

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

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NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

Date of Meeting: Thursday, May 27, 2021

Location: Norton Middle School and Remote Participation

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

Call to Order: Chairperson Savas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., noting that the meeting was being recorded.

Pledge of Allegiance

J. C. Solmonese Elementary School Principal Search Update:

Dr. Baeta reported that following a search by NESDEC, seven candidates were interviewed for the position of J. C. Solmonese Elementary School Principal and that Dr. John Marcus had been chosen for the position. Dr. Baeta gave a brief background on Dr. Marcus noting his educational background and positions held including his current position at Superintendent of Schools in Stoughton. Dr. Baeta welcomed Dr. Marcus.

Dr. Marcus addressed the Committee stating he was excited to join Lancer Nation and how he plans on keeping the community and staff happy and being sure that the kids are doing well. Dr. Marcus stated he was excited to be back in a Principal role.

Dr. Baeta noted that Dr. Marcus would be starting on July 1st and that something would be scheduled before summer for families to meet Dr. Marcus.

The Committee welcomed Dr. Marcus. Mrs. Gallagher said that she was on the interview committee and the best candidate was chosen.

Chairperson Savas announced that there would be a brief recess to allow the School Committee members the chance to move to the NMS Auditorium to recognize the Norton Youth Football 5th Grade Super Bowl Winners and that the meeting would continue following the recognition.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

It was noted that Mrs. Stern was not present at the May 6, 2021 meeting and that the Minutes should be amended.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2021 Open Meeting with corrections

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

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:

- May 6, 2021 \$ 727,713.64
- May 21, 2021 \$ 337,732.91

School Payroll Warrant:

- April 22, 2021 \$1,043,448.44
- May 6, 2021 \$ 968,161.82
- May 20, 2021 \$1,023,759.82

Student Representatives Update:

Students Malia Savas and Zoe Duran shared with the Committee some student opinions when they were asked what they would say to an authority figure:

JCS:

- Get nets to play basketball games at recess
- Be allowed to take a break whenever we get frustrated
- Being able to be closer to each other
- Having the cafeteria back again
- Kindergartners allowed to play in the bigger playground so they can mix with the other students
- Go on field trips again
- Have an outdoor classroom
- Be able to play with other grades
- Bring back Art but we would bring our own materials to class

LGN:

- "I wish the kids on the bus were quieter."
- "I wish the big kids didn't play on our playground at night. They leave trash and write things on the cement."
- "I wish we could pick classes and have a choice in our learning." [She described something similar to a high school student choosing electives.]
- "I wish we had more choices for lunch." [The elementary kids only have 2 choices.]

HAY:

- We want the big tables back at lunch, be able to sit anywhere and near anyone we want.
- Have the whole grade be eating lunch and have recesses together.
- One student mentioned wanting to have lunch first then recess; then another student said having recess first then lunch -- so there will always be differing opinions.

- Would love to be able to use their phones and iPads at any time in the day.
- Be able to climb the trees. (This student said, "Yup; that's it. Just need to climb the trees.")
- Need soft baked pretzels to be a lunch choice every day.
- Need to upgrade the PE equipment -- old, too small, and outdated.
- Need to upgrade the playground -- similar reasons to PE Equipment -- old, too small, and outdated.
- Don't do MCAS, especially during a pandemic.
- One student said, "Keep it the same. I love the way everything progressed this year. It moved right for me." Another said, "Nothing to change. I think it's perfect."

NHS:

- "It was chaotic, but overall I think things went as well as could be expected"
- "We should keep the "no homework" thing in place next year. It was really good for school and life balance."
- "We should still be able to eat outside next year."
- "Sometimes this year felt interrupted. Like we couldn't build momentum or we had to skip certain things. That was just in some classes, like when we couldn't do labs or use equipment. I look forward to next year getting back to a better, more normal time."
- "We should keep the coach busses for sports. They have been awesome."

Anti-Vaping Curriculum Resource Guide:

Dr. Baeta shared a digital version of the Anti-Vaping Curriculum Resource Guide and read the names of all that were on the committee that worked on the guide. The idea for this guide came about in 2019 by the NPS Wellness Committee.

Dr. Baeta noted that two grants of \$25,000 each were received for this project. He has been asked to present the guide in October at the NEASC conference.

The District is meeting internally about next steps regarding this curriculum. This guide is a proactive approach to the vaping issue through online / interactive resources. Copies of the guide were sent to the Commissioner of Education and all members of the Board of Education

Mr. Sheedy asked if we had made any gains regarding vaping. Dr. Baeta said that all schools are still seeing it but it seems to be less since coming back after the shutdown and that the data for this year is flawed.

Dr. Baeta stated that we are waiting for a curriculum on the topic from DESE and that he hopes that they will use or at least consider this guide. The grant was for Grades 6-12 but down to Grade 3 was included.

Mrs. Gallagher thanked Dr. Baeta for having an administration that is proactive.

Vote to Approve Transportation Fees for 2021-2022:

The Committee was asked to approve the reduction of transportation fees for the 2021-2022 school year from \$350 to \$250.

Mr. Savas noted that there used to be a cap on transportation costs and that we should keep this on the horizon. \$65,000 would be moved into the budget to cover the reduction in fees.

MOTION: by Mrs. Stern to reduce transportation fees from \$350 to \$250 for the 2021-2022 school year

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

5 – 0 Motion Carries

Vote to Approve Athletic Fees for 2021-2022:

The Committee was asked to approve the reduction of athletic fees from \$350 per sport to \$250 and hockey from \$500 to \$300 for the 2021-2022 school year.

The cost into the budget would be approximately \$80-\$90k. Dr. Baeta said that this would come out of the operational budget and not staffing.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to reduce athletic fees to \$250 per sport and hockey to \$350 for the 2021-2022 school year

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

5 – 0 Motion Carries

Vote to Approve Appointment of Additional Permanent Building Substitutes:

Dr. Baeta addressed the Committee regarding the addition of one permanent substitute in each building. He explained that these positions are to help with the day to day operations of the schools, i.e., lunch duties, bus duties, and other areas where help is needed as determined by the Principals. The pay structure would be \$100 per day for the first 90 days and then \$125 per day starting day 91.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to approve the hiring of one additional permanent building substitute per school for 2021-2022 and changing the pay structure to \$100 per day for the first 91 days and \$125 per day for the second 91 days.

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

5 – 0 Motion Carries

Vote to Approve Increase in Daily Substitute Rate of Pay:

Dr. Baeta stated that it has been three years since the daily substitute teacher rate had been increased and recommended to the Committee an increase from \$80 to \$90 a day. This increase should help the district acquire much needed daily subs. Substitutes assigned to a long-term position would receive \$90 per day for weeks 1 – 6 and \$110 per day thereafter.

MOTION: by Mrs. Stern to approve the increase of the daily substitute rate for 2021-2022 to \$90 per day and \$110 per day for long-term assignments over 6 weeks.

SECOND: by Mrs. Gallagher

5 – 0 Motion Carries

NESDEC 2021 Spring Enrollment Update Report:

Dr. Baeta shared a spring enrollment report prepared by NESDEC. Compared to figures from the fall report, numbers are off a bit to the positive. He noted that he hasn't seen this huge shift in real estate in ten years and feels that enrollment numbers will go up. This spring report is a new service that NESDEC offers in addition to its fall report.

Dr. Baeta stated that we may want to consider tuitioning-in students and the development of programs so to be able to include and integrate students.

Mr. Sheedy asked about the possibility of opening up the pre-school program. Dr. Baeta said that we had about 113 resident students. Program changes are needed with the possibility of daycare programs to support families. Space is needed to support specialized programs. Rainbow Kids in town is closing down and they are recommending families to the Champions program. Champions has been a great partner, especially during COVID.

Other:

Mr. Savas gave a "shout out" to Mrs. Sara Lyons and her LGN 1st Grade class. He also updated all on Jacob Berry's Project 351 clothing drive for Cradles to Crayons. 294 bags of clothing were collected. 204 bags went to Cradles to Crayons and 90 bags to other organizations.

Graduation is Friday, June 4th at 5:30 p.m.; rain date is Saturday at 5:30 p.m. The weather outlook is for the possibility of showers. The Commonwealth is easing COVID restrictions on June 29th. More information will be going out to parents regarding graduation, etc. Class Night awards will be presented on graduation day. The prom will be held on June 8th.

Some older students have been pushing back about wearing masks but this does not impact the schools. DESE did not move on inside mask wearing, just outside.

Mrs. Stern said that she read scholarship essays and 97 students received Abigail Adams money. Essays were about challenges and quite a few students wrote about losing a parent or someone close to them.

Mrs. Cohen thanked the Town for the passing of the debt exclusion and said how proud she was of the Town. Mr. Savas thanked Mrs. Cohen publicly for all her work on the project.

On Memorial Day at 10 a.m. on the town common the Veteran's Council is donating five POW chairs—one for each school. Dr. Baeta said that we will work with the Veteran's Council in the event of bad weather on Memorial Day and the ceremony needs to be held inside.

Motion to Adjourn:

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to adjourn

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

5 – 0 Motion Carries

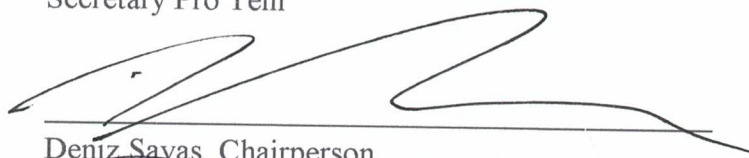
The meeting adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Next scheduled meeting date: June 10, 2021

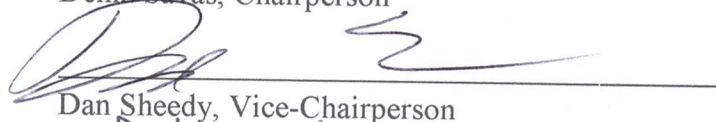
Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- New England School Development Council 2020-21 Enrollment Projection Report Spring Update May 2021
- Massachusetts Anti-Vaping Curriculum Resource Guide May 2021

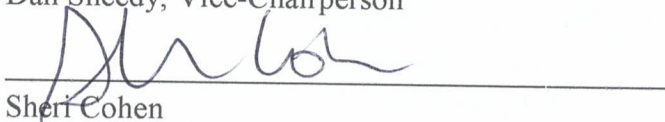
Respectfully Submitted,
Joseph F. Baeta, Ed.D.
Secretary Pro Tem



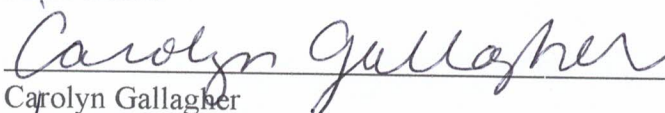
Deniz Savas, Chairperson



Dan Sheedy, Vice-Chairperson



Sheri Cohen



Carolyn Gallagher



Kathleen Stern

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