

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD**  
**SEPTEMBER 15, 2021**  
**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board on Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 6:35 p.m. at the Hollis Brookline Middle School Library.

Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, presided:

Members of the Board Present:           Tom Solon, Vice Chairman  
  Beth Janine Williams, Secretary  
  Elizabeth Brown  
  Kate Stoll  
  Cindy VanCoughnett  
  Krista Whalen

Members of the Board Absent:

Also in Attendance:                   Andrew Corey, Superintendent  
  Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction  
  Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator  
  Tim Girzone, Principal, Hollis Brookline High School  
  Patrick West, Principal, Hollis Brookline Middle School  
  Samantha Shepard, Student Council Representative

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**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**AMEND ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT**

In accordance with NH RSA [195:18,III\(i\)](#), Vice Chairman Solon provided an explanation of the proposed amendments to the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's Articles of Agreement.

The proposed amendments are intended to bring the Articles of Agreement (AoA) into alignment with existing structure and operation of the district. None of the proposed amendments will have any impact on budget or apportionment of expenses between towns or change the scope or operation of the district.

Vice Chairman Solon noted, over the last school year, there were several meetings during which the Board discussed a review of the AoA to capture all amendments that had taken place over the years and ensure the document that was being publicly displayed incorporated those changes. That work was completed and presented at the March 17, 2021, School Board meeting during which the Board received a certified copy of the AoA.

As part of that process, the Board had the opportunity to review the entire document and discovered there were items within it that were perceived as being either inaccurate or not current. The Board agreed to undertake the effort to bring the AoA up-to-date in terminology, which involves some changes that don't impact the operation, function or funding. The original AoA was written before the COOP existed. The desire is for the AoA to match current practice.

The reasoning behind addressing the issue at this time as opposed to during the Annual Meeting was because of the full agenda that was before the community at that time, which included citizen petition warrant articles related to the AoA. There was concern that putting forth this article would not only extend what was already going to be a long meeting but could cause confusion with the articles. The decision was made to postpone

until school was back in session, community members back in Town, and every effort made to publicize this information to provide the public as much opportunity to understand what is being done, why it is being done, and to participate in the special district meeting scheduled for October 5, 2021.

The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public an opportunity to review and comment on the elements of the warrant article. The warrant article can be changed prior to the special meeting.

The proposed amendments are as follows:

### **Article 1**

- Amend the language that refers to “junior and senior high school district” to read “middle and senior high school district”.

There are structural and functional differences between a junior high and a middle school. It is felt important to have an accurate description of how we operate in the COOP.

### **Article 2**

- Amend the language that reads: “Effective with the election of 2003” with “Effective with the election of 2021”.

That results in re-indexing the years used to determine how many members get voted in. It is a rotating cycle. For Brookline it is a three-year rotation and there are three members. In Hollis, it is a three year rotation and 4 members; every third year there are two seats that come up for election. The amendment does not change the cycle or the number of people.

- Amend the language that reads: “apportionment as specified above would be subject to review for possible amendment at least in March, 2005” to identify “March, 2023”.

The change would reflect current status.

### **Articles 4 and 8**

- Deleted in entirety.

Article 4 is regarding the leasing and use of what the article calls the White Building and many in Town refer to as the Farley Building. That building is no longer deemed suitable for use by the school system. The desire is to remove the reference to the leasing of it as it is not how the district operates.

Article 8 is in regard to trust funds from pre-existing districts. That turned out not to be something that was involved. That reference would be removed to avoid people searching for legacy trust funds that never existed.

### **Article 10**

- Amend by inserting “as required by RSA” following “provide transportation for students. To acknowledge there are State RSAs that impact obligations to the provision of transportation. It is not solely up to the discretion of the COOP Administration to make these decisions. They have to do it in line with State law. We not only provide transportation in accordance with State law, we provide transportation above and

beyond the requirements, but certainly don't want to imply that we are able to act autonomously without regard for State RSA.

### **Article 13**

- Deleted in entirety.

References the existence of two joint meetings among the three districts. We don't specifically hold those meetings. However, we have other activities that accomplish similar goals, e.g., meetings of the school board chairmen and district administration, SAU41 Governing Board meetings. What we are recognizing is that we don't have those meetings. To leave the language in would essentially be saying we believe they should exist. The requirement to have those meetings would entail the administration and all school boards adding two additional meetings to their annual agenda, which would be difficult to accomplish.

Any deleted articles would be left in the document and identified as removed with reference to when that occurred to maintain consistency of article numbers and allow anyone reviewing the document to be able to see coherency from prior documents to the current document and understand the history.

The hope is that by getting information regarding the proposed amendments out through the schools, the Towns, newsprint, and social media, the communication has been satisfactory. He encouraged anyone viewing this meeting to share the news of the meeting with others. The meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on October 5th at the Hollis Brookline High School.

*Chairman Deurloo Babcock opened the floor for public comment at 6:47 p.m.*

Joe Garruba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis

Spoke of the remarks made that there are functional differences between a middle school and a junior high school. He requested additional information be provided on the differences.

Vice Chairman Solon remarked it was made clear to him that we do operate as a middle school. The change that is being proposed will reflect how we function currently.

Assistant Superintendent Bergskaug stated a middle school model is composed of teams of students. We have two 7<sup>th</sup> grade and two 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams. Teams have core classes and teachers work together and sort of wrap around students and look at them from all perspectives rather than just seeing the student as the math student, for example. They do more cross-curricular activities, team building, and the like.

Often times when you have a junior high model it is 7, 8, and 9, and a high school is 10, 11, 12. A junior high is more specific to individuals and not really focusing on looking at the students as a whole.

Principal Girzone noted part of the programming here is the use of the common planning time within the schedule. Teachers of common students across a team will have planning periods together. It is a bit more of a closely knit approach to educating the younger student.

Mr. Garruba remarked if there is documentation, standards, or reference that supports that, it may be helpful in the future.

He spoke of having re-read the AoA following the last meeting. He spoke of RSA 195 noting there are quite a few very specific differences, based on the day the COOP was formed, e.g., time limits for certain changes. When he first read the amendment, it seemed as though it was re-instantiating the district as of the date, we would approve Article 1. He suggested, for the sake of clarity, the article be worded similar to “As of 2021, the school for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students shall be known as the Hollis Brookline Middle School.”.

Vice Chairman Solon stated his impression the desire was for the document to provide clarity that we still have the same date of origination.

Mr. Garruba noted there is a section that identifies that date. He was looking to ensure it is not conflicting to a common person who is reading the document; might be clearer to spell it out in the language of Article 1.

Kristine Opalka, 105 Mooar Hill Road, Hollis

Feels Article 13 needs to remain, and the meetings conducted. The AoA is a legal document that requires the meetings to occur. She questioned why the language would have been included in the original AoA. The original architects of the COOP thought this was important. Workforce housing is being built and marketed in Hollis and an 80-unit workforce housing development movement in Brookline. There are 55+ communities in Hollis., etc. She questioned how this will impact the schools and how the school boards are planning for this. Dialogue between the school boards is good.

She stated concern with the process of reviewing the AoA and questioned why any committee that was tasked with reviewing, updating, discussing the articles didn't catch any of these needed changes before now. The White Building ceased functioning in 2005. She understands there isn't the desire for additional meetings, but they must occur. It is a contract between two towns/parties.

Things change, population fluctuates; all affecting funding. No one ever considered a pandemic, remote learning, learning loss. That will not be addressed right away. If the Board wants to pick dates for a meeting to discuss amendments, including apportionment, when voters are likely to be available to participate, a fall meeting date would be the time not during the winter months and one meeting not separate meetings for apportionment and other amendments.

She stated the desire to ensure, in her mind, that she was interpreting this correctly; that the apportionment clock is set to be reviewed 5 years from the January 20, 2020 vote and has nothing to do with this meeting coming up.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock stated she could assure her that this is not apportionment; those requirements are statutory.

Ms. Opalka reiterated she wants it to be stated clearly.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock stated the proposed amendments have nothing to do with apportionment, and the meeting is scheduled for October.

Ms. Opalka stated she was referring to apportionment and other amendments.

Member Brown asked for clarification; there seems to be a complaint that no one caught this up until now, and so now a sub-committee of the Board acknowledged that there are these issues and so we would like to address it now, but then on the other hand you would like these issues addressed with apportionment, which cannot be addressed until 2025. She asked if the desire was for the Board to not address these errors until 2025.

Ms. Opalka stated she was not saying that; she just thinks that in the future it would be nice to have the two meetings together. She feels very strongly that it should not be in the dead of winter.

Vice Chairman Solon addressed the question of why it was in the original AoA to have the two meetings by stating his understanding, from the memory of others, that when this was written originally there was not a clear understanding of all of the inner actions that would take place. The day-to-day communications between districts and among the districts appears to be working well from a functional administrative standpoint, board-to-board, which is what this is seeking to address. The SAU41 Governing Board meetings, which occur a minimum of 4 times/year provide a well-defined and publicized venue. His understanding is that was not completely understood or anticipated and that without the expectation that something of that nature was going to occur, these two meetings were proposed. Once the structure became realized and the understanding of the legal requirement for those meetings to occur, he believes, it was perceived that those were fulfilling the obligation.

Having the legal review done, the wording was viewed to be inconsistent with the SAU41 Governing Board meetings, which are meetings of the three school boards coming together.

Ms. Opalka stated her belief, at one time, there were major differences between the Brookline and Hollis School systems. They wanted to be able to have these kids come into the high school at the same level.

She questioned what would have been of mutual interest that would have been discussed in those meetings. She requested the Board think about that as a group before deciding to remove this language.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock commented what may be confusing is that this article was written before the authors had an understanding that we would be required to have an SAU governing board. We meet 4 times a year as a board. The COOP School Board meets with the Hollis School Board and the Brookline School Board in a public meeting with public input four times a year. We are doing what is required by this article.

Ms. Opalka stated she understood that and is why she asked the question can you think of things that could be discussed and requested they review the agendas and minutes because she is not certain it is reflective of that.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Commented on the language in the existing Article 13 that states “for the purpose of discussing issues of mutual interest” noting as someone who has served on a school board and served on the SAU41 Governing Board, she sees that as the Board’s role versus the role of the administrators, building administration, and teachers. Perhaps the mutual interest is that discussion around migrating from the elementary schools to the middle school to the high school. It is those conversations that happen at that building administration or even at the Superintendent level. She feels that still will happen because it is not a part of what the Board does.

***The Public Hearing was declared closed at 7:07 p.m.***

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_