymnasiums in both of the schools for aggregate student coursework/online learning.

Superintendent Corey responded the space is available, and the high school gymnasium is the largest. Social distancing could easily be provided, and with the outside access, doors could remain open. The meeting could be streamed, and if voting on an item that requires a ballot vote, citizens would know they could drive to the school and vote on that particular article.

Vice Chairman Fareed questioned if the feeling is that an outdoor meeting would garner greater participation. Member Kellner responded it is hard to say. She is coming from a place personally where she is still having her groceries delivered. The only thing she is doing in person is attending school board meetings. Personally, it would be a hard decision for her to attend.

Superintendent Corey commented the COOP School Board looked at a compromise. They booked Saturday, April 10th and Saturday April 17th (backup date). Although he is not opposed to an outdoor meeting, he does believe that would limit the large screens (safety concerns around wind, etc.).

Vice Chairman Fareed commented on typical attendance being 150[±], and what it would look like to have 150 people spread out across the high school gym. She agreed there are concerns, and there would likely be some who would not be comfortable attending no matter how the meeting is conducted. Having an online meeting takes away the citizen participation aspect that is so critical. An outdoor venue in May blows through the contract gateways. She personally feels that sharing a date with the Town's meeting is an inappropriate disposition of the school district's meeting.

Member Roy echoed the comment regarding not conducting the meeting on the same day as the Town meeting commenting it is too much to ask of the citizenry. There could be 4 hours of Town meeting, and we would be adding to that the time required to conduct the school meeting.

Member Roy spoke of the cost of tent rentals, etc., noting the school is preparing to return to the renting of tents at all of its buildings with the warmer weather. If there is the need to conduct the meeting outdoors, it could be conducted on school property.

Vice Chairman Fareed spoke of there being a number of petition warrant articles to be addressed at the Town meeting.

Member Arthur questioned if any type of COVID screening would occur for an in-person meeting.

Superintendent Corey stated he would find it difficult to get that information out to citizens early. Forms could be available at the meeting, but would be provided after individuals enter the facility. Vice Chairman Fareed commented even if having temperature checks before entering, there would be privacy issues involved.

Drew Mason, District Moderator, stated his understanding of current CDC guidelines to be that because there are so many people who are asymptomatic, taking temperatures and asking questions really has no use. Even if they are sick, we cannot deny them the ability to participate in the meeting. We can shuffle them off to a corner, but we can't refuse to let them come.

Asked what the current guidance is on the size of gatherings, Mr. Mason stated it is political, so there are no boundaries. Member Roy added the recommendation is a percentage of the capacity allowance in a space.

Member Arthur asked for clarification on requiring people to wear masks, and was told mask wearing is a State mandate. Mr. Mason stated that order is in place, but there is no enforcement ability. We can't restrict them from coming, but we can put them in an area where they don't expose other people.

Member Kellner questioned the logistics of that; if we have people who refuse to wear a mask. There have been community members in attendance at school board meetings that have not worn masks. What could be done to prevent them from interacting with other people? Mr. Mason stated a designated area would be created. Vice Chairman Fareed noted that is how the Legislature has handled it.

Asked if the district has authority to enforce the mask mandate for its buildings, Superintendent Corey stated the district has the authority to require mask wearing, but as has been stated by the Moderator, there is no enforcement of it, and you would be talking about taking away an individual's right to vote.

From a logistical standpoint, he would probably set up the small gym, which is next to the regular gymnasium, and anyone who did not want to wear a mask could be placed in there with a live streaming television and a voting box. The question was asked of how to address individuals wishing to participate in public speaking, if not wearing a mask. Mr. Mason stated the requirement for two-way audio/visual with both rooms.

Superintendent Corey remarked when looking at the high school, gym capacity is probably somewhere between 1,200 – 1,500 when people packed in for an event, such as a basketball game. He feels confident the district can provide ample social distancing in the large gym with plenty of spacing, grouping chairs so that if attending as an individual there would be room for one and if coming in as a family, etc. there would be room. The small gym could be set up for anyone not wanting to wear a mask. Both of those options allow for bringing in natural air. The ventilation system in the gym would be running a few hours before and after the meeting. He does not know what type of crowd there would be.

Vice Chairman Fareed commented on the size of a tent were it outdoors, and questioned if seating would have to be closer. Member Roy suggested the tent would not be designed for everyone to be under; more like how Town meeting was conducted where it served as coverage for those who might be most vulnerable or need to be closer to hear or see.

Superintendent Corey stated his belief there would be those who would drive and remain in their vehicles in the parking lot and only come indoors to cast their ballot. We may have to identify a mechanism where an announcement can be made for those individuals. He spoke of the contract, which is usually a ballot vote.

Member Roy suggested the Board could decide to make articles ballot votes. Mr. Mason stated some things must be ballot votes, e.g., the SAU budget. He does not recall if there is anything else on the warrant that has to be a ballot vote. A CBA doesn't have to be but sometimes is because voters want the freedom to vote their conscience without their neighbors knowing how they vote. Asked how many people have to petition for a ballot vote, he stated it to be 5 or 7. Mr. Mason stated he could decide, on his own authority, to do it, but cannot decide not to do it, if the required number of voters request it.

Vice Chairman Fareed asked if it is possible people will want to voice their opinions on the DEI initiative even though it is not on the warrant. Mr. Mason stated they would have to do so under other business.

Chairman Mann questioned ordering the articles in such a way as to minimize the time the meeting has to be open, e.g., if we open the voting on a ballot question can we take up other business while the polls are open for the ballot question. Mr. Mason stated that can be done, and has been done on bond issues because the polls have to stay open for an hour. For the SAU budget, as soon as everyone has gone through, he can close the polls and count. The option is there, but he doesn't see much of a point there is in terms of the logistics of getting people in from the parking lot. Vice Chairman Fareed commented we are imagining a very static scene of everyone sitting in their seat, but with a ballot vote everyone is up mixing. Perhaps if the ballot vote were left to last, that mixing would be the last thing done; vote as you leave.

Chairman Mann stated the desire to get as many articles addressed as possible without subjecting people to an extended amount of time at a meeting. We want to do everything we can to make people comfortable participating while being respectful of the health issues.

Member Arthur questioned if ballot voting could be organized in a more structured way that people aren't getting up and mixing. Mr. Mason stated there are districts that have had people stay in their seats and just pass a box up and down the row or, depending on spacing, someone will hold the box and have people put their ballot in. Alternatively, you could do it the way some churches do their collection; an assistant lets people up row by row so that there is a limited number of people up at a time. He spoke of being open to suggestions.

Chairman Mann commented with that scenario a ballot would go into a basket and then leave your sight. Vice Chairman Fareed stated her preference for a ballot vote at the end of the meeting. The budget is the most pressing followed by the contract in terms of funding FY22. She questioned the will of the Board regarding re-ordering the warrant. Asked for his impression, Superintendent Corey stated his belief the Budget Committee would probably want the operating budget to be as close to last as possible because of the 10% rule. He does not believe it will come into play, but he does think there should be awareness of that. He suggested doing the operating budget followed by the SAU budget last and then dismissal in some orderly fashion.

There is the option of selecting two dates. The Board can always postpone if needed. The desire, at this time, is to provide some leeway so that the data can be watched. A late March date could be chosen. The Moderator has up until two hours before the meeting starts to postpone it. If the data started to move in a negative direction, the date could be postponed, and the meeting moved to an outdoor event.

He suggested the Board choose an in-person night in March. If things don't go well, the Board could reconvene and discuss postponing with the Moderator. We could go to an April or May outdoor meeting. No matter what happens the district will survive. The biggest goal is safety.

He suggested Wednesday, March 31st, where the district would know the outcome by April 1st. It would give another almost four full weeks of data, which is trending positive. If we don't like where things are for that Wednesday, we can look at Saturdays in April. The COOP School District will only use one. The first weekend is Easter. We could look into May. We could also go to a weeknight. It might be a little cold, but there are now lights on the turf field.

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the date of the Annual Meeting

Chairman Mann will work with the Superintendent and Moderator to determine order of articles to optimize the functioning of the meeting. A special meeting could be called to run through that prior to the meeting date selected.

Vice Chairman Fareed asked Member Kellner if the idea of having a spillover room for unmasked individuals, and assuming community spread is down, would she feel comfortable attending. Member Kellner stated she would have to think about it. Having a group of unmasked individuals in their own room, makes her very nervous for their exposure. Personally, she would have to give it some thought.

Superintendent Corey commented the district has seen very little in regard to non-compliance with mask wearing. There are a select few, but interactions have been positive, and the district has been able to make accommodations. The Administration could work with a Board member to provide accommodations to create a high degree of confidence.

Member Roy spoke of liking the March 31st date and the plan for an in-person meeting. She would hesitate on the 24th of April as it is the start of April vacation. Traditionally our meetings have been on a weeknight. An outdoor weeknight meeting might be chilly, but we could make accommodations if we need to do it in the April timeframe or as close to that as possible.

Superintendent Corey spoke of the safety precautions that would be in place, e.g., hand sanitizer, plexiglass. He does not believe the meeting will be lengthy; when you have the Budget Committee and School Board unanimous on the articles, citizens historically have moved quickly through that. He believes attendance will be around 70 on the high end.

MOTION BY MEMBER ROY TO SET THE DATE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING AS TUESDAY, MARCH 30, 2021 AND A SNOW DATE OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021 AT THE HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM BEGINNING AT 6:30 PM
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER FAREED

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Robert Mann, Carryl Roy, Brooke Arthur, Tammy Fareed,

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Nay: Amy Kellner

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MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Mason noted once the School Board has chosen a date, further postponements he can do under his own authority; certainly in consultation with the Board, but there would not be a requirement for a special meeting.

Chairman Mann questioned costs that may be required for the use of the gymnasium, e.g., deep cleaning after the event. Superintendent Corey stated it is looked at as a taxpayer funded event, and from a standpoint of personnel, the SAU has gotten very adept at cleaning. The same thing is being done for voting days, etc. If it came to that, he would speak with the Business Administrator concerning the potential of CARES Act funding that may come into the districts in the months ahead.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER ROY TO ADJOURN
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER KELLNER

A Viva Voce Roll Call was conducted, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Carryl Roy, Amy Kellner, Tammy Fareed, Brooke Arthur, Robert Mann

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Nay:

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MOTION CARRIED

The February 23, 2021 special meeting of the Hollis School Board was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____