

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK  
2024 MAR 29 AM 11:13

***Date of School Committee Meeting:*** Thursday, March 14, 2024

***Location:*** Norton Middle School Library

***Present:*** Committee Members: Chairperson Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Vice Chairperson Mr. Deniz Savas, Mrs. Justine Callanan, Mr. Dan Sheedy, and Mr. Nick Schleicher ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Jennifer O'Neill, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Brian Ackerman, School Business Administrator Kristine Hadfield and Student Representatives Antonio Romano and Gabriela Kenaan

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

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

***Pledge of Allegiance***

***Vote to Approve Minutes of February 29, 2024 Open Session Meeting***

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve Minutes of February 29, 2024 Open Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

***Vote to Approve Minutes of February 29, 2024 Executive Session Meeting***

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve Minutes of February 29, 2024 Executive Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

***Warrants:***

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

School Expense Warrant:

February 29, 2024 \$ 387,259.01

School Payroll Warrant:

February 22, 2024 \$1,222,745.40

***Student Representative Update:***

**HAY** - Students are getting outside for recess more and they love getting on the turf field and playing all types of games and activities. They are also getting outside during class-time for experiments and during PE Wellness.

They are currently engaged in ST Math March "Math"ness Tournament where all 15 homerooms are matched up against one another in a bracket-style tournament competition. Each student can do their 60 required puzzles per week, and the class with the better percentage moves on to the next round. The first round has homerooms from 5th Grade versus 4th Grade. We will let you know who is crowned ST March Mathness Champion after a few weeks of competition.

Students are excited for the HAY PTO upcoming Music Bingo night.

One of the best times of the year is almost here with the HAY PTO Book Fair, which begins next week during parent teacher conferences. Students come down as a class to the fair and can go during the conferences to pick out books. We hope to see many parents during parent teacher conferences next week.

**JCS** - Is looking forward to warmer weather and all that it brings. Students were asked this morning what THEY were looking forward to.

**NHS** - The past few weeks a lot of cool things happened at the high school! The National Science Honor Society traveled to the elementary schools to run cool science events for Science Days and the National English Honor Society traveled to the elementary schools for Read Across America Day! NHS held a faculty/student volleyball tournament. Matt Williams won Mr. NHS!

As temperatures warm, people are very excited about all the things Spring will include:

- The Spring Musical - High School Musical
- Spring Sports
- Eating lunch outside

***Update and Vote, If Necessary, on Norton VFW Carnival:***

Mr. Gary Cameron from the Veterans Council addressed the Committee regarding the carnival their organization is sponsoring at the HAY school. He wanted to confirm everything was all set with School Committee and if there were any questions. The carnival is starting on Wednesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> thru Saturday, June 23, 2024, one extra day this year due to the weather last year. They are using the same vendor as last year and there were no issues. He also informed the Committee there will be a car show on the last day from 10 – 2. The Committee confirmed nothing will be on the turf field or behind the school, and the busses will be gone for the summer. He thanked the Committee and the Committee wished the VFW a huge success. Nothing to vote at this time.

***Recognition of Mr. Robert Bielawa – MSAA Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year***

Dr. O'Neill recognized and congratulated Mr. Bielawa on this prestigious recognition. Members of the MASS School Administrators' Association visited the Henri A. Yelle School on Friday, February 9, 2024 to officially recognize Mr. Bielawa as the recipient. Mr. Geoghegan, Principal, nominated Mr. Bielawa. They worked together for over six years and he commented how

wonderful he is with the kids and parents, does everything, and how he depends on him and things get done.

Mr. Bielawa thanked Mr. Geoghegan and expressed how awesome it has been to work with him and the wonderful staff.

***Public Hearing and Vote on FY 2025 School Budget***

In accordance with the Town Charter, the Notice of Public Hearing has been published in *Sun Chronical*.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Open Public Hearing on FY 2025 School Budget and Return to General Session

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

ROLL CALL: Dan Sheedy-yes; Nick Schleicher-yes; Justine Callanan-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Sheri Cohen-yes 5 - 0 Motion Carries

Dr. O'Neill presented slides regarding the Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2025 to the Committee and the public.

She discussed a Level Service Budget to retain staff and services for FY'25 is \$38,873,431. This is a 12.01% increase of \$4,166,987 over the FY'24 budget of \$34,706,443. It is important to note that ESSER III funds of \$550,000 were used during FY'24 to hire new staff or retain staff. This expense now has to be added back into the budget.

The breakdown for the FY'25 Budget for mandated educational costs include special education services and staff, as well as out of district placements and transportation. Additional mandated costs are English, Learner Education, homeless transportation, and translation services. This makes up an increase of \$2,032,446 for FY'25. General education encompasses all other costs, including athletics and extra-curricular activities. This makes up an increase of \$2,134,540 for FY'25.

She then reviewed Budget Actions and the factors to show the community a picture of how the district arrived at this recommended budget. It was important to also include Unfunded Requests that are legitimate and justifiable needs not included in the recommended budget. The total of these unfunded requests is \$643,386. Discussion of an example of an Unfunded Request would be a Middle School Library Media Specialist. This has been a requested for the past 8-10 years.

Dr. O'Neill informed the Committee and public about communication with the Town Manager Michael Yunits and how the town will be in a deficit of around \$2.4M next year. This will reduce the School Budget for FY'25 by \$374,680 from the current year of \$34,706,443. She and Mr. Yunits had very beginning discussions about utilizing free cash, stabilization funds, etc., for this situation and is waiting on responses.

The School Committee expressed that they are just being informed about this deficit. The Committee and administrative team have spent hours looking at ways to make budget cuts with different percentage scenarios. This will now potentially be an additional 15 more teacher/position cuts above the 29, for a total of 44 cuts.

The Committee reached out to the community to please understand in the next few months they will have to make difficult decisions. We don't know how the other town departments are impacted. Again, this information is newly brought forth and no department gets a budget until the town votes. We will continue to follow the process.

The public participated in a question and answer session.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Close Public Hearing on FY 2025 School Budget and Return to General Session

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

ROLL CALL: Dan Sheedy-yes; Nick Schleicher-yes; Justine Callanan-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Sheri Cohen-yes 5 - 0 Motion Carries

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve the FY 2025 Budget in the amount of \$38,873,431 as recommended

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

ROLL CALL: Dan Sheedy-yes; Nick Schleicher-yes; Justine Callanan-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Sheri Cohen-yes 5 - 0 Motion Carries

### ***Discussion on JCS Access Road for Community Farm***

Mr. Joseph Carvalho of Second Nature Farm addressed the Committee for a proposed access road on the JCS property as a means of entry for a community garden. This would be no cost to the school and Conservation has approved the use of Rose Farm Conservation Land to Second Nature Farm for vegetable crop production.

Discussion concerning some issues included: safety, what type of road, fencing, public access during school days, the additional traffic, will lights be installed, access to water, access for emergency vehicles, is an engineer required, or what permits are required. Dr. John Marcus, Principal of JCS, commented he can support the concept for students to learn and this is good for the community, but there are a lot of questions and concerns that need to be addressed.

Dr. O'Neill appointed Dr. Marcus and Nick Schleicher to address any concerns and issues formally with Mr. Carvalho. Mr. Carvalho stated he will also forward any concerns to John Thomas, Conservation Director.

### ***Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Presentation***

Mr. Vincent Cerce, Director of Pupil Personnel and Dr. Maki from The May Institute presented the Committee a slide presentation with an update on PBIS. They reviewed and discussed each school's implementation of the program and the outcomes. The data presented represents reaching our goal of 80%. Although historical data may not have been accurately tracked, this program has been an efficient system for gathering information. Information gathered can be used as an individual basis, group of students, or place to provide us the information to hold us accountable and look at our system. Sometimes it is not always about the kids and a change in the environment will be reinforcement and improve outcome.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Cerce and Dr. Maki for the update on PBIS.

***Review and Vote on Elementary ELA Program Adoption***

Dr. Brian Ackerman and Mrs. Gia Sunderland thanked everyone involved on this level of work over the last 18 months. The ELA Council developed vision as to why we do this and what we want for our students. It was determined by a solid majority vote from council to recommend Into Reading. The cost of the program is \$330,000. The Council has applied for a grant to fund 50%, but to date the grant has not been awarded. Additional funding has been an item on the school's Capital Plan and included in the upcoming budget.

The Committee supports this recommendation, but at this time decided to table the vote due to the current finances. In the next few weeks there should be more confirmation regarding funding from the grant, the FY'25 Budget, and Capital Plan. Dr. Ackerman will continue to work with the vendor to develop a timeline in order to get the students and teachers what they need.

***Other Business:***

- NHS STEAM will take place Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
- It Takes a Community charity event will be held May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the NHS gym  
ITAC has been such a support to families in need. Donations are being accepted.  
[Itacnorton@gmail.com](mailto:Itacnorton@gmail.com)
- The Committee has been invited to attend the Select Board meeting on Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00p.m.

***Adjourn:***

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to adjourn meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5-0 Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 9.49 p.m.

***Next Meeting Date:***

School Committee Meeting Thursday, March 28th, at 6:00 p.m. in the NMS Library

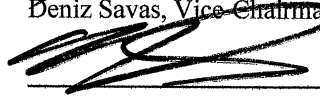
***Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:***

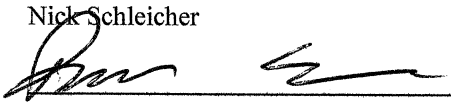
- Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2025
- Second Nature Farm proposal for Rose Farm Community Garden with rough draft  
Community Guidelines Bylaws
- PBIS in NPS
- Elementary ELA Recommendation

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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Nick Schleicher

  
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Dan Sheedy

  
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Justine Callanan

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