

Hancock School Committee Meeting Minutes
September 3rd, 2024

Present: Jim Rodda, Elisa Kryskow, Alex Kastrinakis, Kayt Turner, Bruce Weiner

Also Present: Rebecca Phillips (Superintendent/SPED Director), Jay Merselis (Principal), Hillary Bashara (Nurse), Diane Arduini (SLP)

1. Call to Order - Kayt called the meeting to order at 6:07pm
2. Meet New Staff Members
 1. Introductions by Diane Arduini (SLP) and Hillary Bashara (Nurse)
3. Public Concerns:
 1. Berkshire Eagle Article re: low enrollment due to School Choice Decision. Collective agreement was that the tone and spin of the article was unnecessarily negative.
4. Correspondence:
 1. MASC mailings
5. Bruce motioned to approve 8/6/24 minutes. 2nd- Jim . All in favor.
6. Principal's Report:
 1. Accolades and Happenings
 1. Staff and especially Mrs. LeBarron took care of getting the school prepped for the first day of school after the PD day.
 2. John was able to remove some unneeded items from the school which makes the school look great!
 3. Mr. Merselis is thankful to parents for getting their paperwork in on time! 90% of students have completed all of their paperwork as of first day of school.
 4. Sheer joy of students throughout the first week of school.
 2. Enrollment
 1. Currently have 49 students enrolled. The school still receives frequent inquiries about Pre-K (remember that the committee voted to discontinue allowance of Pre-K students that are not from Hancock).
 1. Difference in enrollment from last year: 7 students graduated, 1 moved out of district, 3 choices out to nearby schools, 2 that were in Pre-K are now in K in NY. This year starts with 3 new Pre-K students.
 3. Project Updates:
 1. Shed is on order, waiting for building permit to be finalized.
 2. Adopted a new student management system with Richmond. Used to use Power School, however the new program is designed for a small school districts that don't have a tech department. Gives information directly to the state to comply with state standards. (And also saves thousands of dollars over the course of 5 years!)
 3. Upgraded to the commercial version of our Math Curriculum (Eureka Math = EM2)
 4. Early Childhood Room Discussion:
 1. Looking at the make-up of the students and numbers. Questions to consider throughout the year: Do we still continue to accept 3 year olds? Would we make the Pre-K program into a 5 day program? Conversation about moving to 'universal' where we're not billing the families? Or, consider financial criteria to start a scholarship fund for families who struggle to pay for PreK? School Committee to think on these items (decide during the spring) so we can plan for future.
 5. Upcoming Events: N/A
7. Superintendent's Report:
 1. Salary Correction (paraprofessional, Support Staff): Discussion and Vote
 1. Bruce motions to increase paraprofessional and custodian salaries by \$1.00 per hour retroactive to the first day of school due to hiring challenges and comparable salaries in other similar (i.e. Farmington River) districts . Kayt- 2nd. All of in favor

2. FY24 end of year budget status
 1. School gave back approximately \$78,000 to the town. \$35,000 was carried over for unencumbered summer salaries. Dr. Phillips will connect with Angela (Town of Hancock accountant) regarding questions about what appear to be balance discrepancies.
3. Grant Funding
 1. Exhausted COVID money which had to be spent by End of Sept. Have ~1200 Rural Aid money left (bought shed, moved to paid program of math curriculum). Waiting to see what will come from REAP and Rural Aid. Dr. Phillips is currently writing the grants.
4. Employee Handbook: Discussion and possible vote
 1. Will hold off on vote until next meeting
5. Student Handbook: Vote
 1. Elisa made the motion to accept the Hancock Central School Handbook 2024-2025 as written. Bruce - 2nd. All in favor.
6. Miscellaneous
 1. Dr. Phillips really pleased with the opening of the school this year, including PD (SPED training). 5/6 Teacher/Para presented on Math, Ms. Shiya presented mindfulness.
8. SPED Director Report
 1. Hiring update:
 1. Had hired a SPED teacher, who then quit the day before school started for a better financial offer.
 2. Donna Beguin will be here part time to cover bases until we find out what is next. Currently have 3 applicants with interviews scheduled for 9/4.
 2. Put into the schedule a regular, rotating time period for which all teachers get time with the SPED teacher to collaborate on cases (both those with an IEP and those who may need extra assistance, despite not having an IEP).
 3. Newly launched IEP forms
9. Exemption Request regarding *School Entrance Regulations* date on 2/24/2009. Discussion and Vote.
 1. Committee requests additional information from the Pre-K/K teacher and some hard data to before making the decision to move the child into Kindergarten.
10. Financial Report - Reviewed
11. New Business: None
12. Kayt motioned to adjourn 8:30, Alex - 2nd, all in favor.