

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

RECEIVED
NORTON TOWN CLERK
2018 OCT -2 P 1:24

Date of School Committee Meeting: Thursday, September 6, 2018

Location: L.G. Nourse Library

Present: Committee Members: Chairman Sheri Cohen, Vice-Chairman Kathleen Stern, Mrs. Carolyn Gallagher, Mr. Deniz Savas, Mr. Daniel Sheedy. ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Joseph F. Baeta, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Jennifer O'Neill, School Business Manager Matthew Wells, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Jeanne Sullivan, Technology Director Karen Winsper, Student Representative Cooper Smith.

Call to Order: Chairman Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being video recorded by Norton Cable Access for public record.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Vote to Approve Meeting Minutes:

MOTION: by Mrs. Gallagher to approve the minutes of the June 18, 2018 Open Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 2 yes 2 abstain Motion Carries

Warrants:

Mr. Sheedy reported that he reviewed and approved the following warrant, to be entered into the public record:

- September 6, 2018 \$277,395.33

Student Representative Update:

Cooper Smith addressed the Committee regarding the beginning of school:

- 16 new Teachers at the High School
- Welcome Back Assembly on Friday, September 7, 2018
- Opening of Fall sports

Opening of School Report – L.G. Nourse Elementary School – Mrs. Catherin Luke:

Mrs. Luke reported to the Committee that it is with great pride and pleasure she is starting her 8th year with the LGN. The opening of school was a tremendous success with smiling faces of staff and students. She thanked the Parent Teacher Connect (PTC) who wrote all the positive messages in chalk.

Currently there are 264 students enrolled, 21 less than last year at this time:

- Kindergarten with 56 students divided into 3 sections for 18-19 students per class
- 1st Grade with 69 students divided into 4 sections for 16-18 students per class
- 2nd Grade with 72 student divided into 3 sections for 24-25 students per class
- 3rd Grade with 67 students divided into 3 sections for 22-23 students per class

The custodians take great pride in their work and did a great job over the summer. Mrs. Brooks, Administrative Assistant, worked diligently over the past few weeks to provide safety and transportation for all students. Their hard work and dedication is greatly appreciated.

Two new staff were welcomed: Carolyn Kenny, Wellness and Jeremy Place, Music Teacher

Transportation Update – Mr. Matthew Wells:

Mr. Wells addressed there are issues and concerns with overcrowding on the HAY and Middle School busses. At the beginning of August 1200 registered to take the bus and since then the registrations keep coming, with the last week of August with 121 registrations and more are still registering. Mr. Wells, Mrs. O'Neil and Wendy have been addressing the issues by moving different stops and routes to balance the bus. Chairman Cohen expressed it is not the issue of the staff not working over the summer on transportation but registrations were not done by the deadline of June 2018.

The enrollment is down and we eliminated a tier to save funds. Bringing in another bus to do one run could be at full cost. Dr. Baeta has contacted the bus company, H&L Bloom, but has had no response. He requests the School Committee address this concern by inviting the bus company to attend a School Committee meeting. Chairman Cohen and Dr. Baeta will prepare a letter to the company.

Mr. Sheedy addressed a resolution of utilizing one of our 15 passenger vans to pick up the overflow, but the vans are already transporting special needs students at that time.

Dr. Baeta also commented on the numerous telephone calls, emails, Let's Talk discussions, change in bus stops requests, and social media expressions that had to be addressed. He reported the bus enrollment was up 100 students this year but then the addition of 126 late registrations was not anticipated. The dominant late registrations were the state mandated transportation to the free bussing students, over 2 miles and school lunch program.

Mr. Savas suggested that we go back from the recent date of a pay to ride and inform the people we cannot accommodate them, and the next day forward until we don't have to hire another bus. Another suggestion would be possibly charge more for late registration to accommodate the expenses and time contributed on this matter. Dr. Baeta suggested keeping to the deadline of registration or possibly eliminating the 7-12 bussing. Ms. Gallagher expressed we could eliminate K-12 as well. That would not be good for safety reasons.

Another concern is exactly what to accept as drop off and pick-ups. Specialty pick-ups and drop offs are becoming an issue. A change in the Bid process will definitely be addressed. We can discuss transportation with more vendors.

The Committee expressed great appreciation to the staff for a good job in handling the kids, email, phone calls, etc. According to social media there was a great number of support for our staff.

***Vote on Fall Town Meeting Articles and Capital Improvement Recommendation –
Mr. Matthew Wells:***

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, an amount of money not to exceed \$465,830 to be added to the FY19 School Department and to be expended under the direction of the Norton School Committee for the purpose of the following:

- \$281,440 for K-12 classroom materials and supplies
- \$99,000 for interactive projectors for 33 classrooms
- \$61,275 for extended school services for students in need of a longer day to be provided 1:1 and small group instruction in literacy.
- \$24,115 for professional development

The Capital Plan priorities have been updated based on new information in relation to technology and safety. This is presented by priority.

- System and Data Backup Software and Storage: Up to \$60,000
- Virtual Infrastructure Replacement (Servers and Storage): Up to \$162,000

MOTION: by Chairman Cohen to approve the Articles and Capital Improvements for Fall Town Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Savas

VOTE: 5 yes Motion Carries

Board of Selectman Correspondence

Chairman Cohen read into record the following correspondence between Norton School Committee and Norton Board of Selectman.



TOWN OF NORTON

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

70 EAST MAIN STREET

MUNICIPAL CENTER, NORTON, MASS. 02766

TELEPHONE (508) 285-0210

August 8, 2018

Norton School Committee
64 West Main Street
Norton, MA 02766

Dear School Committee:

I am in receipt of your letter dated July 18, 2018, as well as the Town Manager's correspondence to the Board of Selectmen (copy enclosed).

In response to the comments contained in your letter, every public meeting provides the opportunity for discussion on any budget as well as the presentation of updated financial information. The Town Manager often reviews matters of finance with the Board and the Finance Committee, including discussion of local receipts, state revenue, and various departmental budgets with or without a departmental presence. In addition, all Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen meetings are posted public meetings that anyone is free to attend, as I often do.

Section 6-3(b) of the Town Charter stipulates that, "the Town Manager has the sole authority to prepare and submit the proposed annual budget to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee". It is also reasonable that providing updates in a timely manner to the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen concerning the finances of the town are both necessary and justified.

As to your remarks that the Town Manager discussed the intricacies of the school budget, this just was not the case. I was present at the meeting where factual information was provided comparing the appropriations for school budgets from Norton, Mansfield, Foxboro, and Easton (see attached). At no time during the meeting was a presentation made on how the Norton Public School Department operates. There was also no representation or discussion on whether the funds appropriated were sufficient. As a matter of fact, at the open public forum on the budget the Town Manager emphasized that he was not saying the amount was sufficient but was all that was available in order to live within the constraints of Proposition 2½.

Norton School Committee

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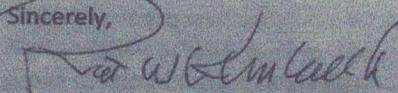
August 8, 2018

I have asked the Town Manager that if he is aware of any meeting at which the intricacies of the School Budget may be discussed going forward that he so inform the Superintendent in advance. Likewise, I would request that a similar courtesy be extended to the Board and the Town Manager by the School Committee if there is to be any discussion concerning the performance of the Town Manager at any open meeting.

In advance of the School Committee commencing its FY20 budget discussion, I would suggest that a preliminary meeting be scheduled with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the School Committee and Board of Selectmen, along with the Superintendent and Town Manager, before the FY20 budget process. I would recommend an early September meeting to discuss the October Town Meeting. In addition, we must strive to convey factual and timely information to the residents of Norton. Misrepresentation of information only fuels divisiveness, and it is time that we work together with common goals to restore the community's faith in its leaders and the process. I know you will agree that strength lies in unity, and we all want to allocate available resources in the most responsible way possible for the community as a whole. I am always available to discuss issues.

I hope that the Superintendent and Town Manager continue their open line of communication. I also suggest that our two committees do the same with quarterly joint meetings.

Sincerely,



Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Chairman
Norton Board of Selectmen



TOWN OF NORTON

MUNICIPAL CENTER

70 EAST MAIN STREET, NORTON, MA 02766

Telephone: (508) 285-0210 Fax: (508) 285-0297

E-mail: myunits@nortonmaus.com

Michael D. Yunits
Town Manager

July 20, 2018

Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Chairman
Norton Board of Selectmen
70 East Main Street
Norton, MA 02766

Dear Mr. Kimball:

I wish to clarify some inaccuracies in the letter from the Norton School Committee dated July 18, 2018, a copy of which is attached.

At the Finance Committee meeting held on July 11, 2018, and the Selectmen's meeting on July 12, 2018, I presented information depicting how the Town of Norton compared with Easton, Foxboro and Mansfield in the Town's commitment of available revenue to the FY19 Norton Public Schools budget. There was no tone, no debate, and certainly no conclusion - just presentation of facts. The budgets were finalized and voted in May.

At no time did I discuss "the intricacies of the school budget", nor did I discuss whether or not the revenue was sufficient to operate the Norton Public Schools. As a matter of fact, in all my presentations on the FY19 budget, including the June 26 budget presentation open to all Norton residents, I have emphasized that I was not saying the amount of money provided was sufficient but was all we had available within the constraints of Proposition 2 ½. I understand that the School Department has autonomy to spend their funds any way they so choose. I also emphasized that during my presentations.

As the Town Manager, it is my job to make recommendations to the Finance Committee on allocations of available funds to all departments, including the School Department, to create one Town budget. At the Town Meeting in May there were many people who strongly scrutinized the Finance Committee's recommendation for the school budget. My job is to keep the Finance Committee, Selectmen and tax payers informed. I believe providing factual data

Robert W. Kimball, Jr., Chairman
Page 2
July 20, 2018

and visual aides to demonstrate how our commitment of available resources, tax revenue, local receipts and cherry sheet revenue, to the school budget compares to our neighbors is important for all to understand.

Though, as I emphasized previously, I have not once during the entire FY19 budget process discussed the "intricacies of the school budget", I believe my 14 years serving on a school committee, most as Chairman, provide me with the qualifications to understand the intricacies of a school budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael D. Yunits", written over a horizontal line.

Michael D. Yunits
Town Manager

Enclosure

MUNICIPALITY	FY18 ADJUSTED BUDGET	FY19 ORIGINAL BUDGET	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE	FY18 SCHOOL CHOICE	FY19 SCHOOL CHOICE	\$ CHANGE	% CHANGE	TOTAL \$ CHANGE
Easton	\$ 39,979,017	\$ 41,330,308	\$ 1,351,291	3.38%	0	0	0	0	\$ 1,351,291.00
Foxboro	\$ 34,089,604	\$ 34,991,125	\$ 901,521	2.64%	0	0	0	0	\$ 901,521
Mansfield	\$ 49,067,951	\$ 50,442,599	\$ 1,374,648	2.80%	0	0	0	0	\$ 1,374,648
Norton	\$ 27,235,611	\$ 28,143,900	\$ 908,289	3.33%	\$ 292,754	\$ 519,937	\$ 227,183	77.60%	\$ 1,135,472

MUNICIPALITY	TOTAL \$ CHANGE	ENROLLMENT DATA* ACADEMIC YEAR			PER PUPIL SPENDING INCREASE
		2016-2017	2017-2018	CHANGE	
Easton	\$ 1,351,291.00	3,785	3,722	-63	\$ 363.06
Foxboro	\$ 901,521.00	2,640	2,596	-44	\$ 347.27
Mansfield	\$ 1,374,648.00	3,979	3,856	-123	\$ 356.50
Norton	\$ 1,135,472.00	2,526	2,473	-53	\$ 459.15

Department of Education (most current data available)



NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Committee

July 18, 2018

Norton Board of Selectmen
Town of Norton
70 East Main St.
Norton, MA 02766

Dear Board of Selectmen:

It has come to our attention that the Town Manager, Mike Yunits, recently addressed both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee regarding the school budget without notifying the school department that he was going to do so. While this is not the first time he has done this, we feel this time was particularly egregious. It was not an unplanned remark or something that was said in response to a question from a member of one of the public bodies. This was a prepared statement with visual aid. There was no notice given to the school department that he was going to do this, and it was not presented on the agenda in any way that could have been interpreted by a reasonable person to mean that he intended to discuss school budget numbers.

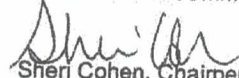

We strongly disagree with the content, tone and conclusion that Mr. Yunits seemed to be presenting. We will now need to sit down with both the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen at a future date to counter his erroneous assertions. While we always support a lively debate about the correct way to fund our town, a one-sided conversation without the entity being discussed even present is far from that. Furthermore, it is clear from the approach taken by Mr. Yunits that he is not qualified to discuss the intricacies of the school budget. The School Committee would never think that it was qualified to publicly discuss the details of another department's budget. We feel confident that if we ever did so, the Board of Selectmen would certainly take exception to it. We therefore assume that you all understand why we take exception to Mr. Yunits' presentation.

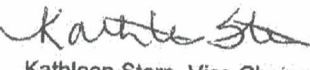
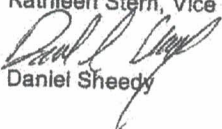
We respectfully request that Mr. Yunits be instructed to include the school department in any future public discussion of the school side of our town's budget. This type of thing cannot continue if we are to move our town forward. We all can do better, but when we fail, it needs to be clear that it is unacceptable.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Norton School Committee:


Sheri Cohen, Chairperson

Deniz Savas


Kathleen Stern, Vice Chairperson

Daniel Sheedy


Carolyn Gallagher

64 WEST MAIN STREET · NORTON, MA 02766 · TELEPHONE: (508) 285-0100 · FAX: (508) 285-0199
www.norton.k12.ma.us

The Norton Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

In conclusion, Chairman Cohen thinks the request for school district presence at meetings where the schools are going to be discussed was a reasonable one to streamline public understanding of budget concerns and maximize communication and collaboration between the two boards. Unfortunately, it seems like our two boards continue to move in different directions. In any case, as School Committee we will continue to work hard every day to improve the education provided to the students in the Town of Norton. That is our mandate.

Elementary Window Project – Mr. Wade Lizotte:

Mr. Lizotte is starting his 19th year and is excited to be a part of this MSBA project from the beginning to the end.

He first wanted to publicly thank and express great appreciation for a wonderful job the custodians have done over the summer preparing our building and grounds for the upcoming school year. They work hard and take pride in their work and go above and beyond. They love our staff and kids. We are proud of our custodians.

Mr. Lizotte handed out colored architectural drawings. The plans and specifications from our architecture firm Turowski2 will be going out to bid in September 2018 and the contract awarded by October 16, 2018. The first phase of this project will begin early Spring 2019 and finish by August 2019 before the next school year starts.

Introductions – Dr. Baeta:

- Lisa Giuliano, Acting Principal of NHS – Ms. Giuliano stated she is going on her fifth year at NHS. It is an honor and privilege to be here and is looking forward to her new role. She is very excited about the positive vibe during opening week at the high school. Quoting Dr. Chris Martis, “Norton is a hidden gem” and she couldn’t agree more.
- Gregory Hood, Interim Principal at NHS – Mr. Hood is thrilled to be here and being a part of this team. It has been a pleasure and he feels at home.
- Martin Geoghegan, Principal at HAY – Mr. Geoghegan feels welcomed by parents and staff. It has been an amazing experience. He is looking forward to the first faculty meeting.

School Committee reported they have heard good feedback and continue to let them know of upcoming events in their schools so the Committee could attend.

Other Business: Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance:

Dr. Baeta introduced Erin Long, Regional District Manager and Mike Varacco from Chartwells. Erin expressed much of the cafeteria staff returned, how great they were and how they stepped up and rallied. They are doing a great job. Mike expressed he is happy and excited to be here. Everyone has been kind and supportive. He is open to communication so please feel free to email him mvaccaro@norton.k12.ma.us. School Committee expressed how they liked the newsletter and healthy option choices.

Dr. Baeta wanted to thank the entire staff for their support, including the bus drivers, even though they are employed by someone else. Safety is the most important and we will resolve the issues with bussing. He also wants to recognize the parents, who do make us better. We had 99 preschoolers enrolled, most in the history of Norton. This is an indication that the parents are telling us this is the way to go.

Motion to Adjourn:

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen

SECOND: by Mr. Savas

VOTE: 5 yes Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Documents and other exhibits used at meeting:

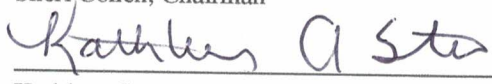
- Memo to Town Manager, Norton Finance Committee and Norton Board of Selectman, dated August 22, 2018, from Joseph F. Baeta, Superintendent of Schools, re: October 2018 Town Meeting School Department Article and Capital Plan

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, September 20, 2018 – 6:30 pm at Norton Middle School Library

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



Sheri Cohen, Chairman



Kathleen Stern, Vice-Chairman



Carolyn Gallagher



Deniz Savas



Daniel Sheedy