

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

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NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING

Date of Meeting: Thursday, February 4, 2021

Location: Remote Participation

Present: Committee Members: Chairperson Carolyn Gallagher, Vice-Chairperson Deniz Savas, Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Mrs. Kathleen Stern, and Mr. Dan Sheedy (6:36 p.m.). **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, Network Administrator Paul Driscoll, Norton High School Principal Ethan Dolleman, Norton High School Assistant Principal Amy Benner, and Chairperson of the Norton Permanent Building Committee Dinah O'Brien

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

Minutes:

Change to Minutes needed to reflect vote of 4-0-1 on the Approval of Chemistry Course for the 2021-2022 School Year item.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve Minutes of January 7, 2021 Open School Committee Meeting with change

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sheri Cohen – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Kathleen Stern – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher - Yes 5 - 0 Motion Carries

Warrants:

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

School Expense Warrants:

- January 8, 2021 \$ 681,989.29
- January 22, 2021 \$ 311,257.99

School Payroll Warrant:

- December 31, 2020 \$ 988,275.34
- January 14, 2021 \$1,114,195.02

Student Representatives Update:

Students Malia Savas and Zoe Duran updated the Committee on what was happening in the schools. They gathered information from students regarding their thoughts on live streaming:

- LGN – Some comments from 2nd and 3rd Grade students included: *It's the second-best thing to being in school. I can see everyone; It's good! We don't even have to wear masks like school; It's good except for my internet troubles.*
- JCS – Some comments from 1st and 3rd Grade students included: *It is fun because I get to see my friends; I think that live streaming is really good because I think I learn more in live streaming than just doing it on paper and online by myself; On Tuesdays and Thursdays I think it's a little weird that we have live streaming but I still like that we get to see our friends.*
- HAY – Mr. Geoghegan interviewed a class of 5th Graders. Comments included: *There is a benefit to fewer students in class. I can focus easier and I can get my teacher's attention and support. I don't like the at-home days. I can't get my teacher's attention;*
- NMS – Comments from students included: *I personally don't like the live stream because I liked being able to do work on my own; I think that live streaming is okay. I like that we get to ask teachers questions in person and explain our questions. I do also think that it takes away from the kids that are learning in school. I do like though that you also have a chance to do work during the time when you have that class and can ask questions if you have any.*
- NHS – Some student comments: *Some kids feel as though it's hard to pay attention when teachers are teaching and their camera doesn't have to be on, so they sort of doze off; teachers are able to do full lessons if they choose or if they're behind for some reason.*

Discussion ensued regarding students having video off during live streaming. Students are encouraged to have cameras on but feel less anxious with cameras off. Questions were asked regarding importing backgrounds for confidentiality purposes. It was noted that Google Meet offers that feature.

Discussion on Municipal Projects:

Ms. Dinah O'Brien, Norton Permanent Building Committee Chairperson, addressed the School Committee regarding the municipal projects. The Select Board voted to bundle the Athletic Complex, Town Hall and Senior/Community Center for April Town Election and May 8th Town Meeting. Ms. O'Brien attended a virtual LGN Parent Organization meeting to discuss the projects, and is scheduled to meet with HAY parents. She is working with other parent organizations to find a time to present. Information regarding the projects can be found on the Town website. Flyers are being made to get the word out and pamphlets are available at the "Little Library" located outside of Town Hall. A Norton cable show is scheduled and will include pictures and design models. A Zoom community meeting will be scheduled as well.

NHS Academic and SEL Interventions:

Norton High School Principal Dolleman and Assistant Principal Benner shared a presentation with the Committee entitled "Meeting the Needs of NHS Students with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

Mr. Dolleman thanked Ms. Benner for her efforts, noting that there is now a process to insure that students get the supports they need. The SEL of our students is taken into consideration by committed staff members.

Mr. Cerce stated that it was a big step for our High School that we will be working around SEL and Trauma.

School Committee members thanked staff for truly caring for our students that are struggling with mental health issues. They noted that teachers struggle, too, and that they should be kept in mind.

Dr. Baeta stated that no one wants kids back in school more than us. We are at our lowest number in months regarding students and staff who are in quarantine. A letter was sent to the Governor about moving teachers up on the list for vaccination, but no plan is in place by the State. There are concerns regarding reentry into our schools and mental health issues, etc. Guidance is needed. There should be a comprehensive plan to vaccinate teachers.

Parents were asked to stop going to social media regarding the opening of schools and to stop comparing us to other districts. We are trying to keep students and the community safe.

Review and Vote on 2021 Spring Town Meeting School Department Articles:

Discussion and vote on moving forward the following three 2021 Spring Town Meeting School Department Articles:

Article 1: Article XX: To see if the Town will vote to appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, an amount not to exceed TBD to be added to the FY2021 School Department Budget and to be expended under the direction of the Norton School Committee.

Article 2: Article XX: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds and/or borrow a sum of money TBD pursuant to M. G. L. Chapter 44, Section 7 and/or any other enabling authority, for the purpose of funding an Energy Management Services Contract under M.G.L. Chapter 25A, Section 111 between the Town and an energy management services contractor; to see if the Town will vote that any bonds to be issued hereunder shall be designated as "qualified energy conservation bonds" pursuant to Internal Revenue Code Section 540, and the bonds may be issued as QECCBs to the extent the Board of Selectmen determines that the issuance of QECCBs is in the best interests of the Town, or take any other action relative thereto.

Article 3: Article XX: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, and/or appropriate, and/or borrow, and/or transfer from available funds, a sum of money for the engineering, design and construction of sewer line connections for the Henri A Yelle Elementary School and the Norton High School.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to approve 3 Articles for Spring Town Meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Stern

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sheri Cohen – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Kathleen Stern – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher - Yes 5 - 0 Motion Carries

Other:

- Update by Mrs. Karen Winsper and Mr. Paul Driscoll regarding the recent internet outages. Mrs. Winsper reiterated that the number one goal of the Tech Department is that technology works and that the issues were out of our control. Emergency mitigation measures by Comcast have been successful. All traffic from outside the U.S. has been blocked.

Dr. Baeta thanked each member in the Tech Department and noted that a contract had been signed with Comcast regarding mitigation plans. Comcast to refund almost \$20,000 in charges. Reports are being shared with local police as well as Homeland Security.

Questions were asked regarding the purpose of these attacks. Mr. Driscoll noted that the attacks are just disruption / nuisance tools and can be generated fairly cheaply.

- Capital Improvement Committee meeting on February 22nd
- NPS will follow the traditional February vacation week schedule
- 49 NHS DECA participants were recognized as follows: Nine 1st place awards, Five 2nd place awards, eight 3rd place awards, and 27 students received 4th to 10th place awards

Motion to Adjourn:

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussions on contract negotiations, not to return to Regular Session

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sheri Cohen – Yes; Deniz Savas – Yes; Dan Sheedy – Yes; Kathleen Stern – Yes; Carolyn Gallagher – Yes

5 – 0 Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Next scheduled meeting date: Saturday Budget Workshop meeting on March 4, 2021

Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Copy of presentation “Meeting the Needs of NHS Students with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)”
- Memos (3) from Matthew Wells regarding three Spring Town Meeting Articles
- Memo from Karen Winsper regarding DDoS Information


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



Carolyn Gallagher, Chairperson




Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairperson



Sheri Cohen

Daniel Sheedy



Kathleen Stern

tlr