

**HOLLIS SCHOOL BOARD
OCTOBER 6, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Hollis School Board was conducted on Wednesday, October 6, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. at the Hollis Upper Elementary School.

Tammy Fareed, Chairman, presided:

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

Members of the Board Absent:

Also Participating: Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
 Donna Smith, Assistant Business Administrator
 Adam Kushmerek, School Resource/Community Policing Officer

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

CORRESPONDENCE/RESIGNATIONS/NOMINATIONS

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug informed the Board of a letter of Intent to Retire received from Penny Currier, Teacher, Hollis Primary School (HPS). In her letter, Ms. Currier states “She has loved teaching at HPS and being a part of the community for the past 20 years.”

MOTION BY MEMBER ARTHUR TO ACCEPT THE LETTER OF INTENT TO RETIRE RECEIVED FROM PENNY CURRIER EFFECTIVE AT THE END OF THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

A letter of Intent to Retire was received from Ellen Lencsak, Nurse, HPS. In her letter she states “This is my 26th year at HPS. Every day is new, and every day has its rewards. I have watched our kids grow, shared their smiles and their laughter, and listened to their stories happy and sad. At the end of the day, I know I have made a difference even if in a very small way. I have had wonderful conversations with parents, and I thank them for trusting their little ones to me when they cannot be there. I have worked alongside a fantastic team of teachers, paras, and support staff, and I have made great friends.”

MOTION BY MEMBER ARTHUR TO ACCEPT THE LETTER OF INTENT TO RETIRE RECEIVED FROM ELLEN LENCSAK EFFECTIVE AT THE END OF THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Hollis School Board [September 1, 2021](#)

The following amendments were offered:

- Page 2, Line 13; correct the spelling of “device”
- Page 2, Line 46; delete “get” before “hospitalized”
- Page 6 Line 21; remove “effort” following “ongoing”
- Page 6, Line 34; insert a comma following “outdoors” and replace “if” with “of”
- Page 7, Line 47; replace “or” with “for”
- Page 8, Line 11; correct the spelling of “surge”
- Page 8, Line 44; remove “of” before “if”
- Page 12, Line 27; replace “difference” with “different”
- Page 14, Line 11; replace “spend” with “spent”
- Page 14, Line 38; replace “Karen Jude” with “Karen Jew”

**MOTION BY MEMBER ARTHUR TO ACCEPT, AS AMENDED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY
MOTION CARRIED
5-0-0**

PUBLIC INPUT

Dennis Johnson, 7 Main Street

At the last meeting, he spoke of concern with his step-son, who has sensory issues, having to wear a mask. He was actually afraid to take his mask off and wore it throughout the entire day on the first day of school. He voiced that he was afraid to kill people. That is how fearful he was. The School Board has put these kids in this position. The psychological damage being imposed on children far outweighs kids that get the sniffles for one day. These children will go through the entirety of their lives with a psychological issue. He suggested weighing the argument logically would result in a decision for no masks.

He cited flu deaths from 2018-2020, which exceed deaths from COVID. He asked if any members of the Board were asking for masks to be worn at that point. More kids died from the flu during those years. He finds it to be hypocritical that now masks are required.

If masks work, wouldn't they be considered medical hazard waste once taken off? If that is the case, why is there not a medical waste procedure followed at the front of the schools? He requested the Board think about the logic and weigh the issues.

Chairman Fareed spoke of having had to consult with legal counsel as a result of having asked a member of the audience to not clap after a speaker spoke. It is protected speech to boo and clap. She requested, but did not demand, that members of the public resist the extraneous response.

Jaima Wilder, 48 Pierce Lane

Thanked the Board for its continued desire to put the education and wellbeing of the children as its first priority. She is hopeful it is also the desire to ensure parent and taxpayer voices are represented through their decision making process. She requested they listen with open ears, eyes, and hearts. Superintendent Corey stated on September 9th that the Board was interested in seeing what happened in Hollis and Brookline. More time was needed to see what was happening in the COOP versus the elementary schools; mask optional versus mask mandate. Since then, we have celebrated Old Home Days, many games in the bleachers together, and many other extra-curricular activities. Her understanding is that the Board gave Superintendent Corey sole discretion to lift the mandate when he felt it safe to do so.

The number of COVID positive cases is far less than the number of other viruses that are slower spreaders such as Strep, MONO, RSV and other unnamed viruses. She spoke with the school nurse when her children showed symptoms and she informed her of what she was seeing. It was expected that more people would be sick given the fact that we were not exposed to anything during the lockdown. It is good to see everyone's immune system building natural immunities.

Our children play sports together, play at the playground unmasked. Masks worn at school do not keep them safe. It hurts them physically because they are breathing bacteria in the mask, carbon dioxide and they lack oxygen needed for development and growth. It stiffens their learning because they read lips to pronounce words, hear correct phenetic sounds to read, and learn empathy through facial expression.

All of the decisions you make today will affect the wellbeing of our children now and for years to come.

If, after all of the research that has been presented to the Board, there is still a false sense of safety when you wear masks, wear them, but stop taking away our rights as parents and make the masks optional.

Joe Garruba, 28 Winchester Drive

Stated clapping is for the people who are coming forward to share their experiences. Chairman Fareed reiterated it is free speech. She simply made a request.

Mr. Garruba spoke of his support of the comments of the two previous speakers.

He commented on the proposed additional position for non-education staff. It appears the position is to address Right-to-Know requests, updating the public on social media, etc. This pandemic is an unusual situation and adding a permanent salaried position because of this is irresponsible. Instead of that, a part-time position for a short duration should be considered.

It seems that employee would be acting as a public relations reporter for information coming from the schools. He does not see a need to pay non-educational staff for that role. To disseminate information on social media platforms that may or may not be accessible to everyone in Town is not appropriate for a paid school position. Information from the school should be shared on the school's website.

Eric Morin, 18 Jambard Road

Spoke of RSV noting only a few who contract it develop serious illness much like COVID-19. Children may have symptoms similar to any other respiratory infection. RSV is spread like any other cold; droplets, sneezes.

RSV can be prevented. According to the CDC website one should cover coughs and sneezes, wash hands frequently and correctly, avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others and refrain from kissing others. Never in time were masks mandated to stop the spread of RSV.

With a child in daycare and co-workers with children in daycare, he can attest that RSV is currently spreading like it does every fall and winter. The test used to detect RSV happens to be the same type of test used to detect COVID. The State does not report RSV cases to the CDC, but Massachusetts does. Based on the CDC website, Massachusetts PCR tests for RSV started to rise significantly as they do every fall. Massachusetts is now averaging approx. 1,000 tests/week for RSV. The average positivity rate was around 3% at the end of July and has now risen to nearly 30%.

According to the CDC, RSV leads to approximately 58,000 hospitalizations/year in children and an annual average of a couple hundred to 500 deaths. Since the pandemic started, according to the CDC, there has been 134 deaths attributed to COVID-19 for the ages of 5-11 and 164 for 12-15. We are going on year 2 with COVID-19 with a total of 4,228 children ages 0-17 hospitalized with COVID nationwide.

We keep hearing about clusters in the State, many of which happened in school districts where masks are required. How many of these kids end up in the hospital or died; likely zero. What happens when a child does get COVID; a positive case for most of these children means absolutely nothing. It does however mean long-lasting immunity from the virus.

Faculty and staff that have chosen to be, have been vaccinated. There is simply no need to force children to wear masks. They do nothing to stop the spread. They are doing more harm than good to our children. Should be a parental choice. Please reconsider.

Lauren Craig, 17 Hills Farm Lane

She and her husband have two children. The eldest is in the high school and the youngest in 6th grade. It is a bit strange dropping one child off at school not wearing a mask and another wearing a mask. As a mother, it goes against every fiber of her being to cover her child's nose and mouth and send him out for the day for school.

It does not make sense to her that children are wearing masks in class. They are 3' apart and yet they take their masks off to eat lunch in the building and while outside playing. To her it does not make sense that if it is a deadly pandemic and masks are for your health and safety, why are they removing them at all?

She moved from Winthrop, MA. She was in a house that had been in her family for 52 years. Her family thought she was nuts when she said she was moving to New Hampshire as they are all in Massachusetts. They spent from March until July 23rd on Zillow and went up 3 hours north to Maine, looked in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida (mask free land), and said we have to be close to family, let's go to the Live Free or Die state of New Hampshire. Is this not that? She left her whole family behind and moved her kids during the most crucial part of their lives. They are both shy and they both have said to her I feel like I am invisible because they do not have any friends yet.

You know that the kids do not get COVID, and if they do, it is a 99.997% chance that they will survive.

Jim Gill, 30 Milton Place

The situation reminds him of an episode of Star Trek where the Enterprise was sent to a planet where there was a civil war underway and when they landed on the planet one group had faces that were white on the right and black on the left and the others were black on the right and white on the left.

That is what we have happening here; fear, except you are wearing your fear on the right side and his is on the opposite side. Your fear is that if you make masks optional there will be hell to pay from a public health standpoint. His deep seated fear is that by forcing young children to wear a mask we do not know the long-term consequences.

Fear is false evidence appearing real. From the Board's perspective, for 2 years we have had a public narrative that has been rigorously scientifically everything battened down. If you accept the public narrative then it would be reasonable to have the fear that if you made masks optional all hell would break loose from a public health standpoint, but when you look at the public narrative, everything that has been said to us from science has been proven false. The latest is 26 scientists have come out and proven Mr. Collins and Dr. Fauci as having been unequivocally untruthful.

Our public health narratives, the injection going into the shoulder was only going to stay in the shoulder, what do we know now, no. If you examine your fear and the false evidence appearing real and the fear that we possess on an experiment with all kinds of things that are being experienced now, he thinks the fear rationally is far more founded than that of the Board.

Member Arthur clarified there is a mask mandate in the building.

Karen Dodge, 73 Alsun Drive

As the only teacher in attendance she wished to share what she is hearing is sincere and accurate. She can tell you what children wearing a mask in the classroom looks like for 6 hours; they do not keep the masks on their faces, masks are put around their throats (where bacteria gathers), they use them to sneeze in, wipe noses, etc. There is no standard for the mask and no expectation that they would or should work effectively. The children take them off repeatedly. Unfortunately, what has happened is there is a mentality of policing the wearing of masks; happens to teachers and children. They go outside and drop it on the ground and then put it back on. Scientifically that mask is nothing more than a moist petri dish for bacteria.

She spoke of bacteria that has been found on masks worn by children, not after 6 hours but after 20 minutes. Children are afraid to take their masks off, and there is no reason for them to have that fear. A mask mandate cannot be justified. It is irrational and is imposing a message on children that she does not think they will ever recover from. Masking is the first step in compliance.

Jim Crittenden, 232 Worcester Road

Spoke of totalitarianism; what we are living under. We are reminded again this week now that the Attorney General is sicking the FBI on all of us who are willing to stand up and speak to the School Boards and maybe disagree with some of the things you have done or are planning to do. Who does not have to wear masks these days for inside gatherings? Who does and who does not? If you look at Barack Obama's birthday party or some of the Hollywood award parties; who is not wearing the masks; the elite. Who are wearing masks there, the waitresses, the valets. It is a class difference. If you ask them why they do not have to wear masks when

the surrounding servers have to, they make it very clear; it is because they are sophisticated. If you are sophisticated, you do not have to wear a mask for interior gatherings. How do you become sophisticated; it is a self-identifying trait just like your gender these days. If you feel sophisticated, you are sophisticated and you do not have to wear masks.

Just like in Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon, we know all of the children in Hollis are at least a little bit above average, so they are sophisticated, so we call them sophisticated, and they do not have to wear masks. That satisfies the CDC, and the rest of the government they do not care because sophisticated people do not have to wear masks. There is a simple solution. You could either do a blanket or have parents write in my child is sophisticated and does not have to wear a mask. If it seems sarcastic really what it is pointing out is it is all about the symbolism. It really is not about the healthcare. The mask really is not doing anything. It is all which class you are trying to fit into.

PRINCIPALS' REPORT

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug highlighted items from the Administrative Report included as part of the [agenda](#) packet.

New basketball polls are under construction at the Hollis Upper Elementary School (HUES). Work will start on the fencing project on the field in November.

Custodial and kitchen support is sought at HUES.

The report highlights work being done to address social emotional needs. At HUES, there are mixed cohorts for lunch; not all 5 sections of each grade level eat together, groups of 2 and 3 classes. Those cohorts also stay together when going outdoors for recess. Every 6 weeks those classes switch cohorts. In grade 6, they have focused their work on fixed and growth mindset and strategies and how to build resilience and confidence. In grade 5, their morning meetings are focused on getting to know someone and sharing outside experiences as a way to build connections between their peers. In grade 4, they are sharing about their names and how important it is to know ourselves to develop those connections. Choose Love lessons are implemented in all grade levels. Lunch groups have started for additional socialization.

At HPS, although lunch is taking place in the classroom, cohorts are mixed on the playground; 2 and 3 classes and instead of switching at 6 weeks they are switching at the trimester. The nurse is sharing health lessons about safe and healthy eating spaces, healthy habits, standard precautions, impact of personal health choices. These are lessons we teach year after year.

In Guidance, students are working on identifying feelings that their pets may have as it is easier to talk about the feelings of a pet potentially than to share a personal feeling. They are reading books like Worry Moves On and Ruby Finds a Worry and identifying there is a strategy that if you notice and identify a feeling then you can breathe through that feeling, practice self-talk and talking it out with someone. They are also looking at gratitude and how to practice gratitude.

They are working on registration for BOKS (Build our Kids Strength), which took place a few years prior to last school year. There is a 6-week section for BOKS. It is a before-school program for 12 students at a time. It is outdoors (space in the gym for inclement weather). It is a movement experience designed to help kids ready for learning in the classroom.

Town meetings are coming back at HPS. They will be via Zoom. The first meeting is about respect yourself, respect property, and respect others.

There is a need for 4 paraprofessionals at HPS. There is a new Guidance Counselor at HUES, Evelyn O'Connor. WING Awards are back at HUES.

Member Mann noted the September packet cited a total enrollment of 642 and the October enrollment numbers are reported as 625. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated she would look into that number. Part of that could be move-outs and late notification. Member Mann spoke of appreciating information that shows the net positives/negatives and educational specifications. Chairman Fareed noted the enrollment identified in August was 624.

Member Arthur remarked all of the items identified under social emotional needs seem great, but do not seem different from pre-pandemic. She questioned what kind of responses are happening or might be needed specifically in response to the experience of the pandemic.

In a communication from the New Hampshire School Board Association, information was provided on a nationwide increase in school refusal and some of the resources schools are having to enact more rigorously. That is one example of increased behaviors and experiences that we may have to look at. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded the school refusal is an issue nationwide. It is less of an issue in our district, she believes, because we were open last year. Some students did not attend school at all, and really did not have much interaction with school folks for a year and a half so to transition back is a challenge. To find some of those kids is a challenge.

She has spoken with her south central region (other Assistant Superintendents) and some of the issues that those nearby districts are experiencing are different from what we are experiencing. What we are seeing is increased difficulty with play. Teachers are doing incredible work teaching kids how to interact with each other again and how to play; lessons that we did not have to teach before. It is not part of a set curriculum, but just part of understanding social interactions. Those are some of the things they are spending a lot of time with that are hard to put down as a lesson.

They continue to encourage classes to go outdoors; do the same learning, but outside and in a movement activity where you are incorporating a little bit of that play aspect within the context of a lesson.

DISCUSSION

- Reopening Plan Discussion

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug thanked all residents who have provided input both oral and written.

There are mixed groups at recess in both of the schools as a means of increasing socialization this year over last year. Groups are mixed at lunch at HUES and are looking to move to that at HPS. There are different challenges given the space in that building. They are acknowledging the importance of that social interaction. One way they are doing that is by switching the cohorts over time so that students have the opportunity to interact with all of their peers. They are mixing groups when delivering services, e.g. if multiple students are receiving additional support in reading, they are pulled from multiple classes to work together.

To date, there have been 2 cases in the Hollis schools. That is attributed to our community, teachers, students, families, custodians, all involved as they are following a set standard.

Looking at the data within the community, we currently have 29 cases in both of the communities. Both communities are looked at. Although these are Hollis schools, a lot of Hollis students have siblings in the COOP and those students are with our Brookline cohort. We have 29 cases currently. There were 12 new cases today, but for the past few days it had been down from the prior week.

We have a higher vaccination rate than the State at 65-70% in Hollis and 53-60% in Brookline. It is another figure to look at and another preventative measure that is an option for those who choose and are old enough.

She and Superintendent Corey meet continually with medical professionals in the community and discuss all of these aspects. They continue to advocate for masks. Many of these people are pediatricians that treat the students in our district. That is important. Our teachers are stressing handwashing. Hand sanitizer is available and the same cleaning protocols that were in place last year are in place. We are doing a fantastic job. We do understand the length of the day and how difficult it is to wear a mask the full time, which is why the students are not fully masked at all times. We have mask breaks that are more regular this year than last year. There was a time when masks were required outdoors, which is no longer the case.

Many people have asked for a matrix for when masks are required and not required. Looking at the various matrix options that have been thrown out over the past year and a half, they tend to be geared either towards always wearing masks or never wearing masks. We are looking for how we slowly change from masks to no masks. A matrix does not really work, e.g., would we look at community data or school case data.

Community groups, e.g., baseball, soccer, lacrosse, have their own set of protocols. We are working together to determine the policies that need to be in place.

She and Superintendent Corey have discussed targeted masking. We are not there yet but would like to discuss the idea of moving toward being intentional about when the mask is worn and when it is not. The example provided was reading and the importance of seeing the teacher's mouth move as the story is being read. If students are sitting at their desks and are 3' apart during an hour-long reading session, is it appropriate to remove masks understanding that if a student were to get up from their desk for whatever reason, they would put their mask on. We are not there yet, but that is the direction they would like to go in as a district, a slow shift over time.

Last year we were open all year. Not many districts can say they were open 5 days/week for all students who wanted to be present in the building. We did a phenomenal job. We kept our cases very low. Other districts came to us to ask for assistance when it was then required of them to do what we had been doing all along. The desire is for that to continue and to provide a safe environment for all of our students.

Additional information will be learned around the availability of a vaccine for our younger students. That is part of it. Once again, not mandated, but if there is another tool available for families who choose a tool then there is an additional option available.

Quarantine rules have changed. Last year students who were in quarantine or isolation were able to be shifted to remote learning. We do not have that option anymore. Last year the Governor put us in a State of Emergency, which is what allowed the remote classrooms. That is not allowed any longer. We do not have any other option. Should we have a ton of cases and students are out of the building, we do not have the tools we

had last year. That is another change that is making it a little bit difficult to be potentially as lenient as one might want us to be.

We read about the social emotional piece every day. It has been a district focus long before COVID hit. We gave our teachers the tools they needed prior to COVID, during COVID, and now, to look at some of these signs/symptoms and develop strategies both for the teachers to work with students but also for the students to begin to self-advocate and identify ways that they can help themselves when struggling with any number of topics. Masks are a part of that, but so is the stress of the world right now. There are so many pieces that are really heavy for everyone. All of that is contributing to the challenges being faced.

Member Mann spoke of sharing the same concern with the potential for an outbreak and the possibility it could cause us to close a school. When the Board was deliberating the mask mandate in September, the concern he had was just that, how do we keep the schools open.

He stated appreciation for the work that is being done to think and move towards creative ways to reduce mask wearing. He encouraged those efforts to continue. He is interested to hear from Superintendent Corey in November in regard to the path to get there. He would like to get as close to mask optional as possible. He has heard from the community the concerns that exist. He would like to move in that direction as quickly as we can.

Members Arthur and Roy echoed the comments of the previous speaker.

Member Mann commented a decision to close the schools based on an outbreak or other incident sits solely with the Superintendent and his office. The Board does not make those operating decisions. The Board is a policy making board and approves expenditures and allocations. This is how we ran last year too with the situation we were in. There is discussion, of course, but from a day-to-day perspective, if something happens, keeping schools open and running is a responsibility solely placed on the Superintendent.

Chairman Fareed remarked she is trying to respect the points that have been made by the public. It is clear she is a person who wants to err on the side of safety. She is intimately familiar with how the various masks work. The reason they can be tested for terrible stuff is because they trap it. She agrees with everyone who says children need to see faces. She agrees the masks are something more than an inconvenience although she disagrees that they are harmful. She cares a great deal that people see things differently and we have to reconcile these differing views.

The Assistant Superintendent pointed out that we have had 2 cases here. The interesting point one of the speakers made is that there is supposed to be this sort of experiment between the elementary schools and the COOP where we have mask optional. She questioned what is being seen at the high school and middle school in terms of the number of cases. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated within the COOP there have been 6 cases in 2 buildings. In all 4 of our elementary schools, including the notice that went out today at 5:00 p.m., we have had 4 cases in 4 buildings.

Asked about staff, she stated when the notices go out, they are not notifying whether the cases are students or staff.

Chairman Fareed stated her belief all of the different tools being used, masks, vaccinations, those who sneeze in their sleeve instead of coughing in faces, etc. are making a difference. Many she talks to in the medical field in our southern New Hampshire region believe that there seems to be a stronger compliance in the State with CDC

type recommendations than in a lot of other places. She does not want to take away the critical one and find out it was a mistake. On the other hand, we also do not want to always operate from a place of fear.

Asked about the concept of targeted masking and why we are not there yet, Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug remarked there are a few factors in place. It is easier to have masks and remove them than to have no masks and then require them. It is easier in the learning process for children to know that on the bus and in school they are masked than to keep a mask sanitary when it is off but on. Those are silly little pieces. Another huge component is the first 6 weeks of school is imperative for the teacher to establish a classroom community, and part of that is understanding when it is okay to get up and walk around or consult a peer, etc. Some students who have not been in school for some time, have to relearn what it is like to be a student in class. For her, that is part of it.

Chairman Fareed commented she has spent hundreds and hundreds of hours volunteering in the buildings prior to her service on the School Board, and she knows what is being described. It takes a couple of months before the kids are reminding the teacher of the routine. The children then know what is expected and they enjoy having that mastery over knowledge, self, and even over the adults once in a while.

The question was asked of whether the Superintendent can shift gears at any point between meetings and how much of a role the Board has in that decision. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded just the same as the Superintendent has the authority to do a mask mandate at the COOP if the need arises based on clusters, etc., the same is true for the removal of masks or making them optional. He is within the power granted to him to be able to do that.

Chairman Fareed remarked there are 625 students and 135 employees in our two buildings. Each one has their own medical background, their own unique protected confidential specific needs, and we do not get to decide who is vulnerable to disease and who is not. We are here trying to make policy and consider recommendations based on the independent/individualized needs of 800 people. It is a difficult thing to make a one size fits all policy. We did not get through last year as well as we did because we got lucky or because we over-estimated the enemy. We got through it the way we did thanks to the incredible moxie and sweat equity put in by the staff; senior staff, administrative staff, building staff who worked and continue to work harder than most can imagine. It is through a honed, fine-edged intelligence and judgment that she feels allowed our community to remain mostly whole/mostly healthy and she hesitates to second guess their internal knowledge of the student and adult population in our buildings and their carefully gathered information basis for what is occurring in the community.

She also agrees with those who provided public input that on the surface of it, it seems maybe we could lower our guard, but she is not that one who likes to lower the guard when she knows the enemy is lurking behind bushes and corners.

Member Mann commented he cannot help but wonder, given the input received from community members and the promise of maybe a vaccine being approved for younger children, that perhaps we consider revisiting/reconsideration of the re-opening plan. He is uncertain if the November or December meeting would be appropriate. He was not suggesting a date but was suggesting that beyond an update, there be a check-in to say what we are doing from this point on. We want an update, and we will potentially take an action to support or change direction and put a date on it. He believes having that discussion would go a long way in the community.

Chairman Fareed spoke of the remote learning option and reiterated that last year, because of the Emergency Order, we were allowed to develop remote learning. Not only has the Emergency Order been lifted and therefore the standing legislation around distance learning not generally being allowed, but currently the Department of Education is debating creating a new ruling that would prevent districts from using remote learning for COVID emergencies. It is not a ruling that has been put in place yet but there is strong movement among the Board of Education at the State level to disallow the use of remote learning due to any COVID related closures regardless of clusters or anything else. However, the ruling that is under consideration now would allow schools to use remote learning on snow days.

If we look at all of the pieces we had in place last year and see how few of those pieces we have in place this year, it argues for caution and prudence.

Chairman Fareed asked, once the vaccine is approved (if it is) for children 5-12, are we allowed to ask for voluntary input from families who choose to vaccinate their children to try to get a sense of the percentage of our students that are being vaccinated? Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded we are able to ask, but she would imagine the practice would continue, as a district, not to ask. Every year when you do your registration you upload your health records. Some families have chosen to include vaccination information about COVID as part of their health records and some have chosen not to. It is not a requirement, and we will not ask, as a district. We can engage in that conversation for informational purposes.

A look at the dashboard shows data that is reported right now for ages 12-19 in Hollis. That provides an idea as to our population in the middle and high school. She would imagine the dashboard would later have a 5-11 category.

Member Arthur asked about moving towards targeted masking and if there is consideration of beginning with teachers. Asked if there is a reason not to do that, Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated it is illegal. We are either masks for everyone or masks optional for everyone, but we cannot pick and choose who gets to have the option and who does not.

- Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Year End Numbers

Auditors have completed their field work. The year ended with a savings in expenses of \$1,225,684 and the FY20 carryover (\$85,690 – were able to offset some of the expenses with COVID funding) the total for expenses was \$1,311,338. Primarily savings were due to COVID-19, e.g., special education contracted services were limited, bus transportation costs were cut, and we had a significant hiring savings due to new employees coming in on a lower step in the salary table.

Revenue came in at \$18,560 less than budgeted. The Federal food service extra revenue offsets the local food service sales revenue as the State issued free meals all year long to the students. In the end, revenue less expenses left a fund balance of \$876,928.78 to be returned to the tax base to reduce the amount that has to be raised through taxes to support the current budget.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted the fund balance is what remains after the air handler 3 expenditure.

Asked to provide clarification on the term carryover, Donna Smith, Assistant Business Administrator, stated any purchase orders that remain open at the end of the year are addressed by carrying over the associated dollars into the next fiscal year. This past year, when funding was received related to COVID, it was used to offset some of the expenses that had been carried over.

The MS27 is the documentation sent to the Department of Revenue; best estimate prior to the audit.

In addition to savings achieved through new hires coming in lower on the salary scale, a number of positions went unfilled.

- Fiscal Year 2021-2022 First Quarter Revenue and Expense Report

The report provided with the [agenda](#) notes an expense balance (*as of 9-16-21*) of \$18,064. With a revenue balance of \$6,595, the *projected* UFB is \$24,659.

- Fiscal Year 2023 – Draft SAU Budget

The draft budget will be presented to the SAU 41 Governing Board on October 14th.

The FY23 adjusted budget (default budget if proposed budget is not approved) is \$2,018,210. Proposed is a budget that includes the addition of the Communications Specialist position and Board approved salaries (\$2,107,176 or 7.6% increase). Options include; leaving in the Communications Specialist position but removing the Board approved salaries (\$2,091,176 or 6.8%) and removing the Communications Specialist position and Board approved salaries (\$2,014,538 or 2.9% increase).

Salary (all in) for the Communications Specialist position is \$76,638. Districts across the Country are moving in this direction. COVID has made it more of an urgent need. We have been hearing for years about a communications person or marketing person. Without a newspaper we do not have an easy way for those who are not a family in the district to receive information. Noted were some of the responsibilities of the position (included with agenda); writing communication policies and procedures for handling sensitive information, putting together a comprehensive communication plan, disseminating facts about school to the public through media.

Regarding the Board approved salary adjustments (\$16,000), there is an SAU Sub-committee looking at salaries. Should the committee wish to make adjustments, there would be a line item within the budget to accommodate that.

The SAU Budget Sub-committee felt strongly about maintaining the position of Communications Specialist in the proposed budget.

Member Roy remarked the Communication Specialist position has been questioned. It is not just responding to Right-to-Know requests as was spoken of. Frankly, you need a dedicated person who is in charge of the communications coming out of the building. The full-time jobs of those employed by the SAU are to ensure that our schools are running. In a crisis communication situation you need someone who is dedicated and knows how to do that. Superintendent Corey is a fantastic public speaker and could certainly do that, but that should not be his job. His job is much larger than that; spans our entire SAU. This role is one many school districts are employing, and one that ensures the communication that is being given to the public is consistent.

The comment was made earlier of why it would not be a part-time position given the current atmosphere is an exception. The need for communications has evolved over the years COVID notwithstanding. COVID has put a spotlight on the importance of the position. She does not agree that it should be a part-time or short term position. As is the case with any position, if it becomes a situation where the position is no longer needed as a full time equivalent or at all, there is always the ability to eliminate it.

The person in this position would not be looking to communicate through a single forum, but through all the different available avenues of communication.

Member Mann reiterated the discussion of such a position has been going on for several years. The level of work has increased as has the challenge for good solid public relation connections. He spoke of the amount of work involved in conducting public forums, etc. to engage and inform the public. He would like to see the skillset of senior staff focused where intended; curriculum and curriculum delivery.

He commented on the uniqueness of the district in that they are owners/landlords of the 4 Lund Lane facility as well as the water system that supplies not only this district but the COOP School District and all of the area in Monument Square. When experiencing issues with the water system, our educational experts were being taxed by having to become water specialists. Having the responsibility for the communication role is seen as similar, where the educational staff is tasked with responsibilities beyond education.

This role has been needed for years. This is the time, and we need to really get behind it, and make a conscious effort to bring the community along as to why this is needed.

Vice Chairman Kellner questioned when the Board would be made aware of the results of the compensation study. Member Mann spoke of a meeting having been conducted. He has engaged in discussions with the Superintendent around some of the work. He was uncertain when the committee would meet next.

Chairman Fareed spoke of having questioned what was involved in responding to the large Right-to-Know filing. It is still not known what the total cost/manhours were. There were thousands of pieces of paper involved in the documentation request. When she asked the Assistant Superintendent who did that work, the response was everyone across SAU41 through the hierarchy beyond the principals, e.g., specialists, teachers, etc. We had to respond to the filing specific to the language within it, and it required the unearthing of thousands of emails, documents, and the redacting, through legal counsel, of anything that was protected. It took 6 weeks to answer one Right-to-Know request. Thousands of copies printed, and our Assistant Superintendent, Principals, classroom teachers, specialists doing work that is not to their highest level of skill.

The number of communication-based issues that arise within the SAU and responded to by a wide variety of employees is great. These employees are suspending policy work, strategic planning work, etc. to make tens of thousands of photocopies, prepare press releases, disseminate information to families, ensure postings on the website are correct, etc. The job description is a good start but needs to be expanded not only to show the scope of the responsibilities, but to identify where the burden of that workload will be reduced as a result, and the benefits of having a point person for the public to communicate with.

Member Mann suggested that material could be developed and provided when the Board is engaging the public in the budget process.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented on it being difficult to quantify the amount of time spent by her office, that of the Business Administrator, building Principals and secretaries on responding to the Right-to-Know filing. For one request, the legal cost was \$8,036.50.

- ESSER I, II, III Funding - Update/Discussion

In 2019-2020 the district was allocated \$7,918.03 in CARES Act / Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding. That was used to purchase 31 Chromebooks for remote learning.

The 2020-2021 allocation from CRRSA Act/ESSER II funding was \$30,859.17. This could be utilized for educational needs as a result of COVID, learning loss, diagnostic tools to assess and address learning loss and learning gaps, to improve indoor air quality. Budgeted items are proposed and approved/rejected. Nothing that we proposed can be part of what is currently budgeted for; has to be in addition to (cannot supplant the budget). We were in the middle of an energy project, which took away HVAC items. What was proposed were both math and ELA directed work via an online learning tool subscription with content specific assignments pushed out by the teacher based on need. That was roughly \$5,800. This past summer we had a summer learning academy and there was data supported targeted math, targeted ELA and cross-curricular skill deficits and gaps. Some were by invite and some were open to anyone who wanted to participate in a book club with their teacher, but in addition there were targeted dates when we were reviewing vocabulary and understanding the content. That was about \$25,000. There still are open items and that will be good for another two years. The hope is to continue the summer learning academy.

The 2021-2022 American Rescue Plan Act/Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund known as ESSER III is currently being proposed and approved/denied. In May, there was a requirement to submit a great deal of data around the number of in-person and remote students and how many days students were out of school due to quarantining. In June, they proposed a reopening plan and then had to send out a proposed use of funds. All of those happened prior to being allocated any funds. A lot of this was big planning based on feedback received from the community either via email or public input but also the internal stakeholder meetings that identify need and how to support need. A survey was recently sent out to all families seeking input.

The fund is for essentially everything ESSER II was to cover; high quality diagnostic tools to assess and address student learning loss, student learning gaps, resulting from disruption in educational services. Inspecting, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve indoor air quality in school facilities, prevention and mitigation strategies for COVID and a mandatory 20% of the funding to address learning loss.

In the proposal submitted over the summer, there were items such as decrease class size to proactively address learning gaps and learning loss and learning academy along with intervention strategies throughout the year.

As of this time, we have a partial allocation of slightly over \$45,000. Eventually that number will go up to \$69,305. That is to be used over the next 2.5 years.

Community feedback received from the survey was to provide additional supports for math and writing instruction, additional supports for homework in both math and writing, decrease class size, increase supports for social emotional learning, and COVID testing.

There is a different source of funding for COVID testing should there be a desire to pursue. There is not yet an approved budget as additional community input is waited for.

Vice Chairman Kellner questioned if there is the opportunity to utilize the funding to accommodate additional outdoor classroom space. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug responded for a 20' x 40' outdoor pavilion, the cost is over \$35,000 without concrete, which is expensive. A great deal more requirements must be met for building projects, including a requirement for 20% of the funding to be used to address learning loss.

Chairman Fareed questioned, if a number of students in a particular cohort were identified as requiring significant assistance to get caught up from being out last year, could the funds be used to augment the cost of an existing educator for that purpose. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated you could create new

positions and we have done that in other districts, with this funding. It is permitted. An existing employee could apply for a new position that was created. Chairman Fareed questioned if a specialist currently at a 0.8 position could become a 1.0 position to address learning loss and was told that could be done.

There are four open paraprofessional positions at HPS. Some of those are specifically to address needs identified in legal documents. We are stretched thin.

Member Mann commented learning loss is something that has been a relatively recent concern given the operating models we have been in due to the pandemic. If the need cannot be fully addressed through use of the allocated funds, he would be interested in hearing what the Board can do to provide the necessary supports.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug commented being in a global pandemic and there being so much in society that is weighing on everybody, it is impacting everyone's ability to make decisions, problem solve, be available to learn. But we were open. While our averages in state testing do not look like they did two years prior, if you look at state level data, we did a phenomenal job, which is 100% attributed to who we are as a school district; our teachers and support staff are phenomenal. They worked tirelessly, and it was not easy.

This year, same thing; not easy, but they show up, put a smile on their face, and that is the normalcy for the students. It is not perfect. We are wearing masks, cannot socialize with everyone, but we are getting there.

Chairman Fareed commented on the importance of recognizing that learning loss happens every summer with all of our students. We know what to do and how to do it, we just need to identify the gaps.

- Professional Development - Update

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated last June, during the Professional Development (PD) days, teachers reviewed all of their students' progress and looked at, as a whole, are we seeing a difference in what we would expect them to be at, at the end of a particular grade. They also looked at individual students that might have a particular gap or need and identified all of those. That data was moved to their receiving teachers. During the PD days in August, teachers were given time to plan for the students they had in front of them rather than waiting 6 weeks to figure out areas of need.

On August 30th, a well-known educator, Thomas Guskey, University of Kentucky, spoke to all of the teachers of differentiating learning with mastery post-pandemic. Specifically, given the pandemic and where we are seeing maybe some strengths in areas we typically have not seen, but also some gaps in certain areas, how do we identify their skills and then bring them to mastery across all standards. They were given that opening and then given time with their teams to plan for the students they have in front of them; how are we going to maybe spiral in an additional lesson to reinforce certain skills that might be weaker this year over prior years.

In addition, we have had in-house professional development on many subjects; some for smaller groups and some for the entire school such as trauma informed schools, social emotional learning, mindfulness. During the November and December professional development days there will be suicide prevention training and looking at curriculum both from an implementation and evaluation given what we are seeing with COVID and potential learning gaps, but also from a resources perspective and ensuring once again that we are on the same page and the resources that are being utilized are documented appropriately within our curriculum.

Asked if feedback is sought from staff following these professional development days, she stated that is typically done after the November date. Pre-COVID they did "For Teachers by Teachers" where teachers

presented their own specialties and teachers signed up for different things they wanted to learn. Feedback was sought on that.

- 4 Lund Lane Lease - Update

Member Mann informed the Board the committee met prior to the September Board meeting and will meet again next week. They have subject matter expertise looking at commercial space and relating that to the SAU office building. The SAU office building is a unique entity. It is not a private residence but not quite commercial space either. The idea of a triple net lease that would equate to a commercial property does not fit the SAU building (do not pay taxes).

Efforts are underway to put a value on the building and relate that to other options. From there, the committee will be able to build a framework for the lease. The focus is less about the term of the lease and more about the components that the lease has to be built around. There likely needs to be a secondary discussion around the term. The other aspect to consider is the idea of renovations.

Chairman Fareed spoke of fit-up costs that may be required to make a particular commercial space suitable for this use. Member Mann remarked the rule of thumb is \$102/sq. ft. for fit-up.

DELIBERATIONS

There being no objection, the Board went out of the regular order of business to take up the Memorandum of Understanding with the Hollis Police Department.

- To see what action the Board wishes to take regarding the Memorandum of Understanding with the Hollis Police Department

**MOTION BY MEMBER KELLNER TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE HOLLIS SCHOOL DISTRICT AND HOLLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR THE SCHOOL RESOURCE AND COMMUNITY POLICING OFFICER, AS CORRECTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MANN**

ON THE QUESTION

Officer Adam Kushmerek stated he has been in Hollis since 2016, and in the schools since August. There will be a few community policing aspects he will eventually be tackling, but up until now it has been full days between HUES and HPS.

He has made one round (half hour) in every classroom thus far. Going forward, his intent is to spend about half an hour to 45 minutes in every classroom/month with diverse topics of discussion, e.g., safety tips.

Asked if he is seeing any particular challenges besides carpool, he remarked a personal challenge for him is being in a school setting versus a patrol setting. Being in a classroom having all of those eyes on you as a teacher has been a big adjustment. Staff, faculty, and students have been very welcoming.

Chairman Fareed questioned the professional development required of the SRO. Officer Kushmerek spoke of the basic SRO course he attended (40-hour). There is an advanced SRO course he will be attending in the coming months. The DARE Officer School is an 80-hour course he will be attending the first week of November. As a Police Officer he is required to do X amount of hours/year for that certification as well.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug noted the MOU is approved once by the Board and signed annually. Should there be major changes from year to year, it would come back before the Board.

Vice Chairman Kellner noted there remain references within the MOU to the Hollis-Brookline High School; Section M5. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated the correction would be made.

Chairman Fareed commented it is her hope that the SRO will not only fulfill the requirements of the MOU, but that he has an opportunity to participate in the kind of professional development that is being done with suicide prevention. Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated that is mandatory for everyone.

Chairman Fareed spoke of the number of students and adults in the buildings having different backgrounds and the importance of sensitivity to how we speak without inadvertently hurting one another. She is hopeful the SROs take the same kind of professional development that our employees do around being thoughtful in how we communicate with our students and community-at-large.

MOTION WITHDRAWN

MOTION BY MEMBER KELLNER TO APPROVE THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE HOLLIS SCHOOL DISTRICT AND HOLLIS POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR THE SCHOOL RESOURCE AND COMMUNITY POLICING OFFICER, AS CORRECTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER MANN

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

The Board returned to the regular order of business.

- To see what action the Board wishes to take regarding Policy **IGE** – Parental Objections to Specific Course Material

Given its second reading;

MOTION BY MEMBER ARTHUR TO AMEND POLICY IGE – PARENTAL OBJECTIONS TO SPECIFIC COURSE MATERIAL BY REPLACING “HIS/HER” WITH “THEIR” AND ACCEPT THE SECOND READING, AS AMENDED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY

ON THE QUESTION

A form developed by the Hollis School District Principals was reviewed at the Leadership Team meeting conducted earlier in the day. As there may be an instance where a parent has an objection to course material in the elementary schools as well as the middle or high schools, it is believed appropriate for there to be a single form utilized across all 6 schools. The form will be reviewed by the principals to determine its applicability to different material.

The request had been made that there be reference in the language of the policy identifying how/where the form can be obtained. Noted was a typo at the end of the second paragraph.

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

- To rescind policy GBEC: Drug-Free Workplace Policy, and replace with policy ADB/GBEC: Drug-Free Workplace & Drug-Free Schools

**MOTION BY MEMBER ARTHUR TO RESCIND POLICY GBEC – DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY**

ON THE QUESTION

The policy will be replaced with policy ADB/GBEC: Drug-Free Workplace & Drug-Free Schools.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug spoke of duplicate policies and work done to combine them. As part of that effort, this policy should have been rescinded. The audit that was conducted mentioned policy GBEC as an outdated policy. It was simply never rescinded when the new policy was adopted.

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER MANN TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER ROY

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

The October 6, 2021, meeting of the Hollis School Board adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Date _____ Signed _____