

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

RECEIVED  
NORTON TOWN CLERK

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING

2024 JAN 26 AM 9:30

***Date of School Committee Meeting:*** Thursday, January 11, 2024

***Location:*** Norton Middle School Library

***Present:*** Committee Members: Chairperson Mrs. Sheri Cohen, Vice Chairperson Mr. Deniz Savas, Mrs. Justine Callanan, Mr. Dan Sheedy, and Mr. Nick Schleicher ***Also present:*** Superintendent of Schools Jennifer O'Neill, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning Brian Ackerman, School Business Administrator Kristine Hadfield and Student Representatives Antonio Romano and Gabriela Kenaan.

***Call to Order:*** Chairperson Mrs. Sheri Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Chairperson Cohen announced that the meeting was being recorded by Norton Cable and Norton Public Schools and asked if anyone was recording to let the Committee know.

***Pledge of Allegiance***

***Vote to Approve Minutes of November 13, 2023 Joint Meeting Open Session:***

MOTION: by Mr. Sheedy to approve Minutes of Joint Meeting November 13, 2023

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 4-0-1 Motion Carries

***Vote to Approve Minutes of December 14, 2023 Open Session Meeting:***

It was noted on Page 1, replace Chairperson Savas with Chairperson Cohen, "announced the meeting was being recorded..."

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to approve Minutes of December 14, 2023 Open Session Meeting with amendment

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 4-0-1 Motion Carries

***Warrants:***

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

School Expense Warrant:

December 14, 2023 \$ 380,502.36

December 27, 2023 \$ 369,398.54

School Payroll Warrant:

December 14, 2023 \$1,302,390.07

December 28, 2023

\$1,174,967.72

***Discussion and Vote on Acceptance of New Member Districts to READS Collaborative:***

As required, acceptance of new member districts to READS Collaborative requires the approval of Member School Committees. Dr. O'Neill read the following statement:

At the READS Board of Directors meeting on November 16, 2023, by a majority vote, the board members voted to allow admittance of two new school districts, the Brockton Public School District and the Whitman-Hanson Regional Public School District, to READS Collaborative. This vote is subject to majority vote of two-thirds of the READS Collaborative Member School Committees.

Pursuant to Section IX: Procedure and Timeline for Admitting New Member Districts as outlined in the READS Collaborative Agreement: Norton Public Schools, by a vote of our School Committee, approve the admittance of the Brockton Public Schools District and the Whitman-Hanson Regional School District as new READS Collaborative Member Districts effective July 1, 2024.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to approve Acceptance of New Member Districts to READS Collaborative

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion Carries

***Review and Discuss Capital Improvements Plan for Spring Town Meeting:***

Mrs. Hadfield presented the Committee with the Spring Town Meeting Capital Improvement Plan. There is a change of priorities to remove a final lease vehicle payment of \$22,000 from the article and replace it with a repair to the JCS elevator. After a fall inspection of the elevator, a hydraulic cylinder needs to be replaced. The State issued 90 days for the repair. We have a contract with Buckley Elevators and they quoted \$68,760. We are requesting \$38,760 from Capital Improvement, and the Facilities account will expense \$30,000. It was verified by the Committee that the lease payment was made on the vehicle due to the payment due date. The elevator at JCS is currently operational and in use. We received an extension from the State beyond the 90 days for the repair to the elevator. If approved at the Town Meeting, we will then obtain the requested three quotes.

It was noted that curriculum requests have historically been on the Capital Improvement Plan.

***Student Representative Update:***

**JCS** - Is excited to welcome artist Joshua Weiner to the school next week. He will use drawings from the students and developed a plan for a large-scale mosaic mural in the library that celebrates a love of literature and the natural surroundings of JCS and Norton. JCS students, parents, and Wheaton students (and hopefully some NHS students as well) will work with Josh on piecing together all of the mosaics to create a lasting piece of art that families can enjoy for years to come. Many thanks to the JCS Parents Organization and NEED for funding this project!

JCS will be having the annual Martin Luther King assembly which is focused on peace and acceptance. Music, poetry, and slide shows will usher the JCS community into this weekend's important holiday

**NMS** - Drama club is proud to announce that the production for this year will be Willy Wonka. Students are excited about this news and are eager for auditions to take place next week.

Sports are enjoying success this Winter season.

The NMS is also proud to be welcoming a very special guest speaker on January 24th, Ms. Ivy Watts. Ms. Watts is an inspirational guest speaker who meets with school groups all around the country to discuss the perils of depression and suicidal ideation. Ms. Watts is being brought to NMS through a generous grant from Sarah's Village and additional funds by the NMS Parent Board.

The NMS will be hosting the annual 7th grade midway social next Friday. This special event marks the halfway or midpoint on the calendar of their careers at NMS.

**HAY** - Students are beginning to get excited for the HAY PTO Boosterthon Fun Run fundraiser to begin. Free registration started on January 10. The Boosterthon on-campus personnel will be at the school working with the staff next week to build incentives for the students. The Boosterthon happens from January 24 through February 2, with the Glow Fun Run happening in the gym on Friday, February 2 throughout the day. This is the big fundraiser the school does for the year which will help pay off the new playground structures purchased last year.

**NHS** - Students at the high school are looking forward to the new semester and new classes as well as some great events.

DECA had 55 members compete at the district competition in Hyannis. Our team did Norton proud. An amazing 40 competitors finished in the top ten of their events and 26 students qualified for State competition in March, with top six finishes.

The Talent Show is on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

Saturday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the high school will host a vendor fair for entrepreneurial students and members of the community to show off their products and services.

### ***FY 2025 Budget Update:***

Mrs. Hadfield presented the Committee with an update on the FY '25 Budget with documentation for a Level Service Budget. The proposed budget request is \$38,873,431.00, a 12.01% increase. Although not broken down, it was noted that the mandates for SPED are estimated to be 39% of the budget, approximately \$15,049,963.00. This is about a 13.5% increase from FY'24. The Committee was provided with documentation with line-item expenditures for the Budget and School Choice funds. The presentation represented a total overview of the combined general and SPED mandates required for FY'25.

Administration and the Committee discussed how collaborative rates are typically increased 3-5% per year and determined by their board. Last year private facilities increased 14%, which is determined at the State level by Operation Services Division (OSD). It was noted the increase

for private facilities in FY'25 is expected to be 4.69%, which is still at a higher increase in over a decade from the historical rate of 1-2%. They reviewed the process of a placement for a student which involves a team, local members of READS and BICO, other collaboratives, and then private facilities. The team, along with the parents, decide the best fit for the student. It was acknowledged this is an on-going process throughout the year with the goal for a student to return to the district. The figures for our FY'25 budget were based on current student needs and anticipated expenditures.

Dr. O'Neill informed the Committee the school can expect the historical 3-5% increase for the FY'25 Budget. If a 5% increase is allocated, this still leaves the school with a \$2,431,665.00 deficit. The Committee and Administration discussed issues regarding how the school is the biggest department in the Town, so why are we held to the same allocated funds as other departments? How is it determined what funds are allocated to which departments? How do other departments present their budget to the Finance Committee? How does the Finance Committee rank department mandates? What are level services for the other departments? These questions and concerns will be brought forth at the next joint meeting with Select Board and Finance Committee, scheduled for January 25<sup>th</sup>.

It was determined we need to advise the community that our level services are at a 12% increase and explain there is no control over mandates. We need to get more information to our community, start the conversation and tax payers can decide. The Committee acknowledged and appreciate the graphs and charts presented for the FY'25 Budget. Dr. O'Neill will be providing families and staff with the same documentation, along with a Budget Survey, so the public is aware of the mandates required for the FY'25 School Budget.

***Discussion on Upcoming School Committee Meeting Dates:***

The final budget needs to be presented to the Town on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Therefore, the Committee scheduled the budget workshop on Tuesday, February 6<sup>th</sup>, in the HAY Library, at 6:00 p.m.

***First Reading of Surplus Items Policy:***

The Committee was presented with a Fiscal Management Disposition of Surplus Items-DN policy. Concerns addressed were how are we determining value; do we need a chief procurement officer; who makes the final order to dispose; what do Fire, DPW and similar department have for a procedure? These concerns will be reviewed for further discussion.

***Review and Vote on Changes to the 2024-2025 School Calendar:***

The Committee was provided with a 2024-2025 School Calendar, Revised 12/19/2023. Revisions to the calendar include the addition of two early release dates for NHS in January and June 2024. These dates, January 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>, and June 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>, have been added for mid-year and final assessments and may flex if the calendar is impacted by school closings. Additionally, early release dates for elementary and middle school conferences have been included on the calendar.

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Revised 2024-2025 Academic Calendar as presented

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

***Superintendent Goals: Mid-Year Update:***

Dr. O'Neill addressed the Committee with and reported her Superintendent Goals Progress Update. She discussed her accomplishments, achievements, and progress with the New Superintended Induction Program. The annual evaluation will be conducted on March 14<sup>th</sup>. This provides the current Committee an opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback before any new members are appointed. She will provide a full report at that time. The Committee expressed a desire to have more substance within the report relating to the walkthroughs of each school, problems or no problems, etc. The Committee expressed that she has done an awesome job and our team is transparent. The Committee wanted her to share her greatest stories and what has caught her off guard. Dr. O'Neill shared her experiences have been positive interaction with families and already working in the District and knowing people is a great asset to this position. She also enjoys working with her Student Advisory Council. It is the day-to-day situations and issues that arise that alter her original plan of the day.

***Historical MCAS Overview and Discussion:***

Dr. Ackerman provided a slide presentation reviewing Statewide MCAS Data Analysis 2014 - 2023. The graphs and charts reviewed provided a basis of comparison with comparable districts utilizing District Accountability and Review Tool (DART). In comparison to the State, Norton is performing good, better than State in some areas and meeting expectations, except Grade 4. This is a concern and we need to figure this out for this grade. Dr. Ackerman provided information and protocol the Administrative Team is preparing; i.e., new material, SEL curriculum, Acceleration Academies, I-MTSS system, interventions, and professional development. The ELA tests have been multiple choice and now the test is compare and contrast. He also advised the Committee we had a consultant in today and it was noted we are at or above where we are supposed to be. Topics of discussion were what other districts who have a lower per pupil cost than Norton are doing and what is working for them? For example, North Attleboro has a DART of \$14K and Norton \$16K. Also, what are we spending on learning per pupil, not including insurance?

***Other Business:***

- Mrs. Justine Callanan addressed an issue from a community member about the grading policy at the high school. The concern is that a grade of 50 is being issued to a student without any work. After discussion, it was determined there was not enough information to allow further discussion. The Administration and Committee emphasized that the chain of command should be followed. Contact the teacher, guidance counselor, and high school administration in writing. The Committee passes policies and procedures and they are expected to be followed.
- A follow-up on PBIS will be at a future meeting.
- Schedule an Executive Session with the School Resource Officers.
- What is the process, procedure and priority for the rental of fields for Norton Youth Programs? Issues have occurred when youth programs have wanted to rent fields and they are already rented to private organizations. Although we need to bring in revenue, it was addressed the community should have some priority. It was determined that a set of

rules and regulations for organizations, policy and procedures, as well as deadline dates, will be drafted and reviewed for another agenda item.

***Adjourn:***

MOTION: by Mr. Schleicher to adjourn meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Savas

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

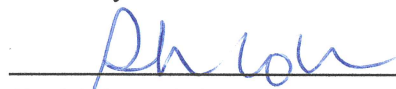
***Next Meeting Date:***

- School Committee Meeting: Thursday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. in the NMS Library
- Joint Meeting Select Board, Finance Committee, School Committee: Thursday, January 25<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m., NMS Library

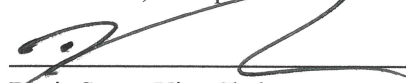
***Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:***

- Spring Town Meeting FY'25-29 Capital Plan
- FY'25 Budget Request
- School Committee and School Choice Line-Item Expenditures FY'25
- Fiscal Management Disposition of Surplus Items-DN
- 2024 – 2025 School Calendar
- Superintendent's Goals Progress Update
- Statewide MCAS Data Analysis 2014 -2023

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jennifer O'Neill, Ed.D.  
Secretary Pro Tem



Sheri Cohen, Chairperson

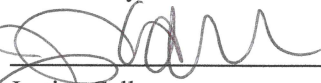


Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairman

Nick Schleicher



Dan Sheedy



Justine Callanan