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NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOL  
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

**Date of Meeting:** Thursday, August 26, 2021

**Location:** 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. 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.

Mr. Savas stated that this meeting would not entail discussions on mask mandates and vaccinations. There would be no discussion. The decision to remove the item from the agenda was his decision. These items are moving targets and things changed during the week. An in-person forum would be held. The School Committee welcomes others' opinions. Dates are being looked at for the forum.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to approve the Minutes of the June 10, 2021 Open Meeting

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

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

**Warrants:**

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

School Expense Warrants:

- June 3, 2021                                      \$ 341,608.90
- June 17, 2021                                    \$ 173,930.04
- June 24, 2021                                    \$ 142,876.21

School Payroll Warrants:

- June 3, 2021                                    \$1,130,997.22
- June 17, 2021                                   \$4,951,874.85

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

**School Expense Warrants:**

|                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| • July 6, 2021    | \$3,823,775.00 |
| • July 19, 2021   | \$ 661,039.49  |
| • August 4, 2021  | \$ 474,717.98  |
| • August 23, 2021 | \$ 292,282.49  |

**School Payroll Warrants:**

|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| • July 1, 2021    | \$ 93,972.83  |
| • July 1, 2021    | \$ 89,343.75  |
| • July 15, 2021   | \$ 12,986.17  |
| • July 15, 2021   | \$ 171,818.45 |
| • July 29, 2021   | \$ 222,178.64 |
| • August 12, 2021 | \$ 223,756.95 |

***Student Representatives Update:***

As school is not in session, there was no update from the Student Representatives.

***Review and Vote on Student Handbooks:***

NHS Assistant Principal Amy Benner shared the revised NHS 2021-2022 Student Handbook, section by section, with the Committee. She pointed out changes to the handbook including the redesign, formatting, and the addition of specific School Committee policies and new personnel. The bell schedule as well as graduation requirements were updated.

Discussion ensued regarding the Community Service requirement. It was suggested that the hours be prorated and drop from 50 hours to 40 hours, with students needing to complete 10 hours a year. Committee members liked the idea of completing hours each year but were not in agreement about dropping the hours to 40. Student Rep Malia Savas raised a question regarding having all the service hours done by sophomore year and the requirement for 10 hours for the remaining years.

Mr. Sheedy asked if guidelines were available to clarify what is considered volunteering, what is acceptable, and if something can be rejected. Ms. Benner said that guidelines would be formed.

Mrs. Gallagher agreed that the number of hours should not decrease but noted that it was hard for 14/15 year olds to find volunteering opportunities. She suggested forming community partnerships. Ms. Benner said that they would work with students to build up an inventory of places to gain hours. Mr. Cerce noted that the new School to Career platform may help. Dr. Baeta stated that an after-hours person may be needed to go see students out in the community in opportunities such as cooperative education, job shadowing, and police/fire academy.

Under Student Services, time was increased for LLB. The longer blocks will be for appointments with teachers and for making up work.

With input by faculty, a tiered system will be used for behavior to include different interventions; positive reinforcements/privileges for making right choices; in school suspensions. Updates were made to the photographing, video recording, and security cameras in school section.

More discussions regarding the number of Community Service hours ensued, and it was decided that the policy would remain as written. Dr. Baeta suggested that Ms. Benner report back at a School Committee meeting in February or March.

MOTION: by Mrs. Cohen to accept changes to Norton High School handbook as written

SECOND: by Mrs. Gallagher

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

Dr. John Marcus, J. C. Solmonese School Principal, presented the Elementary Family Handbook. He worked with Principal Luke of LGN and Principal Geoghegan of HAY on the handbook, noting that changes were mostly grammatical. Confusing language regarding bus passes was updated.

Mr. Savas noted that the masking policy was included in the Elementary handbook but not the High School one. Dr. Baeta said that it would be imbedded into the handbook.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to accept Elementary Family handbook as written

SECOND: by Mrs. Stern

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

Dr. Baeta noted that policies and procedures are two different things. The School Committee makes policies and procedures are made by the District.

### ***Update on Return to School:***

Dr. Baeta addressed the Committee as follows:

- Hiring for a few positions was still taking place; a personnel update would take place at the first or second meeting of the new school year.
- Sarah Alves and Marc Liberatore were formally thanked for all of their efforts running the new staff mentoring program.
- Next week all COVID protocols and policies would be published.
- There were a number of changes to the DESE requirements and there will be a review on October 1<sup>st</sup>. School Committee meetings may have to be added in late September or early October.
- Starting on September 7<sup>th</sup> there will be weekly updates on the district website.
- Schools have been packed with staff all week with excitement in the air; staff members learning from each other and working on team plans.
- A lot of work had been done in the schools during the summer. TRANE was working on heating system at HAY.
- Portrait of a Graduate is for K – 12 and is not just a High School thing. It starts when students enter the district.
- Policies in place are on the district website under the School Committee section. They are not voted on year to year, only when changes are made.



***Review and Vote on the Addition of Two Early Release Days to the 2021-2022 School Calendar for the Purpose of Staff Professional Development:***

Mrs. O'Neill addressed the Committee and recommended that Friday, February 18, 2022 and Friday, April 15, 2022 be early release days for students for the purpose of afternoon professional development for staff. These are the two Fridays before the winter and spring breaks.

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to add two early release days to the 2021-2022 school calendar for the purpose of staff professional development: Friday, February 18, 2022 and Friday, April 15, 2022

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

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

***Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies Award:***

Dr. Baeta received information that the Social Studies department was granted the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies award. Dr. Baeta congratulated members of the department and thanked Marc Liberatore for his leadership. Dr. Baeta noted that students connect to the social studies department.

***Other:***

Mr. Savas reiterated that the community would be heard and that a separate forum would be held, possibly on September 8<sup>th</sup>, for a respectful, open discussion. He stated that the Committee was doing their best.

Mrs. Cohen stated that the Committee was not the enemy—that we are parents, too. The Committee is trying to navigate through all of this and to work with parents for the best for our children. She asked that people take a step back and be kind.

***Motion to Adjourn:***

MOTION: by Mr. Stern to adjourn

SECOND: by Mrs. Cohen

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

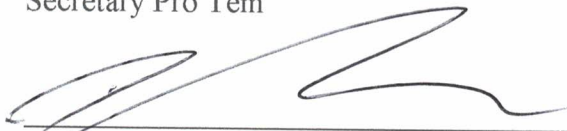
The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

***Next scheduled meeting date:*** September 9, 2021

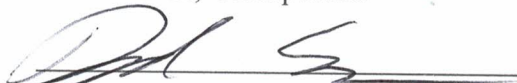
***Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:***

- 2021-2022 Norton High School Student Handbook
- 2021-2022 Norton Elementary Family Handbook
- Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies Awards Announcement

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



Deniz Savas, Chairperson



Dan Sheedy, Vice-Chairperson



Sheri Cohen



Carolyn Gallagher

Kathleen Stern

tlr