

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 10, 2021
MEETING MINUTES**

A Public Hearing was conducted by the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. for Hollis voters.

Holly Deurloo Babcock, Chairman, presided:

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

Members of the School Board Absent:

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
Gina Bergskaug, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Bob Thompson, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
James O'Shaughnessy, Esq., Drummond Woodsum

Due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis, and in accordance with Governor Sununu's [Emergency Order #12](#) pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-04](#), this hearing is permitted to be conducted electronically.

As stated on the notice, the hearing was conducted electronically via [Zoom](#) (Meeting ID: 972 1453 9607 Passcode: rmPJ6x).

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARINGS
PETITION WARRANT ARTICLES**

Chairman Deurloo Babcock explained the purpose of the Public Hearing was to obtain public input on the posted Petition Warrant Articles, and went over the rules to be observed during the Zoom meeting.

Noted was that the articles being presented are Citizen Petition Warrant Articles. The Board will take a position on the articles, but is not the author of them.

Petition Warrant Article 1:

“Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year's actual amount of local taxes raised, by more than 4%.”

Chairman Deurloo Babcock opened the floor for public comment at 6:33 p.m.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Provided a presentation (can be viewed [here](#)) on behalf of all Brookline voters. The petition requires a 3/5 majority to pass. He referenced NH RSA [32:5-b](#) and the number of towns and cities that have adopted a tax cap.

A long-term view of the COOP indicates from FY05 to FY22 (17 years), spending has been up over 79%. At the same time, student population has decreased 6%. That equates to a student spending that is up 82% during those 17 years. For comparison. Inflation from CPI-U is up 37% or about 1.8% annually. COOP spending is increasing at more than double the rate of inflation.

A graph was displayed depicting his calculated cost per pupil, which is basically the operating budget and all warrant articles divided by the number of students in a particular year. The district was down around \$11,300 in 2005 and it has been growing rapidly, especially in the past three years (roughly \$18,200 in FY18 and 19). It will be up around \$21,500 this year. While inflation has been about 37%, the cost per pupil has been up 82%. We are more than doubling the rate of inflation in the COOP.

The COOP spending is on an unsustainable trajectory. We have decreasing population and rapidly increasing spending. What is more alarming this year is that we will see large tax rate increases for the COOP. Mr. Pauer provided numbers that were presented by the Budget Committee on February 2nd. There will be a tax increase of 15.5% for Hollis and 15.9% for Brookline. A tax cap would prevent this sort of increase from occurring.

Displayed was a bar graph showing the student population and the operating budget for the COOP. In the last three years inflation has been 4% and student population has been down 4%, but our budget has been up over 13.3%. NESDEC projections suggest the population is not expected to go up in the next five years for the COOP.

The budget should not be going up at this alarming rate. We have the third year of our sanbornized teacher contract that is hitting us this year and next year there will be a sanbornized increase. We also have the turf field that we are paying for.

Mr. Pauer requested taxpayers consider the 2% tax cap proposed last year. It achieved nearly 40% approval, and requires 60%. This year the citizens have decided to go for a 4% tax cap, which is far above any inflation that has been seen in recent memory. Four percent seems to be a reasonable guardrail and provides a reasonable and sustainable spending profile for the COOP. He encouraged all voters to support the tax cap for reasonable and sustainable spending for the COOP.

Cindy Ryherd, 150 Witches Spring Road, Hollis

Believes the article was simply being presented this evening, and would be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock clarified the intent is for this to be voted on during the Annual Meeting, which is hoped will be an in-person meeting, and one for which a schedule is being worked on. The date will be decided later on in the evening (April 10th or 17th or an alternate date).

David Sacks, 23 Jambard Road, Hollis

Questioned the margin the article is required to achieve to pass, and was told it is 60%.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

Is retired and moved to Hollis about 5 years ago. He is appalled at the increases in the taxes and revenue being spent by the school system. He does not have any children in school, but does not mind paying his fair share, which in Hollis is 70% of his property taxes. These kind of increases just demonstrate that there is poor fiscal management in our COOP school system. People need to pay attention to this and something needs to be done about it or people like him and his wife will be driven out of Town.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq.

Under RSA 32:5-b, the vote required is 3/5 rather than a majority vote.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Is not in support of a tax cap based on impending legislation in Concord that could drastically impact the State contributions to school budgets. Having a tax cap would be a huge detriment to the students, Administration, and the School Board in their ability to create a budget that would sustain our district.

The CPP at the COOP is comparable to many districts across the State. The problem is connected to how we fund public education in the State. It will not be solved in a positive way by implementing a tax cap.

Bryan Loveland, 17 Toddy Brook Road, Hollis

Stated his opposition to an arbitrary tax cap that would not allow any leeway in the case of unexpected expenses and uncertainty regarding State funding.

Doug Davidson, 85 Rideout Road, Hollis

The rates we are looking at are unsustainable from a long-term standpoint. We need to look at that. Mr. Penkacik's comments were spot on. We're throwing a lot of our seniors and others under the bus because they cannot afford these rates of increases.

It is a tradition here in Hollis and in the State to fund our schools locally with nominal amounts coming from the State relative to the overall budget. That is a dog whistle for a State income tax; let's call it what it is.

We need to pay particular attention to the incredible growth in the staff and the budget of the SAU office. As a former high school teacher he can tell you the classroom is where the rubber meets the road. We have done a good job of keeping student-teacher ratio in check in terms of allowing optimal situations in the classroom, but the SAU office, with all due respect, has a budget that is growing too fast. He supports the tax cap.

Patrick Haggerty, 25 Parker Road, Brookline

Has a young child who has not yet entered the school district. Does not see a problem with implementing a 4% cap on spending. It is not as if we are cutting budgets, we are just saying you cannot raise the budget more than that. As those in charge of educating our children, you want to give the students the best education possible. We have a great reputation in the district. He questioned how long he will wait for his 2-year old to enter the schools, how much he will pay, and if the schools would continue to be worth that money as the student population continues to decline (if a decline continues as predicted). He is in support of the article.

Cindy Ryherd, 150 Witches Spring Road, Hollis

Questioned when the School Board would provide its response to the proposal, and was informed the Board would take its positions on the articles following the public hearing. The Board will have an opportunity to comment at that time.

The public comment period was closed at 6:50 p.m.

Petition Warrant Article 2

“Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District on the second Tuesday of March?”

Chairman Deurloo Babcock opened the floor for public comment at 6:51 p.m.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Spoke on behalf of the citizens of Hollis and Brookline that put forward this petition to adopt the SB2 official ballot voting for the Hollis Brookline COOP.

SB2 is a way to conduct our school district meeting in two sessions. It consists of a deliberative session and a ballot voting session. The deliberative session is the same format as our current meeting; open to all voters with debate, discussion, amendments, and motions. The purpose of the deliberative session is to finalize the warrant articles for the second session (ballot voting). You finalize the warrant articles in the deliberative session and then go to the ballot voting session (held on Town election day). The voting can be done anytime; polls are open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. or you can vote by absentee ballot.

The operating budget is one of the big things you have to consider. You will have a choice on the ballot of the operating budget or the default budget (reduced by one-time expenses in previous year). The proposed operating budget, depending on outcome of deliberative session, can be higher or lower than the default budget.

Advantages of SB2 is it increases voter participation. In Brookline we had almost 1,000 people that voted in the Brookline School District because we have SB2 for our school district. There are two opportunities to participate; deliberative session and/or ballot voting session. You also get at least 30 days after the deliberative session to consider what you will be voting on. You can do fact checking on things that have been said. There is also the privacy of ballot voting, the flexibility to vote any time on election day, and the ability for absentee voting. You don't have to remain at a town meeting that goes to midnight or later.

The disadvantages of SB2 are that you have to communicate well to the public, before and after deliberative session, regarding what you want to do and what the positions are on the warrant articles. You cannot table articles; they will be voted upon. They may be modified, but they will always be voted on. Another disadvantage is that you can't do reconsideration and bring back articles multiple times. It is either passed or defeated. There is an exception for an operating budget if it fails, but that has been resolved by having the default budget.

We have had meetings that have been one session, two sessions, and even five sessions. It is difficult for voters to commit to go to these meetings versus doing a deliberative session and a ballot voting session. Last year we had two sessions; one for apportionment only and then drive-thru voting in June. In 2018, we had 14 hours of meetings.

He spoke of attendance at SB2 in Brookline. There have been quite a few people voting; almost 1,000. The deliberative session is about the same as our traditional meeting was when we started it. There are more

opportunities to participate with the two sessions. It provides a longer and more informed discussion on all warrant articles and ensures privacy and ability to vote for all voters.

Barbara King, 15 Barton Road, Hollis

Is not opposed to SB2, but is opposed to the fact that the 28 citizens that signed this petition aren't listening to the will of the voters from last year when they voted down SB2. It continues to get voted down, and in a crazy year with a pandemic we're throwing it back on the warrant. One of the biggest arguments against SB2 is that the deliberative session can be taken over. While our current meeting is being taken over by 28 people that have put four petition warrant articles on because the bar to get a petition article is 25 people, they are actually convincing her that they would take over a deliberative session to get what they want. She wishes they would listen to the will of the voters and maybe not every year, but how about every other year we put this up.

Kat McGhee, 237 Hayden Road, Hollis

We do hear this over and over again, and although the presentation from Mr. Pauer was quite informative, she believes there to have been some things left out that are critical in terms of context of what we would gain or lose. Democracy is hard; our town meetings are long, but it is the purest form of democracy. She spoke of it being a wonderful thing to be able to attend and receive the explanations of the context around what we are voting for and why. She has had the pleasure of serving in a flatorial district; four towns, two of which were SB2. She attended SB2 meetings and is aware of the complaints put forth following adoption of SB2. Something reiterated by former State Rep. Jim Belanger, many times in articles he has written against SB2, is that the deliberative session does not afford the same level of debate.

The warrant articles are merely presented, they are not debated and discussed at the level that they are at town meeting. That level of understanding is not there. What was glossed over but very significant for many of the smaller towns is that a group of people at a deliberative session could decide they want to change a budget level item and remove \$800,000. If successful at the deliberative session, that is what goes on the ballot and there is no discussion about it, no way to change it, and no way to table it.

Patrick Haggerty, 25 Parker Road, Brookline

Understands where the previous speaker was coming from although she believes the speaker contradicted herself. When you talk about pure democracy; showing up at the meetings is an important part of that. If the deliberative session is something found to be important voters should attend. This battle of attrition that has happened at the last few COOP meetings where it has gone late into the night, they basically wait until enough people have left and they vote on whatever it is they wanted and pass it. He believes this provides that breathing room between forming the ideas that we want to vote on and voting on them. It gives people a chance to talk about them. If you don't like it then don't vote for it.

The percentage of voters that voted for or against SB2 was barely considered a majority of both Hollis and Brookline. There was not a high participation rate and the majority of those in attendance rule. The will of the people was not represented by the picture from last year.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Is opposed to the petition warrant article for multiple reasons many of which have been stated previously. The Honorable Jim Belanger who served on the municipal and county committee for the State house for many years and is well versed in this area has spoken passionately year after year against SB2. Towns that adopt SB2 see a decrease in participation in deliberative sessions allowing small, yet very vocal groups to commandeer a meeting, and propose and vote on changes that are detrimental to the district, our students and the overall budget.

Eric Pauer's presentation really glossed over this one; where he said attendance in these deliberative sessions is consistent. She saw numbers of 60, 40, 100, 69 people making those decisions. It is easy for a small, dedicated minority to commandeer a meeting. Although there is excitement around all-day voting, it does not provide an opportunity for debate. A small group, which isn't the majority of these two districts and doesn't represent what they want for their students and what impacts their property values, could dictate what will be on the warrant. Noted was that SB2 is really easy to vote in and really difficult to vote out.

Maureen Maisttison, 60 Milton Place, Hollis

Is opposed to SB2 for reasons stated previously. Voting this down year after year has become tiresome. She pleaded with Mr. Pauer and the others to please stop putting this to the legislative body. Listen to the will of the people and let it go.

David Sacks, 43 Jambard Road, Hollis

Is a strong supporter of schools and education funding, and also a supporter of SB2. He lived in a town that had SB2 and but for one year every year it was very possible to have thorough debate on every article. You agreed on the language of the warrant, and 30 days later had a chance to vote on it. The biggest benefit of SB2 for him is the absentee ballot. There are families with young children and others who cannot stay and participate in every vote at town meeting. Under SB2, they get to voice their opinion on every article.

He finds SB2 to be a way for greater participation, which equals greater democracy. There was one year in Bedford where a small group of people took over and did get some massive changes. The purpose of our job is to be committed and participating voters and to show up. If we don't show up, even in the current format, things can get taken over. He supports SB2.

Mike Colena, 7 Marys Way Lane, Hollis

Supports SB2. He and his wife are two of those people that are unable to attend meetings that run until all hours of the morning. They have had 3 children go through the school system; 1 is currently in. They are very interested and very invested in the quality of our school system. That said, in their time in this town, when attending meetings, they have never been able to stay until voting time.

He believes it valuable to have the session where voters can voice and discuss but as stated, it would also be valuable to then have a month to research facts and details and then make informed decisions rather than decisions that are made after exhaustion of hours of mindless debate.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

Supports SB2. Every taxpayer in this town should have the opportunity to voice their opinion on legislation that comes up regarding the school system. He commented on how long the meetings run, and his inability to stay until concluded. He pays a lot of taxes for the school system and expects to be able to vote his opinion on these items without having to stay at a meeting until 2:00 a.m.

Joseph Garruba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis

Spoke of having trouble raising his hand on the Zoom call. That is why he came to the meeting location. He spoke against the petition article for SB2. The benefit of our traditional town meeting is that all voters get to see and hear from both sides of an issue. He believes town politics has largely been free from the partisan ranker that national politics suffers from. Seeing and hearing directly from your neighbors and learning their viewpoints helps us understand each other and work together towards the best solutions. The SB2 system allows voters to be influenced by advertising campaigns and partisans. People often seek out information that supports or reinforces their own biases. Look at the national news channels. Without the complete picture from a traditional town meeting, our local politics will suffer from the same divergence of opinions and fractured nature as it has on the national level. He requested a no vote on the article to preserve the great system that we have.

Asked if he was aware of other Zoom participants having difficulty, Assistant Superintendent Thompson stated he sent a message to all participants in chat saying if there is an issue with hand raising to use the chat function to indicate their desire to speak.

Lynnae Day, 145 Broad Street, Hollis

Stated the chat feature is disabled. Chairman Deurloo Babcock provided her cell phone number and stated participants could text her if having difficulty and wishing to participate.

Assistant Superintendent Thompson noted a message received indicating that the chat function was working.

Rob Mann, 29 Nartoff Road, Hollis

Opposes the perennial warrant article. This comes up every year, and we go through this debate every year. We heard the same reasons for having it and the pros and cons. All it serves to do is take up time in our regular meeting. For folks that put forward remarks about all of the great things in a deliberative session, he would ask each and every one to consider that we already have that. It is called public hearings, which were held this week with very little participation. There is also a public hearing on the SAU budget conducted in early December. He has served on the board since 2007 and can count the people who have showed up for that on one hand over that entire time.

He continues to be concerned about the very small turnout of an SB2 deliberative session and the shenanigans that can take place under those kind of situations. He has been, is now, and will continue to be against SB2.

Lee Kubishta, 94 Hayden Road, Hollis

Is in favor of SB2. She believes those who have spoken against it actually have made her point for her and reaffirmed her commitment to SB2. They discuss lack of participation and lack of involvement. She thinks that very point speaks to the fact that people would participate more if they could vote and not have to stay up late. She has been to these meetings and found it to be an arduous process. The deliberative session and having the 30 days between allows people and trusts that people will self-educate and vote accordingly. The back and forth and arguing for hours on end is what turns people off from participating. She would much prefer to have the facts from both sides in evidence, be able to make an informed decision on her own, and then vote. SB2 allows that possibility. She is a strong proponent of SB2.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

By serving on the school board and participating in the budget process for both the Hollis School Board and the SAU Governing Board, she can state that budgets don't happen in a vacuum. Budget season begins practically after the Annual District Meeting. It takes months and goes through many irritations. Much time is devoted during those monthly school board meetings to go through the budget to ensure there isn't over-spending. She has seen wonderful things start off on the budget and get cut because of the guidance that our budget committees provides. It is a process, and to just say that is not valuable and someone can come in and say we're going to change this and take all of the months of consideration and hard work out of the process just seems ludicrous.

There are times when we are at the Annual Meeting until 2:00 a.m. because of petition warrant articles such as these. We are sometimes there until 2:00 a.m. because there are hot button topics that people want to debate. How do you decide on what it is if you don't have the full information? We come to those meetings for the facts, not falsities or opinions. SB2 is not the solution. If people don't want to come to those meetings and they simply want to vote on something perhaps we should be looking at a representative meeting rather than individual. This is not the solution for Hollis.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

Agrees with a lot of what the previous speaker stated; it is a process that we have to go through, but it doesn't have to be an arduous process. It has to be a process where all of the citizens have a reasonable opportunity to represent their views on these topics. To the earlier presentation we saw on the previous warrant article, the expenditures that we're seeing projected in the school system are unreasonable. We need to be reasonable about it and everyone needs the ability to present their view relative to the school system budgets and other topics in the Town. SB2 would enable that.

Look at what happened in our recent Presidential election. That is no different than SB2. People are okay with that. Why are we not okay with SB2?

Mallory Risler, 14 Hobart Hill Road, Brookline

Shared an experience as someone who has lived in Town for a few years and was a supporter of SB2 before she started attending the deliberative sessions between both Brookline and the COOP School Board. She is a mother of 3 small children, and understands that it is exhausting to stay late at these meetings. However, we have to look at what we sacrifice for 1 or a couple of nights a year in comparison to what we are gaining. When we are sitting in that pickup line picking up our kids from school, when we see their faces get off the school bus, when we are so enjoying what a great asset we have in our two towns, we need to think about what we are giving as citizens.

It is the petition articles that are causing the most issues. She does not support SB2. It continues to be the same small group of people who continue to bring these things to life. The trust is not necessarily there for her that things are being done in the best way and in the best interest of our kids and our two towns.

The public comment period was closed at 7:24 p.m.

Petition Warrant Article 3

“To see if the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District will vote to amend the Articles of Agreement of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District by deleting Article 3 as currently written and substituting a new Article 3 as follows:

Article 3: The Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District shall be responsible for grades nine (9) through twelve (12).”

Chairman Deurloo Babcock opened the floor for public comment at 7:24 p.m.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Presented the petition warrant article on behalf of Hollis and Brookline voters. The proposal would change Article 3 of the Articles of Agreement (AoA). The AoA is basically the constitution of the COOP and it specifies how we do things at a high level.

The current organization of the SAU is a K-6 Hollis School District, K-6 Brookline School District, and the COOP with grades 7 and 8 at the Hollis Brookline Middle School (HBMS) and 9-12 at the Hollis Brookline High School (HBHS). The proposed change would make the Hollis and Brookline school districts K-8 and the COOP School District 9-12.

Why this is a good idea; the current HBMS facility is old, student population growth is seen (coming up in elementary schools according to NESDEC projections), financial conditions of historically low bond rates, revised building aid proposed by the legislature, and process within the AoA.

The current HBMS building was constructed in 1953 and has gone through several additions/renovations over the years. There have been 3 major additions to the 68-year-old building, and further expansion would be expensive/impractical.

It is a process that needs to start as it takes a long time to pass, investigate, and construct. Student population projections show Brookline will see a 51% increase in grades 7-8 by FY29 and Hollis a 41% increase in grades K-6 by FY29.

A slide was shown identifying possible usage of the HBMS should Brookline students move elsewhere; could build a brand new middle school or expand CSDA. Grades 9-12 would remain in the HBHS.

Bond rates are at historic lows and are very favorable for renovation/new construction. There are two House Bills (HB1214/HB594) that will revive school building aid.

Article 15 in the AoA calls out how the process would work should this article pass. A grade reduction committee would be formed and would develop an educational plan, and hold a public hearing on the proposed plan, which would then be sent to the State Board of Education, and a final vote by the Legislative Body.

Mr. Pauer requested voters support realignment of the Cooperative School District. It is a proactive approach for our children. We don't want the middle school to get overcrowded like it did last time and not have any options.

He noted he could not use chat or hand raising in his Zoom, and stated the desire to speak on the next article.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock requested members of the public not able to get through, email any member of the Administration or Board present, and provided the email addresses.

Asked what the effective date would be should this article pass, Attorney O'Shaughnessy responded Article 15 of the AoA has a pretty comprehensive process for forming a study committee. The study committee has to propose a plan, which has to be approved at various levels. The plan itself establishes the timetable for the transition.

Vice Chairman Solon noted the wording in the AoA is essentially the same used in the RSA for dissolution of a COOP; a three-year process.

Barbara King, 15 Barton Road, Hollis

Commented at the meeting in Brookline last week, this was based on how this would save Brookline taxpayers money. This is not realignment, this is again breaking up the COOP, which Brookline voted down last year. A few years ago Hollis voted for a study and then decided it was too expensive. We've been through all of this. She asked the voters to dig into this and not fall for realignment. It is particularly targeting special education costs and the numbers shown seem to be void of some particular things of interest to all voters, e.g., return on investment and economies of scale. Those are two sound financial principles that individuals putting forward an article like this should be thinking about.

If you have Brookline put forth a middle school or a middle school and high school you are talking about tens of millions of dollars that first you have to pay before, as Mr. Pauer stated last week, you start to save money. This return on investment is, in her opinion, 15-18 years away, at a minimum.

This is about breaking up the COOP and the voters have spoken several times over the last years. This will decimate our property values in Hollis and Brookline where the underpinning is our great schools.

Kat McGhee, 237 Hayden Road, Hollis

Is opposed to the article. It is true that a significant portion of our taxes go to the schools, but looking at her tax rate for 2015, it was \$23, in 2016 \$23, in 2017 it was \$23, \$21.67 in 2018 and \$23.10 for 2019. Our taxes have been held very steady in terms of the amount per thousand. We are not seeing exorbitant increases in our tax impact based on the cost of the schools, and that goes back to the point that was made by Michelle St. John that the volunteers that do our budgets actually do a really good job of holding us steady and doing right by the taxpayers. It is a false argument that we hear again and again that we should be alarmed, when actually our tax rate has been very steady over this time.

David Sacks, 43 Genrod Road, Hollis

He is flabbergasted by this article, and believes it to be ridiculous and without merit. The HBMS is successful, the COOP is successful. It is what makes our two towns desirable and very healthy. The interesting thing in the presentation from the petitioner is that he talks about how the numbers are going up and our schools are overcrowded, and in petition Warrant Article #1 he talked about how our numbers are going down and now we need a tax cut. It is confusing to see two completely different arguments.

If using the rationale that the enrollment numbers are going up and bond rates are low, it is much cheaper to build an addition than a brand new school in a separate town, and then to have Brookline have a separate administrative cost for its own school. We get a lot of synergy by having a combined school for middle school. You bring two towns together. It is great for the students and their ability to interact and work together. It builds teamwork across the school. There are classes that can be offered with that dynamic. It is a school with good enough size that you can do a lot; we have a huge diversity of math and other programs and great offerings in sports and co-curricular activities. There is no rationale at all for this and every argument given for it, to him, sounds completely ludicrous.

Patrick Haggerty, 25 Parker Road, Brookline

Opposed the article. It does not make financial sense for a Brookline resident to support even two more grades in our current facilities. He spoke of the prospect of adding onto facilities or building new facilities, finding land, and going through that entire process.

He cannot imagine that getting school aid for renovations, improvements, or even building replacements for Brookline alone does more benefit than getting school aid and bonds for Brookline and Hollis. We share that burden even if it is not 50/50.

Gerrell Smith, 42 Rocky Pond Road, Brookline

Opposes the article. Mr. Pauer has spent a lot of time giving surface presentations. He is constantly seeing him be the spokesperson for each of these warrant articles that are just frustrating everyone from both towns. There is a Hollis Brookline fabric here that is trying to be unraveled. He believes the majority of people don't want that to happen. This is one of those areas where there is an attempt to create a separation of the two towns as though we don't get along when in fact we truly do. His kids are enjoying the kids from Hollis. The kids from Hollis are enjoying the kids from Brookline. We need to figure out a commonsense way to get this thing moving forward and stop trying to separate the two communities.

Rob Mann, 29 Nartoff Road, Hollis

Has heard that he is supposed to support a tax cap because of declining enrollment and that he is supposed to support realignment because of increasing enrollment (that is coming). Shown was NESDEC data that was out 27 years. The district plans on NESDEC best within 5 years of that data. We do not, as a matter of best practice, look out beyond roughly 5 years. Twenty seven years is ludicrous. He is very concerned about the Brookline students that would normally matriculate into the COOP, and where they would go. He heard nothing about where they are going. He didn't hear anything about change management; how we are going to implement and execute such a thing without messing up a year of the students' education. He also didn't hear from our education professionals; of any impact study on how we do it and what impact that might have on the students themselves during this change. He is not clear as to what the point of this article is.

Tiffany Testa, 101 Mooar Hill Road, Hollis

She is a math and science teacher. They are teaching statistics. She is not confused at all about the use of data. You can use that data in any way you want. She is hopeful the community saw those two very different uses of the data. It could have been confusing, but not really; how can our numbers being going up and down and left and right. She does not know, but she does teach her students to look out for that kind of stuff.

She saw in the petition and has heard that this is a money matter. She wished to provide the perspective of the student. Developmentally, the program that we have had for a very long time, makes absolute sense. In addition, the middle school is one of the gems in both communities. This should not be divisive. We build bridges, and our middle school does exactly what it needs to do when our kids are at the age that they need it. They are redefining themselves, and going through all kinds of stuff. They make new friendships, build bonds that last through high school. Our middle school works fine. The financial part she does not get; two new schools, seems like our taxes might go up.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

Has been in his home in Hollis for about 5 years and in that period of time their tax rate has gone up by 16.25% (3.25%/year). The bulk of it has gone to the school system. What was previously stated is not true for everybody in Hollis. The Board needs to understand that too. We should not be increasing taxes indiscriminately in this town or you will lose your citizens and tax income as a result of doing so.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Echoed the comments made by Mr. Sacks, Mr. Smith and others regarding being flabbergasted by the idea of this petition warrant article. Our middle school is a jewel as is the relationship students begin to have with teachers and with classmates from both towns.

We cannot depend on a school building aid fund. She is flabbergasted that we are told in one petition that we have a decrease in enrollment and another that it will increase dramatically, and we need to plan for that.

She did not see a single Hollis resident signature on the petition. She questioned how many signers have students in that school district and understand what they are doing by pulling it apart. Who benefits from this? How are you going to pay for it? How is it going to impact the town and the communities? She unequivocally opposes this.

Maureen Maisttison, 60 Milton Place, Hollis

Agrees with the comments of Ms. St. John and others. She went to the Wilton Marlborough Cooperative Junior/Senior High School, which is a 6th grade school. It was wonderful. As a 5th grader she looked forward to merging with the other town and going to that new school. It was getting to meet new friends and people and expanding her circle. She knows our kids are excited to meet their classmates in the 7th grade. If anything we should be expanding the COOP not breaking it apart.

Gillian Hinkle, 16 Hillside Drive

Believes the NESDEC studies don't consider housing availability. Both Hollis and Brookline have extreme limitations on the amount of housing and how they can be built out. That study doesn't seem to take this into account, which makes the numbers that were shared unlikely.

Daniel Palmer, 167 North Pepperell Road, Hollis

Supports what was stated by David Sacks and Michelle St. John regarding this article, which he finds equally ludicrous for all the reasons they stated.

He noted something Barbara King said about how we go through this over and over again. Every year we have a small group of people who seem to put together those citizen petitions that are tremendous hot button topics requiring all of this debate, and the vast majority of the time these all fail. Although uncertain possible, perhaps it is time for a requirement that citizen petition warrant articles have to first pass the school board, and if unable to achieve support there, then they don't move forward. We shouldn't have to waste our time hearing these kinds of arguments and seeing these kind of presentations that we all know are going to go nowhere. This COOP is extremely important to the town, it is what makes these towns great. We know that this isn't going to pass, and he hopes that there could be a process put in place in the future that would prevent taxpayers from having to listen to some of these arguments if they don't even pass the basic sniff test from our school board who has volunteered their time and done a tremendous service for us.

Elizabeth Brown, 10 Williams Way, Hollis

Wished to refer to something stated earlier to ensure the public gets to hear the factual information close in time to the time that the allegation was made that the tax rate in Hollis had increased over 15% in the last 5 years. The 2016 tax rate for Hollis was \$23.44. The tax rate for 2021 is \$23.15. That is actually a reduction. In Hollis you can go to the Hollis Town website and pull up your tax bills for the last years and can figure out exactly how much your tax bill has gone up. You can look for the real facts and not the rhetoric. Tax rate does not always equate to a higher tax bill. Once houses are reassessed, there is a calculation that results in the tax bill.

Drew Garuba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis

Supports the article. Passage of the article would start the process of a study committee. It doesn't instantly dissolve the COOP. It is not even intending to dissolve the COOP, it is intending to just shift 2 grades from the COOP. There is a lot of discussion about the NESDEC projections. Because of the wider implications of COVID, he would not be surprised to find that the projections, which are showing a considerable increase, are low because of the amount of development we are going through in Town.

The closer decisions are made at the local level, meaning the Hollis School Board as opposed to the COOP Board, the more people have more direct influence over decisions. Any shifting of students or grades from the COOP to the Hollis district would give Hollis, as well as Brookline, residents more influence directly over the education of children in those grades.

Gillian Hinkle, 16 Hillside Drive, Hollis

The NESDEC report doesn't consider housing availability, which is very limited in both communities. That we would actually achieve the increases that are being predicted seems very unlikely.

David Sacks, 23 Jambard Road, Hollis

Questioned what dictates the minimum number of people required for a petition and what the process would be to raise it.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq.

Responded the governing law is RSA 197:6, and it basically says that it is a written application of 25 or more voters or 2% of the voters of the district whichever is less. The Statute would have to change. RSA 197:6 actually creates a legal right for the petitioners to have their petition warrant article placed on the warrant provided that the petition article itself isn't illegal. Right now there is not any way to change that process.

Jonathon Garuba, 30 Meadow Drive, Hollis

Has heard several comments around restricting residents' rights to raise petitions, and he thinks that is the wrong way to go to try and take away rights that have been in place for a long time, and he is concerned that people would want to take away control from the individual town residents that vote.

Eric Pauer, 12 Westview Road, Brookline

Wished to mention when he was showing the projections he was showing not the same projections. The COOP is going down in population. That is true. It will eventually go up long term. The projections shown about K-6 that is where there will be a rapid increase especially in Hollis. Hollis is going to run out of space if these projections are true. He was on the school board and understands that at five years is the reliable projection, but you can't just dismiss what is happening beyond those numbers, you have to plan for that. He would rather see the community be proactive in this regard. The process will take many years to complete. It is wise to be able to look at it and determine what the facts are and then we will also have a better idea of what is happening with the population. The population in the K-6 is increasing and the population in the 7-12 is decreasing. Eventually the 7-12 will see that bubble and will also increase.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Remarked while she understands what the last gentleman said, she appreciates what Mr. Sacks said in regard to the same group of people bringing the same petitions which causes the late nights and the arguing back and forth. Sometimes she wonders what the intent of these petitions is, what the intent is to do to our COOP. It is year after year and that is what causes frustration and that is what causes division.

Commenting on the NESDEC projections, she remarked there is an eb and flow in the housing market and individuals who are in our towns. People come to the towns, and this can be argued in a negative way, but people come here to raise a family and then many people move on. Their children move to the west coast, they move to the west coast, etc. This is what society does. To just say to everyone that enrollment is going to explode; we have a finite number of houses. There is new housing coming in. With the zoning laws that we have, we have 55+ people coming in. We don't have major housing developments. People choose to conserve the land and put it in protection rather than build gigantic housing developments. We're not Nashua.

Doug Davidson, 85 Rideout Road, Hollis

Is uncertain where he stands on the article. As was pointed out earlier, it is a multi-year process. Let's play make believe and say if it were to pass we would go through many deliberative years of whether this was the right thing to do, and if it were, how we would do it. Not unlike what the process would be for changing the COOP or leaving the COOP, which he does not see this as saying that it is. He believes the argument is prudent if you agree with it. He is uncertain if he does.

He wasn't going to get up and speak to the article, but he is shocked that so many people are against having the voices of the voters heard. The warrant petition mechanism is a legal mechanism in this State, run by State law. For anyone to say, whether it happens year after year or not, that when you get a sufficient number of names that it shouldn't be heard or it should be deferred to the School Board, to him is abominable and undemocratic. He does not agree with every warrant article that comes up, but to say that people don't have a voice or shouldn't have a voice to him is just abominable.

Vice Chairman Solon

Commented he is not an attorney, but has been through the wording quite a few times. The way the article is written, if this were approved, it would change the structure of the COOP. What is a multi-year process is how it occurs, and it would have to go through an iterative process until it was approved by the voters and the State, but it is not an up or down. This is the up or down. If this gets voted up then the articles change, but it would be multiple years before the change occurred because of the process of how the dissolution of the middle school COOP works.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock added it is different than if trying to dissolve the COOP, which does trigger a 3 year process and then it is an up or down vote at the end of that. This is an up or down vote in the beginning.

Vice Chairman Solon remarked the wording, as he read it, lacks the phrases that say there is an exit point other than having to go back and rework the process until you get State approval. He did not see anything in the clause of the COOP AoA that give an escape hatch that if at some point people say no we don't want it anymore.

Unlike the wording in the RSA which gives some certain points where it can be voted on again, the wording in Article 15 of our AoA says that if it is not approved by the State or one of the towns, it goes back to the committee to re-work and re-submit. He did not see any language in the AoA that says that a rejection of the plan cancels the process. That is a concern for him.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq.

This part of the Statute, RSA 195, which was a subject of a legislative study committee a couple of years ago. He was an appointed member of that committee and spent a lot of time talking about the process for dissolution or withdrawal in a COOP school district. One of the major talking points was that once the process started, is there a way for the committee to basically stop the process if they determine that it is not feasible or not worthwhile to continue pursuing. The law does provide such a process. The committee, early on, can take a vote to basically stop if it determines it is not feasible.

Mr. Solon is right if what he is saying that the Article 15 process does not contain a provision, it basically requires that the grade reduction committee is responsible for starting the process and formulating a plan and that they are responsible for bringing that plan forward and ensuring that it is placed on the warrant for a vote at some point in time. If this is approved, there will, at some point in the future, be a plan for the reduction of grades that is put before the voters of the Cooperative School District.

Doug Davidson, 85 Rideout Road, Hollis

The point is that there are many exit ramps that are possible and one of the most possible is if the committee comes back and says this isn't workable or the conditions under which we passed this some years ago have changed, and we want to do it a different way now. That option is still there. The other option is to just reject it; to have another warrant and say the reason why we put that in place no longer exists so we want to change it.

Laurie Miller, 14 Forest View Drive, Hollis

We talk about having this study committee; who will be doing the work and aren't they already taxed with dealing with the pandemic? It is really inappropriate to be asking our school board and administration to add other items onto their plates.

Barbara King, 15 Barton Road, Hollis

If this passes, can the same petition warrant article be put on next year where the intent is to take 9th and 10th grade out of the COOP?

Chairman Deurloo Babcock

Responded yes.

Barbara King, 15 Barton Road, Hollis

This would then effectively become another way to disband the COOP. She encouraged all taxpayers and property owners to not support this if they like their property values. Just studying breaking up the COOP will impact our property values.

Mallory Riser, 14 Hobart Hill Road, Brookline

Echoed the remarks of the previous speaker. She was at the meeting in Brookline last year where voters were asked to vote on the feasibility study to break up the COOP. Where a lot of the frustration comes from is that last year it was breaking up the COOP, now this year we are going after the middle school. It is just the continuous question of what is next. That is what people should also be thinking of when deciding what to vote for. We really need to think about where these ideas are coming from and what the larger idea is.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

It is not broken; what are we trying to fix? Are we trying to break something or to fix something with this petition warrant article?

Daniel Palmer, 167 North Pepperell Road, Hollis

Some commented it is anti-democratic. He is certainly not anti-democratic. There are already procedures in place, by law, where these petition articles have to gain some sort of traction before they can be put in front of the citizens. It appears to be 25 people have to sign on, and there are 14,000[±] residents between the two towns. It is obviously an incredibly easy thing to achieve to get these petitions on the warrant that a lot of times are a time waste for a lot of people because we know what the end result is going to be. He is not in any way advocating that there is no way to get these petitions in front of the community, but does wonder if there is a way to increase the threshold of what has to be accomplished to get the petitions on the warrant. He is happy to support democracy but also not interested in wasting his time. He is curious if there is anything that can be done legally.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock commented that is certainly not under the purview of the Board.

Drew Garuba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis

Commented this is not a question and answer session about State law.

The public comment period was closed at 8:17 p.m.

Petition Warrant Article 4

“Shall SAU 41 and the Hollis Brookline Cooperative Schools hereby affirm our general support for each student’s growth and enrichment, in support thereof, We, the Legislative Body, hereby state the following as a matter of general policy:

- (a) The family unit is ideally at the core of each individual’s social, educational, intellectual, and emotional well being,
- (b) Our schools are a critical element that shall foster an environment where our goal is that all students are enabled to thrive and positively achieve their potential and develop the content of their character accordingly,
- (c) It shall be the primary goal of all teachers and administrators to support these efforts,
- (d) Any divisive policy that fosters prejudicial discrimination, segregation, stereotyping, intimidation, censorship, harassment or retribution based on race or sex is, by its nature, a threat to our social fabric, morally wrong and generally unlawful,
- (e) Further, educational techniques that hinder or prevent: fairness, impartiality, equality of opportunity OR, conversely, support outcomes of “equity redesign”, “equity based outcomes”, “redistribution”, “retribution”, “unlearning” or “Critical Race Theory” are, by their nature, detrimentally counterproductive to healthy education and the unifying ideals of our greater American Society,
- (f) Any parties so wronged may seek court relief under applicable federal and state laws, through and with RSA 354-A (Anti-Discrimination), RSA 91-A, (The Right to Know), et al., noting the enforcement and penalty provisions provided therein.

Therefore,

WE, the Legislative Body of SAU 41 and the Hollis Brookline Cooperative Schools, with our vote, hereby affirm that this Article be published and made an integral policy of our School Administrative Unit and Cooperative School District.”

Douglas Davidson, 85 Rideout Road, Hollis

Is a former high school teacher having taught affiliation cultural studies, was a ranking member of the Budget Committee in the COOP and is a member of a mixed-race multi-generational family.

He grew up in the '60s, and if there was one message that came out of that time, it was what Dr. Martin Luther King taught us "I dream of a day when my four children will not be judged by the color their skin but by the content of their character." That in great part is the essence of why this petition was filed. Where are we relative to realizing that dream, he does not know. He suggested Clarence Thomas, Dr. Ben Carson, Morgan Freeman, and others could be asked how far we have come, in several generations, relative to Dr. King's dream. That is worth considering.

We're seeing in the schools with the DEI Committee and Critical Race Theory (CRT) around the country, the debate of equity versus equality and outcome versus opportunity. At the recent DEI Committee meeting, the analogy of a 100 meter race was used. Equality means that we all get to the starting line at the same time, the race starts, and then we finish 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. Equity means we all get to the starting line and we all finish at the same time. That is part of the whole CRT and DEI strategy here. It is outcome driven versus opportunity driven. We're looking for common outcomes and not unlike we were looking at common core, driving the least common denominator in terms of avoiding or hindering achievement.

The foot race analogy is really the difference between equity and equality and common outcome versus common opportunity.

To effect CRT and DEI strategy, you have to look at everything through a prism of racism. You are looking at identity politics in society, at defining groups and victims; those that are dominant and those that are subordinate, the basic premise is all of our laws and legal institutions are inherently racist, these inequalities need to be corrected and the norms that we look at today need to be changed. In that process, private and public bonds within communities are grossly weakened, We go through a process that is not discovery but more of an indoctrination.

He received a letter today where that concern was expressed by a parent who will see some of the goings on in their child's classroom that they saw through the Zoom meetings.

The other critical elements are race based; white people foster differences that create inequality, systemic prejudice, subjugation, and poverty. He questioned where the years of racism documentation that have been going on here in the COOP District or in the entire SAU are. If indeed we have systemic racism in the schools not only should we look at every person in this room and every person in the community, but certainly administrators and the teachers. He does not think that situation exists. If there are situations where you have some kid putting a Swastika in a bathroom or is being prejudice towards one kid or another, those are isolated incidents. If we had a systemic race problem in this community then we should indict ourselves and our administrators and all of our teachers because that documentation hasn't been published, those incident reports haven't occurred, and those police complaints have not been made.

The end game is to make this process of racial dichotomy part of their end game and to normalize that negative discourse. The methodologies they use are traditional ones that you see with the Red Guards, Alinsky, and BLM.

He displayed a list of comments sent by a parent given recent concerns. They are events dated and the quotes written down during the various meetings and the interactions with their child.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock opened the floor for public comment at 8:19 p.m.

Phillip Stephenson, 262 Hayden Road, Hollis

This warrant article is in response to a committee the Superintendent put together to help address requests from students who actually have reported a lot of their own instances of negative experiences with respect to diversity and inclusion. There has been a group of people from across the political spectrum and spectrum of views working together for months on this, who come together and put together language that is acceptable to a broad array of people but that also addresses the fact that this is a real issue, and that we need to address it and create ways for people to talk about it. If you speak to the members of that group they say that is exactly what happened just being in the committee and the result of their work is to strengthen and to press that forward. He thinks the presentation that was just shown, and the sort of wild references were way out of why this was put together. What it is meant to address demonstrates that addressing this sort of paranoid view of the intentions of people who want to make sure that those who are being left out or where there are situations where people just felt like they were being left out need to have and should have our support of community.

Gerrell Smith, 42 Rocky Pond Road, Brookline

Echoed the remarks of the last speaker. The intent of the DEI Committee really is to look at, to a certain extent, how do we give students inside of our school system the resources they need where they are at, regardless of the rest of the school body, to help them to be able to achieve their goals at the highest level without feeling like they have to be demeaned in order to get there. It is based on all of our students, those that we might say are advantaged to those that might be disadvantaged; how do we give each of those different groups the resources they need to excel to a level that they truly want to be at. That is really what they are trying to do, and it is not just based on race. It is based on the individual student and what they need.

Kat McGhee, 237 Hayden Road, Hollis

Participated in the DEI public call last year, and was very impressed with the work that she heard the group that had been together for several months doing. She sees the petition warrant article as in competition for being able to outline what it is the schools will come up with. She was a little confused by the wording. There is a template for how petition warrant articles are written, which requires that signatures be on the same page as the language of the article to ensure signers are aware of the content. This was not done in that format. She questioned if it is considered a legal warrant article the way that it is has been presented.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq.

Hollis Brookline doesn't have that process requirement. When reading the heading at the top of the signature pages, it states the petition included herein by reference. Then it becomes do I really have a legal basis for saying it is not a lawfully signed petition. The district doesn't take that position. He doesn't think the clerk or whomever reviewed the signatures took that position. He does not think it is illegal for it to be a valid petition warrant article.

Kat McGhee, 237 Hayden Road, Hollis

It seems to want the legislative body, which she assumes is those who organize the warrant, thinking they are speaking for all of us in saying that they want to have relief whereby they can sue the schools if the schools don't implement these words the way they think is correct. She questioned if that is something that a petition can impose on a school, school boards and officials and authorities that we are paying for public services.

James O'Shaughnessy, Esq.

With a petition warrant article, the default rule is you put it on the warrant unless it is illegal. A petition warrant article is illegal, for example, if it is an attempt to give the governing body or the school board authority to take an action that is not legal or that is not authorized by law. He reviewed this petition warrant article with his client. It doesn't purport to give the board authority to do something illegal so there wasn't a clear basis not to put it on the warrant, but it came somewhat close to that just because some of the language, although possibly well intentioned, does suggest a limitation on how the district teaches anti-discrimination. However, it did pass the legal test. He stated the petition warrant article to be most definitely advisory only. It will have no binding effect whatsoever on the school board if it passes because the legislative body does not have legal authority to define the educational policy of the school district. Educational policy making is by law the duty, responsibility, obligation of the school board that you elect and not the legislative body.

It doesn't create a private right of action or a new cause of action for voters to seek additional legal relief that isn't already available. If it is available under the law then it is available. This doesn't create any new rights for citizens in the community.

Kat McGhee, 237 Hayden Road, Hollis

In the body of the article it does quote that RSA 354-A is the anti-discrimination law that would cover anyone who felt harmed or who wanted to take action.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock clarified the point legal counsel made is that this is advisory only.

Joe Garruba, 28 Winchester Drive, Hollis

Supports the article. Critical Race Theory is a flawed concept, which leads to perpetual division by its rejection of all authority structures. It does not differentiate between benevolent restrictions like those imposed by parents on their children or the benevolent authority of the school board. It portrays all authority as oppression. It perpetuates division by dividing people into various identity groups and seeks to group ideas by identity. Other school districts that have embraced this theory have gone to such measures as declaring merit based decisions as racist based simply on the race of those in authority, bans on cultural appropriation such as Italian cooks selling Mexican food and similar divisions based on race are the result of this flawed theory.

This is the opposite of what he believes in and what he wants to teach his children. He believes people and ideas should be judged by their merit and people should be encouraged to work together and value their differences.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

Spoke of being involved in DEI in various ways over the last 6 months or so. One of the big things that bothers him is the word equity versus equality. They are very different in terms of what they mean. Equality means that each student is afforded the same opportunity to succeed. Equity means that each student is guaranteed the same outcome regardless of their effort. Those are very different. He has been harking on this in his communications about this curriculum for a while now, and no one seems to recognize that is the case. He thinks it is important. Someone said earlier it felt like something with respect to those of us who were opposing this curriculum. It is not about feeling like, it is about what makes sense, it is about facts. We shouldn't erase American history we should recognize that it happened. It is not all good. But we shouldn't cancel it, we should teach the students what happened because that is how we prevent mistaking the same things in the future.

Natalie Haytayan, 24 Powers Road, Hollis

Is 23 and grew up in the school system. Has never spoken up at a school board meeting before, but after seeing this petition felt she had to say something. As someone who grew up in the school system and is not far out of it, she has to say it does a huge disservice to students to not acknowledge the blind spots and to acknowledge CRT. There is a conversation happening around are these reported and why haven't things come forward, where are the police reports. She thinks that it is very fair and honest of us to say well maybe we don't have a system in place that makes it easy for students to report. Earlier this year countless experiences were shared on the Facebook page by students concerning their experience in the school system involving race. As someone who graduated and went out and got a job, there was a lot that she didn't learn. There weren't conversations around her own blind spots as a white person.

Opening this door up in Hollis Brookline would literally only make for more open and honest conversations around race. She does not feel it would do any harm to have these conversations when this is out there in the real world. You leave and you are confronted with these things. Why not have a healthy open conversation in the school district. Why wait until we get into the world to figure it out on our own. She believes this petition does students a disservice because they will be confronted with all of these issues once they leave.

Rob Mann, 29 Nartoff Road, Hollis

Wished to point out that this is still in committee under the Superintendent's auspices. This has not come before any of the school boards within SAU41.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock remarked that is a good clarification to make that the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board does not have oversight over the body of the SAU41. That is not how it works.

Tiffany Testa, 101 Mooar Hill Road, Hollis

There were some false statements made previously, and she wished to note them. She realizes the work is hard and is confusing. She realizes that because there was a group of 8 with extremely diverse views that came together and have worked collaboratively in a bridge building process to define these terms for our towns. She encouraged the community to review all of the minutes of the work that has been done. For the many members of the community that came out and spoke, the committee heard them.

The truth is that equity in education is defined, and is also defined in the statement that the group has made, as equal opportunity not equal outcomes. To put the warrant article out is really just a slap in the face of the process. She thinks that community members that are concerned should join the work. It is a partisan divisive article that is out there.

Todd Porter, 24 Cameron Drive, Hollis

Within this article we are setting a dangerous precedent of a relatively small group of people attempting to leverage their point of view on the community. There are references to censorship here, and he fears that is the way this is headed. Once we say we can't teach certain things that becomes a dangerous precedent to set.

There are a lot of terms in quotations that aren't adequately defined. We haven't really been given the background in terms of what those terms are for a lot of people that are reading this for the first time. We're seeing a lot of alarmist language in the presentation in terms of what this means and how we must protect our children. That just becomes a vehicle for that group of people to be able to leverage their point of view and dictate what the school will teach.

The language reads as very mom and apple pie, but hidden within this is a lot of dangerous concepts and attempts at censorship and thought policing. He is firmly against it.

Jonathon Garuba, 30 Meadow Drive, Hollis

CRT is a fundamentally flawed idea. Correcting and solving inequality cannot be done through a process which institutionalizes grouping of people by identity. That process of itself is inherently discriminatory and contradictory. He rejects racism of all types. Accepting CRT will lead to unintended consequences.

Caitie Parikh, 8 Petersen Road, Brookline

Noted the first point in the article around the family unit being at the core, which when you read it at first glance seems like a really nice idea. After thinking about it a little bit, she finds it a bit discriminatory against kids who don't have a really stable family unit. If we word something like this into our school culture then you will be leaving those kids out and they will be feeling like they have some sort of less chance for success because they don't have the stable family unit at the core of their experience. The core child experience is the child themselves. The language in part E is like a motion for censorship. She does not support any of this.

David Werner 148 Ridge Road, Hollis

Is on the DEI Commission. This article has nothing to do with the work of the DEI Commission. He is a little surprised that anyone would connect the two. It has to do with a theory of racism called CRT. It is also known by another name called building equity. A young student in 2nd grade reported that they first were run into the classroom and then were given an oppression test, is what the child called it. They were given words and asked to say which was the oppressor and which was the oppressed. First on the list was white people, second the American Government, and third Christianity. The answer was in each case that each of those was an oppressive group. The philosophy of CRT is that our entire country is privileged white racism, we need to take down the Constitution and we need to take down Christianity, and replace it with something else. The third stage of the CRT is after you get the kids to admit that they are either a member of the oppressive class or the oppressor that they then go through an unlearning process and the unlearning process tells them to tear down the Constitution, tear down Christianity, forget what mom and dad told you, and trust the teacher to guide you to an equitable outcome.

He asked that people wake up to this CRT. It is a national movement. It is not anything to do with this DEI Commission. It is an offensive and vile approach going after 2nd and 3rd graders. There is a wealth of ideas out there that are much superior to that. The young lady who talked about discussing racism he agrees with. He came from California, and sees the kids around here as clueless about what is really going on in the world in terms of race.

Kathy Grossman, 140 Ridge Road, Hollis

Is opposed to the petition. Part D talks about not wanting censorship and in part E, it elaborates all the ideas they want to censor. This is ridiculous and hamstring the educational process, teachers, school board, and does a disservice to all of our students' education.

Michelle St. John, 29 Orchard Drive, Hollis

Is opposed to the article. She believes the content speaks for itself with contradiction and setting its own agenda again from a very small vocal group trying to dismantle our system as it stands and has been effective for decades here in Hollis and Brookline. More importantly, she feels this is a last minute petition with a very specific agenda to bypass the SAU appointed DEI Committee that has worked collaboratively and had public hearings to receive input from the public.

This article should not take precedence over a designated committee where the work has been to listen to the students and ensure that everyone in our community has the tools they need to succeed as students. As the young graduate stated, we do need to acknowledge our past and we need to acknowledge the stories and the history that wasn't told because of the oppression to the people that were not allowed to tell those stories.

Aaron Penkacik, 133 Dow Road, Hollis

We should teach history, but we should teach it in an unrevised manner. We should teach what really happened. History isn't all good. Todd made the point earlier of what should we teach. We need to think about this point; if our teachers are teaching the students what to think and not how to think they have failed as teachers. That is what this is all about.

Anna Birch, 16 Broad Street, Hollis

Is opposed to the article. Has a son in 8th grade and is deeply impressed with the teachers. Her son has learned so much and she cannot wait for him to go on to high school. The teachers are doing an amazing job and are getting the kids to really think. She cannot believe the conversations her son comes home with. She is really impressed with the DEI Committee having attended a few meetings. It is a broad spectrum of people having these conversations. She is against this article.

Drew Morrissey, 8 Hills Farm Lane, Hollis

While he supports the warrant conceptually, he does not support it as written. He is a parent of two children in the elementary district. What he is not hearing from anyone is the audience that CRT should be targeted at particularly in terms of age groups. Critical Race Theory was a series of ideas that originated in college. These are college level ideas that we do need, in some respect, to teach our children. As a parent, he wants to have some input as to the appropriate age for some of these things. The trouble with teaching young kids is that when it comes from a teacher it is not just a suggestion it is more like authority. For the same reason that his child that goes to HPS believes in Santa Claus because he told him about Santa Claus, he will believe anything

he is told. Therefore, he really believes what we need to be talking about is the appropriate age and ideas that we start introducing to our kids.

Chairman Deurloo Babcock clarified this is the Cooperative School Board that oversees grades 7-12.

Drew Morrissey, 8 Hills Farm Lane, Hollis

His older son is going into 7th grade next year. He wants to have input as to how these ideas are communicated. He has seen and heard a lot of reasonable suggestions, and has heard what he will refer to as radical suggestions. As a parent, he needs input on that.

Tiffany Testa, 101 Mooar Hill Road, Hollis

Don't be fooled; she believes this is against the process and the work that is already there, and the reason she believes it is the first slide we saw in the presentation had DEI/CRT. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is not CRT. Critical Race Theory has never been mentioned in any of the work in DEI; not once. Critical Race Theory is not being taught in our schools nor is it in the curriculum. Critical Race Theory is also not rampant and prevalent in our nation. Is it in some pockets, yes, so is Creation Theory. She was in Merrimack when they fought that.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is not just about race, it is about each individual. In addition, Part D here says any divisive policy that fosters prejudicial discrimination, segregation, stereotyping, intimidation, and censorship...well by the actual statement there, that would be this warrant article. This is divisive, it is intimidating, it is censorship by listing every single word that can't be said. There are so many undefined terms in this warrant article, and the biggest one of concern would be equity distribution. That is the fear that something will be taken from you and given to someone else. That is not equity in education. Equity in education is giving every student what they need, and it has nothing to do with equal outcomes. Please don't be duped by this warrant article. We are doing the work. Join it.

Gregory Darbonne, 65 Cleveland Hill Road, Brookline

Has had two children go through the school system, and is proud that they did. He was speaking more as a veteran than just a voter. He thinks Mr. Morrissey and the last speaker spoke very well about this whole situation.

We are the envy of New Hampshire with our school system. We veterans are invited into the elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school to speak to those kids during the various holidays that veterans are associated with. In fact, a few years ago the High School wanted to do away with one holiday to increase the academic year, and decided Veterans Day would be the one that is not celebrated. The kids put together a petition to make sure that the holiday was celebrated. The kids said we grew up with these veterans and we want to celebrate them. He personally does not think we have an issue. He understands this is something that is boiling up through our country, but believes here in our school system we have teachers and parents who understand that yes we have had bad history, we need to teach it, but we also have great history, and we need to celebrate it.

He applauded the parents who want to be involved and also the school district of teachers, principals and a school board that all want to celebrate that we are a great nation, in very different ways, but we are a great nation. He does not think this is a problem that needs a solution for our school district. We should monitor it, yes, but that is a parent's responsibility and the school board's responsibility.

Julie Desmarais, 24 Mill Road, Hollis

Is opposed to the petition. A previous speaker commented that teachers shouldn't be teaching our kids what to think, and she agrees. She does however think that they should be taught how we have come to think the way we do and how historical events and decisions that have been made throughout history have influenced the way we look at things socially, our world views, our socioeconomic positions. The way the petition is written with the first item being that the center of our kids' education should be coming from the family unit, she believes is intended to take the responsibility out of the school setting where everyone should feel that they are seen and heard and that they understand that they have a place there and understand what discrimination is and how to avoid making more mistakes.

Doug Davidson, 85 Rideout Road, Hollis

Clarified there is nowhere in the petition any wording that restricts communication, talking and even using the words. The word is foster; we want to foster policies that are against prejudicial discrimination and segregation. That is explicitly stated there. In the other section we are talking about fairness impartiality and we are looking at not supporting outcomes of equity redesign, equity based outcomes, and redistribution.

The words mean things. Equity means what it means. Why would the committee not use that term and talk about equal opportunity. The committee has tried to redefine the term equity to mean equal opportunity. They don't mean the same thing as several people have commented on. Why don't we use the right words, why don't we use equal opportunity, why don't we say we are against discrimination in all forms, and why don't we go about using those sorts of words rather than trying to change the definition of the words as they are written in the dictionary? He suggested the committee do that. If that were done and CRT rejected, we probably wouldn't even need a petition, but that hasn't happened.

Todd Porter, 24 Cameron Drive, Hollis

He believes, in this article, we are not giving enough credit to the administrators and teachers and we're not giving enough credit to our students to be able to think critically. He understands 7th and 8th graders that is a fear, and as a parent he was often fearful of what they would bring home from school or from talking with their friends. He thinks encouraging the discussion and open conversation about these things is not a bad thing. Once we start trying to limit what is discussed in the school it is going to detract from the administrators and teachers doing their jobs and the students to be given the opportunity to think critically and say do I agree with what is being said or challenge it.

On the whole of this article, he disagrees with every fiber of his being to say that we need to, as a community, take the decision out of the hands of the professionals; teachers and administrators that we have trusted with our children's education, and then try and limit what they can and cannot say and teach to our students. This is all hypothetical. None of these concepts are currently being taught. This is really just an attempt to leverage a point of view on a group in our community, and he disagrees with it.

Colleen Micavich, 29 Iron Works Road, Brookline

Is strongly opposed to the petition. It is poorly written and incredibly vague. There is no definition of divisive yet it asks the community to allow the district to be sued under anti-discrimination and Right-To Know Law for anything deemed divisive. It asks the SAU to accept that concepts such as unlearning and CRT are by their nature detrimentally counter-productive to healthy education. This in itself cannot and should not be accepted by a district seeking to teach reality and not teach our children history and civics.

This petition opens up the district to lawsuits for even putting this forward to the community. It also attempts to create a right to seek damages for words and concepts spoken and discussed while not being clear as to who would be liable for uttering those words, and then asks a local municipality to wrongly interpret State anti-discrimination law to include concepts the petitioners do not like or do not want their children exposed to. This simply cannot be done, and it is not legal on so many fronts.

It is essentially asking the district to discriminate by teaching only a preferred anti-inclusive and safe version of history and then asks the district to hold itself and its teachers liable for anyone who chooses to teach history and/or socioemotional learning concepts in a non-discriminatory, honest and inclusive way. Essentially the petition is asking SAU staff to discriminate then hold themselves liable for non-discriminatory free speech under anti-discrimination law.

Natalie Haytayan, 24 Powers Road, Hollis

Race is an unfortunate kind of perspective of CRT, and she believes it actually unfortunate because were this to enter the school system it basically means we think critically about race in the community. That again is something that would be such a disservice to deprive students of in any way, shape or form. The petition doesn't make it very clear but it is simply not discrimination against students or the community to acknowledge the harsh issue of race in this country. There is an objective truth to it that is hard to swallow just like many things in history are. Critical Race Theory applies to it in a way that is honest and gives us the opportunity to have honest conversations that don't make us feel good, but sometimes that happens.

The public comment period was closed at 9:13 p.m.

The Public Hearing was declared closed at 9:13 p.m.

Date _____

Signed _____