

**HOLLIS BROOKLINE COOPERATIVE SCHOOL BOARD
FEBRUARY 6, 2019
MEETING MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board was conducted on Wednesday, February 6, 2019 at 6:15 p.m. at the Hollis/Brookline Middle School Library.

Chairman Tom Solon presided:

Members of the Board Present: Cindy VanCoughnett, Vice Chairman
 Holly Deurloo Babcock
 Elizabeth Brown
 Melanie Levesque
 Krista Whalen

Members of the Board Absent: John Cross, Secretary

Members of the Budget Cmte. Present: Darlene Mann, Chairman
 Raul Blanche, Vice Chairman
 Matt Maguire, Secretary
 Tom Enright
 Brian Rater
 Lorin Rydstrom

Members of the Budget Cmte. Absent: David Blinn
 John Cross, School Board Rep.

Also in Attendance: Andrew Corey, Superintendent
 Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent
 Kelly Seeley, Business Administrator
 Linda Sherwood, Assistant Business Administrator
 Rick Barnes, Principal, Hollis Brookline High School
 Bob Thompson, Principal, Hollis Brookline Middle School

AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS - None

MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SEARCH - Update

Gina Bergskaug, Assistant Superintendent, remarked after an extensive search process concluding with a public meet & greet and a second-round interview process with SAU Administration, a single candidate will be brought forward to the Board at its February 13, 2019 meeting.

Chairman Solon commented on the process and the well-attended public meet and greet. Students appeared to be vested in the process.

RECESS

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECESS UNTIL THE CONCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE PROPOSED FY20 BUDGET AND FACILITIES BOND ARTICLE

**MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER BROWN
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0**

*The Board recessed at 6:20 p.m.
The Board reconvened at 8:38 p.m.*

DELIBERATIONS

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget and subsequent Warrant Articles

The Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board and the Hollis Brookline School District Budget Committee discussed the merits of the articles in a joint discussion.

Article 1

To see if the District will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,060,000 (gross budget) for renovations at the Hollis Brookline High School to create and equip a STEM facility (the “Project”); and to authorize the issuance of \$2,060,000 of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act (RSA Chapter 33); and to authorize the School Board to issue and negotiate such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon; and to authorize the School Board to accept on behalf of the District any federal, state, or private funds that may become available for any part of the Project and to use such funds to reduce the amount of bonds or notes issued for the Project and/or offset future debt service costs; and to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$43,060** for the first year’s principal and interest payment on the bonds or notes issued.

**MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 1, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK**

ON THE QUESTION

Mr. Enright stated his full support of the Article commenting he has given this a great deal of consideration. He has been involved in his history in robotics and believes there to be no finer program in the high school.

Mr. Rydstrom stated his support of the program. He believes the need to take a year off from a bond issue. A two-million-dollar tax impact is a lot. He will vote in opposition of the article, and hope it comes up again next year.

Mr. Rater remarked it is a good idea and a wonderful set of programs involved. He supported it last year. This year, as was the case last year, he has reservations about the bang for the buck; \$2 million for space. It failed last year, and bringing it up again this year doesn’t feel right. In addition, there are several other expenses, beyond the control of the District, that taxpayers are being asked to take on this year in addition to a very substantial increase in taxes in Brookline last year. He cannot support the article this year.

Mr. Maguire commented, as an engineer, he supports these type of programs believing them to be advantageous for students. He has some concern with the way the space is laid out. He questioned if the issues raised during the public hearing relative to the floorplan could be addressed noting concern with noise levels, etc.

Chairman Solon stated the original goals related to this project were increasing support for math and sciences. It was seen as an opportunity to bring robotics back to the high school, which at the time was considered a high priority. Since then, the landscape seems to have evolved; we see more emphasis on the total curricular needs. The project has tried to evolve to address those. There are new State curriculum requirements that also drive

this. In the same timeframe, the robotics club has pointed out ways in which this may not achieve the goals we had hoped they would.

It is a compromise that may not achieve what he believes to have been the intent when the proposal was first presented. Interest rates have risen significantly. The total goal is a compromise solution, and it was compromised quite a bit in order to satisfy robotics. Were robotics not in the picture, he does not believe the fitness center would be on the second floor, which would impact the cost. We are trying to get a handle on the total curricular needs for the school. He is uncertain all those options have been explored as fully as he would like. For that reason, he is not ready to support this in its current form.

Budget Committee Vice Chairman Blanche commented this is the second time in two years we have had this discussion trying to come up with a solution to the original goals. His first concern is what we call it. The acronym STEM is used, but the proposal is a lot more than that. Even robotics doesn't exactly fit as illustrated by the fact that they are withdrawing their backup plan. This reminds him of a time many years ago when planning to build a new high school; they went through four iterations before approving one. That suggests to him that there is the need for more work. He stated his support of the program in the final form, but it seems to him the timing is not right. The typical increase over the past few years has been in the area of 1.5% - 2% and now we are looking at perhaps upwards of 6.5 - 7%.

Ms. Deurloo Babcock stated she feels strongly this is a compromise and that is what the taxpayers want; they want taxes low, but they want the best possible education for the kids. This is a way to enhance the spaces, to add some space to the high school, which has always needed a bit more space, and to do it in a fiscally responsible manner.

Her job is to be an advocate for the students and those in robotics every day. That is part of what she sees her role as. There definitely is tension between robotics and this program, but that is between the adults. The kids just want to be able to do robotics, and she believes they want to be able to do it in the high school. That matters to her, and is why she will support it.

Ms. Levesque spoke of being very sensitive to the fact that taxes are high. She is also very sensitive to the fact that we have a great school system and we need to continue that. We have heard of the need for space for years. A solution has been identified that will support many things and will solve space issues. She stated her support of the article.

Ms. Whalen remarked she has been thinking about the concerns relative to the tax increase a great deal. She believes it is a School Board and Town issue, but it is also a State issue, where we need to be funding education in a different way other than just property taxes. As school board members we are here to do our best to educate our children. The space is needed. The FIEMUS program is talked about and gets pushed aside. That took up a number of classrooms in our school. Although it doesn't serve lots of students, it serves a group of students that we, as a community, need to take care of. It has helped our community move forward. It results in cost savings for the District and serves our students better every single day.

We need to do the best we can to serve our students and continually stay up with what is happening in terms of education and technology and how education is changing. Schools in communities that we compete with in terms of housing sales, are putting programs like this in and building onto their schools all the time. We are not always at the forefront, but we are the top educators. She believes the need to move forward and try to work with the STEM program. She believes this to be a compromise. It is being brought forward as it is believed to be needed. Last year 60% of the voters supported it.

MOTION CARRIED

5-1-0

Member Solon voted in opposition

Article 2

To see if the school district will vote to approve the cost items for the second year of a three-year collective bargaining agreement reached between the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board and the Hollis Education Support Staff Association for the 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, which calls for the following increases in support staff salaries and benefits at the current staffing levels:

Fiscal Year	Estimated Increase
2019-20	\$70,621

and further to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$70,621** for the second fiscal year (2019-20 school year), such sum representing the additional costs attributable to the increase in support staff salaries and benefits required by the new agreement over those that would be paid at current staffing levels. This is the second year of a three-year agreement. Negotiated cost item increases for the next fiscal year (2020-21) will require approval of a specific warrant article at the 2020 annual meeting.

MOTION BY MEMBER WHALEN TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 2, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LEVESQUE

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 3

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate a sum of **\$23,113,302** for the support of schools, for the payment of salaries for the school district officials and agents and for the payment of statutory obligations of the district. This appropriation does not include appropriations voted in other warrant articles.

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 3, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK

MOTION CARRIED

5-0-0

Article 4

To see if the school district will vote to establish a contingency fund for the current year for unanticipated expenses that may arise and further to raise and appropriate up to **\$100,000** to go into the fund. This sum to come from the unassigned fund balance available on July 1, 2019, and no amount to be raised from taxation. Any appropriation left at the end of the year will lapse to the general fund.

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 4, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK

ON THE QUESTION

Noted was the public comment regarding the language; whether it could be amended by inserting the word “new” or “additional” before “taxation”. The belief is, were any language changes to be made, the article would have to be vetted by legal counsel.

Ms. Brown suggested there could be an amendment made from the floor of the Annual District Meeting when legal counsel would be present to provide an opinion.

Mr. Rydstrom stated the desire to understand if the order of the articles would be changed. Chairman Solon stated his understanding there is a desire to re-order the articles; however he was uncertain how that related specifically to this article. One of the main goals was to bring the athletic trust to the top, as those are funds contributed by participants.

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 5

Shall the District vote to raise and appropriate the sum of **\$878,364** as the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's portion of the SAU budget of \$1,719,314 for the forthcoming fiscal year? This year's adjusted budget of \$1,691,711 with \$864,235 assigned to the school budget of this school district will be adopted if the article does not receive a majority vote of all the school district voters voting in this school administrative unit.

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 5, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 6

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$67,000** to be added to the previously established Athletic Program and Services Expendable Trust Fund. The sum to come from the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's June 30, 2019 unassigned fund balance, available on July 1, 2019.

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 6, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK

ON THE QUESTION

Ms. Deurloo Babcock stated the desire for the taxpayers to have a clear understanding the amount represents fees parents pay into the District for their children to participate in athletics. It is not taxpayer funded. Chairman Solon stated the trust was created for the sole purpose of ensuring the funds are not artificially mixed with any other funding source.

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 7

To see if the school district will vote to raise and appropriate up to the sum of **\$75,000** to be added to the previously established School Building and Facilities Maintenance Expendable Trust Fund. The sum to come from the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District's June 30, 2019 unassigned fund balance, available on July 1, 2019.

MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 7, AS PRESENTED

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK

ON THE QUESTION

Mr. Rydstrom remarked were the School Board to move article 4 to follow article 7, it would be more likely article 7 would be funded.

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 8

To see if the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School District will vote to raise and appropriate up to **\$25,000** from the June 30 unassigned fund balance available for transfer on July 1, 2019 to be added to the previously established Special Education Expendable Trust Fund. No amount to be raised from taxation.

**MOTION BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 8, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LEVESQUE**

ON THE QUESTION

Vice Chairman VanCoughnett questioned the mention of a cap. Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated it to be an internal cap of \$280,000. Asked if a vote of the Board or Committee established that cap, she stated the first time the article was put forward the Budget Committee requested a cap. It was amended on the floor of the meeting and the cap was removed. Since then, they have made an annual stipulation saying while we support it, we would be able to support it more long-term if there were some type of cap identified. This year, members of the Administration worked to establish kind of an internal cap of what that amount would be.

Superintendent Corey stated it to be a number we hope to achieve. When we get there, we will have a discussion regarding what has changed. Special education costs continue to rise; \$280,000 five years from now may not be adequate. It was to start looking at what we want to do, it is the first number we would like to get to. Chairman Solon suggested a change in the way it is advertised.

Ms. Brown commented in years when there were funds available, taxpayers have voted to double the amount in the article.

Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated the summary received stated "Each special education expendable trust will not exceed \$280,000." Chairman Solon commented that is unenforceable, and questioned what would occur were there a motion from the floor to appropriate a large sum of money. Budget Committee Chairman Mann responded it would be up to the voters whether to support that. Chairman Solon questioned if there would be an attempt to enforce the cap. He asked for clarification, from a presentation standpoint, the Budget Committee would not make that statement. Budget Committee Chairman Mann stated when this comes to the floor will she make a statement that it was explained that there would be an internal cap of \$280,000. Since it is not stipulated in writing in the article and it is not necessarily legally binding, it is more of an administrative agreement that that is what the target would be, if someone were to come to the floor and say they wished to fund it to a total of \$300,000, that then becomes an issue for the legislative body to determine.

Vice Chairman VanCoughnett stated concern when people hear cap, they think it is set. Budget Committee Chairman Mann responded she also indicated we only have \$150,000 toward it. It is intended so that it does exactly what the Superintendent said; it makes us mindful of what the target is, to examine the reasons why we need it, and if we see a change in programs we offer in house, that would then shift what some of the contracted expenses would be and change targets.

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

Article 9

To see if the school district will authorize the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board to access future year state and federal special education aid funds if special education costs exceed budget limitations.

**MOTION BY MEMBER LEVESQUE TO RECOMMEND ARTICLE 9, AS PRESENTED
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0**

- To see what action the Board will take regarding the order of the Warrant Articles for the Annual Meeting

Ms. Brown questioned the deadline if the Board had a non-monetary article to add to the warrant, and was informed the deadline is February 13, 2019.

Chairman Solon recommended articles 1, 2, and 3 remain in their current positions, the SAU operating budget (article 5) become article 4, the athletic trust fund (article 6) become article 5, the maintenance expendable trust (article 7) become article 6, the special education trust (article 8) become article 7, and the contingency fund (article 4) become article 8.

**MOTION BY MEMBER WHALEN TO RE-ORDER THE ARTICLES SO THAT THE BOND
ARTICLE IS #1, THE HESSA CONTRACT #2, OPERATING BUDGET #3, SAU OPERATING
BUDGET #4, ATHLETIC TRUST #5, MAINTENANCE TRUST #6, SPECIAL EDUCATION TRUST
#7, AND CONTINGENCY #8
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LEVESQUE
MOTION CARRIED
6-0-0**

Superintendent Corey stated the Board would be updated on any petition warrant articles that come in, and at its next meeting would schedule dates for public hearings.

Chairman Solon commented on the anticipation a petition article will come in for SB2. Ms. Brown stated the desire for the Board to put that on the warrant. Chairman Solon stated the likelihood an article will come in on February 11th. Ms. Brown noted citizen petition articles require a public hearing; however, were it a Board article a separate public hearing in each town would not be required.

Chairman Solon noted the likelihood there will be a citizens' petition article for a tax cap and another for putting the estimated tax impact on the warrant.

Superintendent Corey stated were the Board to have put forth an article, it would have had to have been done this evening as it would have been counted in the public hearing. At this point, it would be a new article, and a public hearing would be required.

Ms. Brown questioned the will of the Board. Chairman Solon stated a hesitancy to put on the warrant something he does not support. Ms. Brown stated her belief had that been in place last year the District would have been able to pass the bond when construction costs were lower and interest rates were lower. We knew we were threading the needle and achieved the 60% but was unable to achieve the super majority. She believes the District is getting too large to make town meeting work.

**MOTION BY MEMBER BROWN TO ADD SB2 TO THE WARRANT AS A SCHOOL BOARD
ARTICLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH LANGUAGE PROVIDED BY ATTORNEY O'SHAUGHNESSY
MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER VANCOUGHNETT**

ON THE QUESTION

Ms. Deurloo Babcock spoke of being conflicted; she agrees with the maker of the motion and believes the District is ready for SB2, however, she is not prepared to support it at this moment. She needs to give it its due consideration. She believes in the purity of the District meeting.

Chairman Solon commented having experienced SB2 in Brookline and witnessing the outcome, he is opposed to it. The annual meeting may be difficult, however, the SB2 deliberative session is no easier. It is extremely frustrating to have intelligent discussion the day of deliberation and no outcome. The deliberative session is not attended as well as the actual voting day.

Ms. Whalen stated her understanding of the desire for it, and certainly after the frustration experienced last year, but she still enjoys witnessing pure democracy at work in the form of the town meeting. She believes the community is still small enough to continue with that format. Hearing the pros and cons goes a long way toward ensuring the voters receive the information needed.

Vice Chairman VanCoughnett commented she was not expecting this to come forward this evening, but could support it going on the warrant as a School Board article, just because we will see it as an article anyway.

Ms. Levesque stated her impression by putting it on the warrant it indicates the School Board supports it. She believes the format of a town meeting is important.

Ms. Brown commented she feels the town meetings have become an elaborate game of chess. There are probably 35 people in town who are really playing this game like pros, but that doesn't mean that is good for the kids, good for the taxpayers, or good for democracy, and frankly when we have a situation that we know who they are, because we are moms, that are telling people what time to come over to vote and people are running in and voting; they are not sitting there for the discussion, they are coming in, ready to vote, and leaving. There isn't this discourse besides a very small remnant that are into it. The rest of the public want to get their information before they get there, they will get it however they will get it, but they are not going to show up to have real discourse at town meeting.

That is why, at this point, she believes SB2 is at least an alternative that allows people to have what they really want, which is all-day voting, which is where we will be headed again, except this time we will be using some kind of odd procedure that we don't know will work. We are probably just opening ourselves up to another lawsuit next year because we have people trying to run two sets of ballots and two checklists, and all this crazy stuff that we have never done before.

Ms. Levesque stated the desire for additional time to consider this.

Vice Chairman VanCoughnett commented if we are going to start moving bonds to an all-day vote then we are already at SB2 before we decide we even want to be.

Ms. Brown commented people who support the bond and people who reject it may choose to come to the meeting and support an all-day vote because they both think theoretically that if they have a 12-hour day they will get more people who are going to vote consistently with them. What we learned last year is that the vote during the meeting had about the same percentage point, almost exact, as the all-day one did.

Mr. Mason stated there are several considerations if you want to move to SB2. One is the default budget. From what he is told, the Legislature, every year, tries to deal with a procedure for dealing with the default budget. There is continuous turnover on various aspects about SB2. It is a moving target and there is no way to tell where it will go.

MOTION FAILED

2-4-0

Members, Deurloo Babcock, Levesque, Solon, and Whalen voted in opposition

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY MEMBER DEURLOO BABCOCK TO ADJOURN

MOTION SECONDED BY MEMBER LEVESQUE

MOTION CARRIED

6-0-0

The February 6, 2019 meeting of the Hollis Brookline Cooperative School Board adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Date: _____

Signed: _____