

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2021 JAN -4 P 1:19

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING

**Date of Meeting:** Thursday, October 15, 2020

**Location:** Remote Participation

**Present:** Committee Members: Chairperson Carolyn Gallagher, Vice-Chairperson Deniz Savas, Mrs. Sheri Cohen, and Mr. Dan Sheedy. **Absent:** Mrs. Kathleen Stern. **Also present:** Superintendent of Schools Joseph F. Baeta, School Business Administrator Matthew Wells, Director of Facilities Wade Lizotte, Director of Technology Karen Winsper, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Vincent Cerce, Coordinator of Special Education Casey Russo, and Director of Athletics and Student Services Aaron Sumner

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Gallagher called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**Minutes:**

**MOTION:** by Mr. Savas to Approve Minutes of September 24, 2020 Open School Committee Meeting

**SECOND:** by Mrs. Cohen

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Deniz Savas – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher - Yes 4 - 0 Motion Carries

**MOTION:** by Mr. Savas to postpone School Committee meeting and to enter into joint meeting and to return to Open School Committee meeting following joint meeting

**SECOND:** by Mr. Sheedy

**ROLL CALL VOTE:** Deniz Savas – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher - Yes 4 - 0 Motion Carries

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Gallagher called the joint meeting with the School Committee, Select Board and Finance Committee to order at 6:33 p.m. noting that the meeting is being recorded.

**Discussion on FY21 Town Meeting:**

Due to the forecasted poor weather for the Saturday Annual Town Meeting, Mr. Yunits said there would be a meeting at 10 a.m. on Saturday morning to discuss set-up.

Dr. Baeta noted that the Governor's office released information with cuts of \$72,000 (Student Opportunity Act Funds). He said that the school budget was frozen regarding expenditures. The biggest issue is filling / back-filling positions due to FMLA and paternity leaves. Doctors are signing off on medical leaves due to COVID and staff members are using FMLA and accrued sick leave and can also apply to actual contractual sick leave bank for additional time. All Federal Government funds

currently expire on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Increases in Special Education, including SEL needs, could lead to out of district placement costs in the six figures, not including transportation. We are trying to figure out transportation. We are using Bloom for food delivery through June 30, 2021. Any funding coming in could offset the costs.

Mr. Wells said that end of year and current financials were shared with the Finance Committee a couple of weeks ago. Financial updates will take place at the second School Committee meeting of the month.

***Discussion on Trane Bid:***

Mr. Wells presented an update on the TRANE project bid. The evaluation team completed their assessment of the three firms that submitted proposals. All firms were determined to be qualified and capable. The most qualified firm was TRANE Commercial Systems by unanimous decision. The next step in the process is to issue a written notification of selection to TRANE Commercial Systems, which will start the development of the Audit Contract leading to the start of the audit in the town buildings. The estimated time for completion of the audit is 3-4 months.

When asked about savings, Mr. Wells explained that there is no guarantee of what the savings will be until the audit is complete. He answered a question regarding if new buildings would be covered under the project, stating that by adding all town buildings onto the bid document, we are assured that they would be covered in the future.

Mr. Wells said that the proposal was a large bound book and that he would share it electronically with the Finance Committee and Select Board.

A question arose regarding who reviews the projects that will move forward. The School Committee and Town Manager talk and then it goes to the Select Board. Mr. Yunits noted that large projects should go through the Building Committee.

It was decided that another joint meeting with the School Committee, Select Board, and Finance Committee would be held on Thursday, January 14, 2021.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to adjourn joint meeting to return to regular session

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Deniz Savas – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes    4 – 0    Motion Carries

***Student Representatives Update:***

Students Malia Savas and Zoe Duran updated the Committee on what was happening in the schools.

- JCS – Working on reading and writing and assessments. Enjoying great weather.
- LGN – Flu clinic held; purple heart buckets; purple gear day
- HAY – Principal Geoghegan is proud of everything that is happening regarding mask wearing and social distancing. PTO to hold meeting next Wednesday.
- Digital Learning Academy – Students getting used to new platform. Family Q & A session held; looking to make curriculum more robust.

- Mr. Hayward let his students know that if they have any ideas to let him know and he will make an announcement.
- NHS held spirit week. Soccer and cross country going on with mask wearing; student survey went out; Representatives noted that remote days were very busy for them and that this was reflected in the survey.

Mrs. Gallagher noted that we are getting a lot of thoughtful insight. We are getting close to the 6-week mark. There is a lot going on but we can tweak things, too.

Dr. Baeta stated that he released the list of supplemental clubs/activities that will run. Working on how to put together and schedule keeping social distancing in mind.

***Warrants:***

Mrs. Cohen reported that she reviewed and approved the following warrants, to be entered into the public record:

- September 25, 2020                      \$380,188.50
- October 7, 2020                         \$563,879.79

***First Reading of District's Personal Travel Policy During COVID-19:***

Per the Governor, a policy should be in place regarding personal travel during COVID-19 and be aligned to the current Commonwealth guidelines. Travelers arriving in Massachusetts from higher-risk zones must quarantine for 14 days or provide a negative COVID test administered within 72 hours before arrival. Lower-risk states currently include: Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont. Exempt from these regulations are those travelling in state for work, school, medical appointments, and military personnel.

Dr. Baeta reiterated that this policy is not considered an approval for employees to travel out of state, but serves as notice that the conditions are understood.

The sample policy uses language taken from the state. A formal vote will be taken at the 2nd reading. The reason for having a second reading is to allow for public review and comment.

***Discussion and Vote on Superintendent's Goals:***

Two updates to dates were incorporated into the goals: Goal # 1, Action 1: Change October 1, 2020 to October 30, 2020; Goal #4, Action 1: Change October 1, 2020 to October 30, 2020.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve current Superintendent's Goals as written

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Deniz Savas – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes    4 – 0    Motion Carries

***Review and Vote on Coaches' Handbook:***

Mr. Sumner presented the draft 2020-2021 Coaches Handbook noting that the process started in January 2020 by recommendation of the School Committee and is based on the Portrait of a Norton Graduate and MIAA regulations. The emphasis is on the education lens and building the whole student.

Dr. Baeta noted that the handbook offers a clear communication of expectations (and is not an evaluation tool which will be forthcoming at a later date). The document is like an employee handbook and incorporates a philosophy of what we want to do. Coaching has the same definition as teacher.

The Committee thanked Mr. Sumner for his efforts, noting that it was a collaborative effort and that this was the first time that Norton had a handbook for coaches.

Mr. Sumner stated that the handbook would be in effect next season – starting November 30, 2020. Coaches would need to sign-off acknowledging receipt of the handbook before each season.

Dr. Baeta said that the handbook was a work in progress and would undergo a yearly review.

Mr. Savas remarked that he would like to see a section stating that there would be no compensation for coaches/assistant coaches/volunteers from the booster organizations, as well as another step under conflict resolution. After discussion ensued, he then said to drop the latter.

The meeting was open to public comment. Peter Wiggins commented through text thanking Mr. Sumner for letting him attend games as a member of the press.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve Coaches Handbook with noted amendments

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dan Sheedy – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes      4 – 0      Motion Carries

***Discussion and Vote on Wednesday Before Thanksgiving (November 25, 2020) – Full Day or Early Release Day:***

Dr. Baeta stated that currently the school calendar has students attending school for a full day on the Wednesday before the Thanksgiving break. It is his recommendation to leave this as a full day with the rationale that including the remote Monday, all students would get two full days that week. Schools are already scheduled to be closed on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Election Day, and November 11<sup>th</sup>, Veteran's Day.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to approve a full day of School on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dan Sheedy – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Deniz Savas – No; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes      3 – 1 – 0      Motion Carries

***Vote to Move October 22, 2020 School Committee Meeting to October 29, 2020:***

Dr. Baeta recommends moving the meeting to October 29<sup>th</sup> at which time more information will be available to report on including: data points, parent meetings and surveys, special education meetings, and remote/hybrid models.

Mrs. Gallagher gave a “shout out” to Health Agent Christian Zahner for sharing the Town COVID-19 data. Mrs. Cohen stated that Mr. Zahner would be sharing the information to Facebook.

Discussion ensued regarding having the October 29<sup>th</sup> meeting at 6:00 p.m. All were in agreement.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to move October 22<sup>nd</sup> School Committee meeting to October 29<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m.  
SECOND: by Mr. Savas

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dan Sheedy – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes    4 – 0    Motion Carries

***Other Business:***

- Mr. Wells announced that the Kyle Bishop Foundation made a \$2,000 donation to the NPS to be used for students that need help paying for fees for activities and tests. Formal thanks went out to Steve Bishop for his consistent support.
- Mrs. Gallagher spoke about the Wheaton Community Council / President Hanno. She noted how impressive a college Wheaton was and how they are on top of their COVID safety plan. Students are tested twice per week. Students appear to be engaged and safe.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Adjourn  
SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dan Sheedy – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Sheri Cohen – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes    4 – 0    Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

***Next meeting date:*** Saturday, October 17 at 12:30 p.m.; Thursday, October 29 at 6:00 p.m.

***Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:***


- ESCO RIFQ Evaluation Results report
- Draft version: District’s Personal Travel Policy During COVID-19
- Superintendent’s Goals: 2020-2021
- Draft version: NPS Coaches Handbook 2020-2021

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joseph F. Baeta, Ed.D.  
Secretary Pro Tem

  
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Carolyn Gallagher, Chairperson

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Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairperson

  
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Sheri Cohen

  
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Daniel Sheedy

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Kathleen Stern

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