

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

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NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

Date of School Committee Meeting: Thursday, February 25, 2021

Location: Remote Participation

Present: Committee Members: Chairperson Mrs. Carolyn Gallagher, Vice-Chairperson Deniz Savas, Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Mr. Dan Sheedy, Mrs. Kathleen Stern. ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Joseph F. Baeta, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Jennifer O'Neill, School Business Manager Matthew Wells, Director of Facilities Wade Lizotte, Technology Director Karen Winsper, Director of Pupil Personnel Services Vincent Cerce, ***Absent:*** Coordinator of Special Education Cassandra Russo. Also present are the Student Representatives Zoe Duran and Malia Savas

Call to Order: Chairperson Gallagher called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and announced that the meeting was being video recorded.

Student Representatives Update:

Zoe Duran and Malia Savas updated the Committee:

JCS and LGN- Read Across America Week with fun days and activities. Wednesday, March 5th is our 100th day of school.

Student Opinions on back to school full time:

HAY – Students are unbelievably enthusiastic to come back to school full time. The students mentioned they will get more teacher support, be with friends, and wouldn't have to deal with technology glitches at home. Two students were excited but expressed concern about being kept safe.

NHS – A survey of about 37 students from multiple grades and class levels was conducted. The results were: 75% did not want to return, 16% maybe, 8% yes. Some comments from the students were brought to the Committee:

- Kids feel like even if they give their opinion, it won't get taken into consideration because it's always the adults making the big decisions. They would love it if they were being acknowledged as being heard...doesn't necessarily mean the decision needs to go their way.
- Nervous that it could get worse
- Scared that it will happen too early and then eventually effect what happens next year
- Tough to follow distance rules as it is
- Afraid of getting their parents or themselves sick
- Already use to the complicated hybrid schedule
- Stick it out for the rest of the year

- Want to finish their senior year in person fully with the other group of kids they haven't seen all year
- Feels like someone is going to get sick and set everything back to hybrid
- Would be easier to talk to teachers
- Have more motivation to get work done

The Committee and administration want the students to know their voices are always being heard. The Committee wants the opinions of students. They may not always agree and everyone may not always be satisfied, but the Committee always does their best when any concern is brought forth. Dr. Baeta will be sending a survey and will get student participation. The Committee thanked the student representatives for their hard work and bringing this concern to the Committee. All agreed the students need reassurance.

Discussion on Proposed FY'22 School Department Budget:

Dr. Baeta explained the process and presented a power point for the FY'22 Proposed Budget. At this time, administration recommends a 5.55% increase in the budget, which will be \$1,722,545.00 for a total budget of \$32,759,384.00. He explained that the mandated education increase is 3.02% and the general education increase is 2.53%.

Mr. Deniz addressed the Committee with two concerns. His first concern is how mandates are always more of an increase to the budget than the general education. The state has to support more for mandated education. Dr. Baeta mentioned there is an ongoing discussion for a bill to increase reimbursement costs. He also mentioned there may be funds coming from Circuit Breaker to support mandated transportation expenses.

The second concern is the School Choice Revolving Account. We are fortunate to have a good amount of funds to carry over for the next fiscal year. The concern is how it will affect future budgets. The budget for FY'23 may be an issue.

Mrs. Gallagher clarified that if the Town does not award the school the full 5.55% increase, the Committee will address the Town for more funds at the Annual Fall Town Meeting. The Committee agreed current discussions need to be held with the Town.

Dr. Baeta explained this budget is for a full re-opening in the fall. It does not present different scenarios or provide options. The Committee will vote on the budget at the next meeting in order to provide the proposal to the Finance Committee's at their next meeting. Mr. Sheedy commented this is a good first draft. The Committee and administration thanked everyone involved for all their efforts in putting this budget together.

Vote to Award Vendor Selection of Food Service Request for Proposal:

Mr. Wells discussed the food service management proposals. The three proposals received were from Chartwells School Dining Services, Fresh Picks Café and Genuine Foods. The evaluation team is recommending to award Chartwells as the vendor selection. Questions from the audience addressed an issue about nutrition. It was determined that we follow the state regulations for nutrition.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to award Chartwells as the Vendor Selection of Food Service

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

Discussion and Vote on Fall 2 and Spring Athletic Fees:

Mr. Wells addressed the Committee that the Fall 2 Athletic Fees be reduced to \$200. Expenses for the season are lower than a traditional season. The expenses incurred by lowering the fee can be supported by administration. It is the recommendation from Aaron Sumner, Athletic Director, that we hold off on a vote for the Spring Athletic Fees.

The Fall 2 Season consists of Football, Cheerleading, Boys/Girls Indoor Track and Girls Volleyball. Dr. Baeta announced he removed himself from this discussion due to a personal interest.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen that the Fall 2 Athletic Fees be reduced to \$200

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sheri Cohen-yes; Kathleen Stern-yes; Dan Sheedy-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Carolyn Gallagher-yes 5-0 motion carries

Other Business:

- Dr. Baeta discussed the current situation of re-opening the schools. He expressed concerns and considerations involved in returning to school full time. The priority has always been the safety and well-being of staff and students. We don't want to open and then have to close. The Committee addressed the negativity from social media and asked for patience and kindness during this transition. The Committee has always been working towards returning to school full time. This is not an administration against teachers and the Union leaders are thoughtful and work together.

Dr. Baeta announced a survey will be sent with specific questions on where parents stand on returning to school. The Committee is working on a plan and it will be released soon with specifics.

- Mrs. Gallagher addressed the Committee about emails and questions about MCAS tests. A resolution has been drafted and states, "In light of the coronavirus and its impact on our schools and students, the Norton School Committee believes it is critical that Massachusetts officials seek and obtain a testing waiver from the U.S. Department of Education and cancel this year's MCAS test." It was determined the Committee will vote at the next meeting to accept or decline this resolution.

Motion to Adjourn:

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to Adjourn Meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

ROLL CALL VOTE: Dan Sheedy-yes; Sheri Cohen-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Carolyn Gallagher-yes; Kathleen Stern-yes 5-0 motion carries


The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

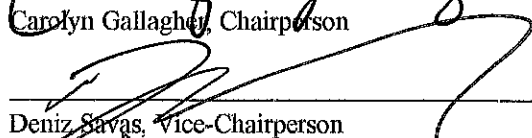
Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- Proposed FY'22 Superintendent's Budget
- Memorandum to Award Vendor Selection, Food Service Management RFP
- Memorandum of FY'21 Fall 2 Athletic Fee Reduction
- Norton School Committee Resolution-draft


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



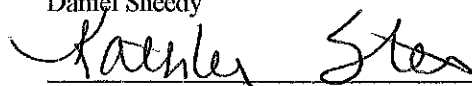
Carolyn Gallagher, Chairperson



Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairperson



Sheri Cohen

Daniel Sheedy


Kathleen Stern

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