

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2023 OCT 27 AM 9:05

***Date of School Committee Meeting:*** Thursday, October 12, 2023

***Location:*** Middle School Library

***Present:*** Committee Members: Chairperson Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Mr. Nick Schleicher, Mrs. Justine Callanan, and Mr. Dan Sheedy ***Not present:*** Vice Chairperson Mr. Deniz Savas ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Jennifer O'Neill, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Brian Ackerman, School Business Administrator Kristine Hadfield and Student Representative Gabriela Kenaan

***Call to Order:*** Chairperson Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Chairperson Cohen announced that the meeting was being recorded by Norton Media and asked if anyone was recording to let the Committee know.

***Pledge of Allegiance***

***Vote to Approve Minutes of September 28, 2023 Open Session Meeting:***

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to approve Minutes of September 28, 2023 Open Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Callanan

VOTE: 3 - 0 - 1 Motion Carries

***Vote to Approve Minutes of September 28, 2023 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee:***

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to approve Minutes of September 28, 2023 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 3 - 0 - 1 Motion Carries

***Warrants:***

Mr. Sheedy reported that the following School Expense Warrants and School Payroll Warrants were reviewed and approved by Mrs. Cohen and are to be entered into the public record:

School Expense Warrant:

September 28, 2023                      \$ 963,828.56

School Payroll Warrant:

September 21, 2023                      \$1,373,795.46

***Student Representatives Update:***

Gabriela Kenaan updated the Committee on school activities as follows:

**NHS** – Career Day will be held on October 24<sup>th</sup> with approximately 25 professionals presenting to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class to emphasize career exploration. Spirit Week organized by the Student Council will be held October 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>. On October 27<sup>th</sup>, students will participate in SEL activities with their peers and teachers. The high school will revive the tradition of a Homecoming Dance on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

**HAY** – Students have been doing great as they really get into their academic work. The PBIS program rewards positive behaviors with paper “hashtags”. When students collect 50 hashtags, they can redeem them for a coin for the HAY PTO book vending machine. So far over 60 students have received a book from the machine because of their positive behaviors. In addition, the HAY has made 73 Good News Calls of the Day so far this year. The Scholastic Book Fair will be set up during conferences next week, and the hope is to restock the vending machine with more great choices for the students. Teachers look forward to seeing families at conferences to talk about all the progress students are making.

**JCS** – The SPO recently hosted “Flamingo Flocking” where families were able to “flock” someone in town. The SPO is also hosting a movie night on October 14<sup>th</sup> where students and families can enjoy “The Addams Family” with concessions and raffles. Students have also been working hard to earn Turtle Tokens for showing safe, respectful, and responsible behavior. Some grade levels have already earned fun rewards for collecting the most tokens.

***Opening School Remarks – Principal Vincent Hayward:***

Principal Hayward addressed the Committee reporting that it has been a great school opening for his 571 students and 81 teachers and staff. In a slide presentation, he introduced the middle school’s new staff members. Major initiatives for the school include PBIS and IMTSS. PBIS expectations are outlined for students, reinforced with tickets, and prizes are awarded twice a week for each grade level. He extended thanks to the NMS Parent Board for helping fund prizes.

Mr. Hayward reported that 14 clubs at NMS are up and running with 206 students participating. 138 students are participating on 5 middle school and 3 JV high school teams. Volleyball started this fall at NMS with tremendous interest in the team.

Mr. Hayward closed with a video clip from the recent Jesse Green motivational speaker assembly featuring a student so moved by the presentation that they took to the stage to sing. He reported that it was fantastic to see how the students responded to their classmate. The Halloween dance is October 27<sup>th</sup>, and conferences are in November.

***Vote to Approve DECA Trips for the 2023-2024 School Year:***

Mr. Portway, NHS Teacher, gave an overview of DECA and introduced student Helen Russell, DECA President. She discussed her experiences being involved with DECA. The following DECA activities were presented for the Committee’s consideration and vote:

- **DECA PowerTrip | Austin, Texas | November 17-20, 2023** - PowerTrip engages DECA members in a weekend of leadership development through college and career readiness workshops, mock and practice competitions, networking, and learning labs.
- **District 8 Competition | Hyannis, MA | January 4-5, 2024** - The preliminary level of competition where students compete in written events, individual and team series events, presentations, and exams. Qualifying students advance to the next competition.

- **Sports & Entertainment Marketing Conference | Orlando, FL | February 1-5, 2024** - Career and leadership development conference for students interested in careers in sports and entertainment marketing hosted by Universal Orlando.
- **States Competition | Boston, MA | March 7-9, 2024** - The second level of competition where students compete in written events, individual and team series events, presentations, and exams. Qualifying students advance to the next competition.
- **International Competition | Anaheim, CA | April 27-30, 2024** - The final level of competition where students compete in written events, individual and team series events, presentations, exams, and leadership programs.

The Committee requested clarification on the number of students participating in DECA as well as how funding for the trips is handled. Mr. Portway and Ms. Russell reviewed current DECA enrollment and explained how student officers present information about the varied opportunities to prospective members. Student trips are self-funded, but there are several opportunities for fundraising and scholarships. Dr. O'Neill stated that the district would also work with families who have extenuating circumstances to ensure student access is equitable.

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to Approve DECA Trips for 2023-2024 School Year as presented

SECOND: by Mrs. Callanan

VOTE: 4 – 0 Motion Carries

***Presentation and Vote on Global Education Trip to Greece in April 2025:***

Dr. O'Neill presented the Committee with information on a proposed seven-day global education trip to Greece in April 2025, coinciding with April break. Dr. O'Neill clarified for the Committee that students self-fund their travel. EF Educational Tours offers payment plans, and students find various ways to fund their trips. In the past the district was able to support charter buses for airport transfers, but those funds have been depleted.

The Committee inquired about the possibility of refunds if trips are cancelled and also about the student to chaperone ratio on trips. Dr. O'Neill stated that EF Tours provides 24-hour contact and support while trips are in progress to address any health, safety, or logistical concerns that may arise. EF Tours does not offer refunds but will allow vouchers for future travel or the gifting of the trip voucher to another student. If a tour could not happen as planned, they would work to rebook a new trip. Dr. O'Neill stated that the student to chaperone ratio is 6:1, and chaperone costs are covered by EF Tours. Additional chaperones can be added and funded by the district if desired. A district administrator always travels with the tours.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to Approve the Global Education Trip to Greece in April 2025 as presented

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 4 – 0 Motion Carries

***Enrollment Update – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill:***

Dr. O'Neill presented to the Committee the October 1<sup>st</sup> enrollment summary and an overview of comparisons to last year's data showing a slight decrease in Norton resident enrollments (14 students) and a slight increase (44 students) in School Choice enrollment. Special Education enrollment has stayed consistent since the start of the year.

The Committee discussed the enrollment fluctuations and the impact on funding as well as the rental agreement with the READS Collaborative to house the DHH Program. In addition, the Committee reviewed the process for accepting School Choice students and discussed that the Committee could be extremely prescriptive in determining how many seats are available for School Choice in the coming year. Dr. O'Neill will share the district's monthly enrollment tracking with the Committee.

***Transportation Update – Mrs. Kristine Hadfield:***

Mrs. Hadfield reported that transportation is off to a very good start with almost 1,500 students registered and roughly 1,322 students riding the bus regularly. The district has collected approximately \$136,000 in bus fees so far this year. The new late fee for registrations after July 1st has generated about \$1,500. A couple of buses on the HAY/NMS run have higher capacity, but those numbers are coming down. There are a few families on payment plans. Families who qualify for free/reduced lunch have bus fees waived.

The Committee discussed bus revenue versus our overall bus cost as well as the legal obligations for providing transportation and the potential implications if bus fees were eliminated. This generated a discussion regarding school start times. The district will form a School Start Committee to research possible options. Dr. O'Neill will present the Committee with a proposed timeline at the October 26th meeting.

***Budget Update – Mrs. Kristine Hadfield:***

Mrs. Hadfield provided year-to-date financials, revolving grant funds, and the budget. Since the previous update there has been one payroll and a few grant receipts have come in. The daily and long-term substitute lines will be transferred out into School Choice once those funds are distributed.

***Discussion and Vote on School Attendance on March 5, 2024 – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill:***

Dr. O'Neill advised the Committee that the Town Clerk's office had requested the use of both the gym and cafeteria at NMS for voting during the presidential primary on March 5, 2024, due to predicted voter turnout. This would necessitate the closing of schools as NMS could not be open with both of those spaces in use for voting.

The Committee discussed multiple concerns such as parking, safety, and disruption to learning and families in relation to both this and upcoming elections. Dr. O'Neill noted that since the elections have moved to the middle school, the voting process has gone very smoothly. For future calendar planning, the district will coordinate with the Town Clerk to project election needs. Additionally, the Committee will propose the election process be added to the agenda for the upcoming joint meeting with the Select Board and Finance Committee.

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher for school to remain in session on March 5<sup>th</sup> with voting in the NMS gym only

SECOND: by Mrs. Callanan

VOTE: 3 - 0 - 1 Motion Carries

***Review and Vote on Superintendent's Goals for 2023-2024 – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill:***

Dr. O'Neill presented the Committee with her goals for the 2023-2024 school year and reminded them that as a new superintendent, she has a one-year evaluation process. The Committee commended Dr. O'Neill for providing detailed measurable goals and expressed an interest in completing the evaluation process prior to reorganizing in the spring. The formative evaluation will take place in January with the summative evaluation completed before April 1<sup>st</sup>.

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to approve the Superintendent's 2023-2024 Goals as presented

SECOND: by Mrs. Callanan

VOTE: 4 - 0 Motion Carries

***Discussion and Vote on School Committee Delegate for November MASC Annual Business Meeting – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill:***

Dr. O'Neill provided background on the Committee's participation at the MASS/MASC Conference in previous years. The Committee discussed the possible merits of attendance. Dr. O'Neill will provide the appointed delegate with additional information so that they will be able to determine whether they will attend the conference.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to appoint Mr. Schleicher as the delegate for the MASC Conference

SECOND: by Mrs. Callanan

VOTE: 3 - 0 - 1 Motion Carries

***Discussion and Vote on Nurse Substitute Rate – Mrs. Kristine Hadfield:***

Mrs. Hadfield notified the Committee that the Coordinator of Health Services, Doreen Browne, has requested a nurse substitute rate increase from \$125 to \$210 per day. The increase will be covered by the Comprehensive School Health Services Grant which the district has been receiving since 2019, and expects to receive for at least an additional five years after 2024. The Committee discussed the challenges of finding substitute nurses and looked at the provided nurse substitute comparable rates from other districts. While in favor of increasing the rate, the Committee requested additional historical data regarding the use of grant funds in order to determine an appropriate rate increase. Item is tabled until the October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

***Other Business:***

SEPAC is participating in the Halloween parade as is JCS. Candy donations for SEPAC are being accepted at Blush Vanity and Epione Wellness where you'll be entered into a raffle for one of their services.

The Desfosses/Petersen Memorial Food Drive will be held Saturday October 21<sup>st</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

***Adjourn:***

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to adjourn meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 4 - 0 Motion Carries

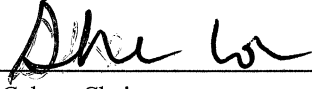
The meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

**Next Meeting Date:** Monday, October 23, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., in the NHS Teachers' Lunchroom


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


- DECA Trips 2023-2024
- Global Education Trip – Greece April 2025
- Enrollment Update October 2023
- Budget Update October 2023
- Superintendent's Goals 2023-2024
- MASC Annual Meeting and Delegate
- Comparable Nurse Substitute Rates

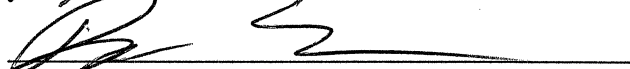
Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer O'Neill, Ed.D.  
Secretary Pro Tem

  
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Sheri Cohen, Chairperson

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Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairman

  
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Justine Callanan

  
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Nick Schleicher

  
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Dan Sheedy

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