

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

NORTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

RECEIVED
NORTON TOWN CLERK
2024 MAR 18 AM 8:59

Date of School Committee Meeting: Thursday, February 29, 2024

Location: Norton Middle School Auditorium

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

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

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Recognition of Norton Youth Cheer – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill

Dr. O'Neill recognized Norton Youth Cheer athletes and coaches for their performance at their national championship competition in Florida. The 10U and 14U squads were in attendance with their families. Dr. O'Neill invited both groups to the stage for photographs and recapped their impressive seasons as detailed below.

10U Cheerleaders

- 2nd Place at EMASS AYFC Power in Pink Competition
- 2nd Place at Locals in Waltham
- 3rd Place at States
- 4th Place in the Nation

14U Cheerleaders

- 1st Place Win and Power in Pink Award at EMASS AYFC Power in Pink Competition
- 1st Place, Hit Zero, Grand Champions at Locals in Waltham
- 1st Place, Hit Zero at States
- National Champions

The School Committee extended their congratulations to the athletes and stated they look forward to seeing their future successes. The School Committee also recognized the coaches in attendance.

Recognition of Voice of Democracy State Finals Performance – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill

Dr. O'Neill recognized Norton High School Junior Isabella Farquharson for her achievement in the Voice of Democracy State Finals. Since 1947, the Voice of Democracy has been the Veterans of Foreign Wars' premier scholarship program. Each year, nearly 27,000 high school students compete by writing and recording an audio essay on an annual patriotic theme. This year's theme was, "What are the greatest attributes of our Democracy?"

Dr. O'Neill noted that this was the first time in at least 25 years that a student from Norton High School was a regional first place winner. As the district and regional winner, Isabella represented

Norton High School at the State Finals on January 28th where she received fourth place in the state of Massachusetts out of over 3500 entries. She received a \$1,250 scholarship and further cash compensation from the Women's Auxiliary at the event.

Isabella explained to the Committee that over the course of the summer she wrote about freedom, and the ability to change our constitution through amendments and impact the future. She submitted a written essay and recorded audio of her work. Mr. Marc Liberatore, Norton High School Social Studies Academic Coordinator, added that the veterans reviewing her contest submission were touched by her references to her mother's military service in her essay. The School Committee congratulated Isabella on her achievement and commented on the remarkable combination of talent required to have a sense of history and excel in both written work and presentation skills.

Recognition of Mr. Robert Bielawa – MSAA Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill

Mr. Bielawa was unable to be present at the meeting as the youth basketball team which he coaches was scheduled for a playoff game. Recognition of his MSAA award will be moved to a future meeting.

Vote to Approve Minutes of January 25, 2024 Joint Meeting, February 6, 2024 Budget Workshop, February 8, 2024 Open and Executive Session Meetings

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Minutes of January 25, 2024 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee and Select Board

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Minutes of February 6, 2024 Budget Workshop Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Minutes of February 8, 2024 Open Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 5 - 0 Motion Carries

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve Minutes of February 8, 2024 Executive Session Meeting

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

VOTE: 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 the public record:

School Expense Warrant:

February 8, 2024 \$ 193,324.94

School Payroll Warrant:

February 8, 2024 \$1,174,245.06

Student Representatives Update

Antonio Romano shared updates with the Committee on school activities as follows:

JCS - The annual elective program begins tomorrow afternoon. All students K-3 will be taking one of 38 classes of their own choosing. Classes will be taught by teachers, staff, Central Office staff, parents, and NHS students. Electives give staff, parents, and NHS students a chance to teach something new and different while giving students a voice and choice in their learning. The mosaic mural, created by the students at JCS under the direction of artist Josh Winer, will be finalized this week, and an Open House ceremony is planned for next Thursday evening. The School Committee and the Central Office leadership are invited to be able to join the open house or to stop by to see the finished product.

NMS - The Unified Basketball schedule kicked off yesterday with a home game against Berkley and great support from students and staff. NMS just completed their celebration of Black History Month with different units choosing to do various activities. The Drama Club has been busy working on this year's production of *Willy Wonka*.

HAY – Several activities have been planned to help keep students' enthusiasm high during the month, including Spirit Days planned in the upcoming weeks and the HAY PTO Musical Bingo night. The Yelle LLT (Lancer Learning Time) is being used to help support students better for the upcoming ELA MCAS.

LGN - Students enjoyed an amazing Elementary Science Day yesterday, Feb. 28th, run by Norton High School Students. Next Wednesday, March 6th, LGN will celebrate Read Across America Day with another visit from NHS students who will be reading to classes.

Update on L. G. Nourse Roof – Dr. Jennifer O'Neill

Dr. O'Neill provided the Committee with a brief overview of the roof leak at the LGN. The impacted area is located in the D wing of the building housing third grade which is an addition to the original structure added in 1963. This has been an ongoing problem which has persisted despite efforts to resolve the issue, including patches to the roof and trimming branches that overhang the roof from the property line.

Recently a core test was performed on the affected roof, and air quality tests were completed with results all within normal ranges and consistent with results in the rest of the building. As a precaution, dehumidifiers are used overnight in the area of the leak, and a device has been installed to collect and disperse rainwater on the roof.

Mr. Wade Lizotte, Director of Facilities, addressed the Committee, explaining that a full patch will be added to cover the entire D-wing roof. This repair will buy some time before the full roof needs to be replaced. He confirmed for the committee that this would be the last time rubber overlay could be added to the roof. To date, two quotes have been received for the repair, and a third is due. The repair can be completed as soon as the weather is warm enough. This roof was most recently overlayed in 2004 and will be a potential MSBA project in 2029-2030.

Dr. O'Neill advised the Committee the cost for the repair would be absorbed by the Facilities Revolving Account.

Discussion and Approval of MSBA Accelerated Repair Program Statement of Interest for Norton Middle School – Dr. Jennifer O’Neill

The Norton Middle School roof, original to the school in 1997, has had issues since the beginning with leaks impacting the cafeteria and third floor. Because of the age of the roof, there is an opportunity to get on the MSBA Accelerated Repair list. Districts that have repair needs in their school facilities must express interest in the Accelerated Repair Program through the MSBA’s Statement of Interest ("SOI") process. Approval by the School Committee and by the Select Board is needed so that an SOI can be completed for a new roof at Norton Middle School.

The following statement was read by Chairperson Cohen - *Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 29, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Norton, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 2024 for the Norton Middle School located at 215 West Main Street, Norton, MA. 02766 which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the accelerated program for installing a new roof; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Norton to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.*

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to Approve MSBA Accelerated Repair Program Statement of Interest for Norton Middle School

SECOND: by Mr. Sheedy

VOTE: 5 – 0 Motion Carries

Discussion on School Choice Funding and FY2025 Proposed Budget – Dr. Jennifer O’Neill and Mrs. Kristine Hadfield

The Committee expressed interest in tabling this item pending additional data from the Administration. The Committee requested information regarding School Choice reimbursement looking at the variable cost to educate students, including special education, versus the reimbursement funds. They are seeking a better understanding of the net profitability of being a School Choice district. A discussion followed regarding the means of completing such an analysis. The Committee remarked on the disparity between the School Choice reimbursement rate of \$5,000 for in-person students and \$9,597 for the two public virtual academies.

The discussion moved to special education with the Committee noting that Norton is known for its well-established programs. The Committee talked about the impact of School Choice on special education and whether that is burden with increased workloads or a benefit with funding to offset the cost of running programs. The Committee additionally discussed participation by other districts in the School Choice program.

The budget proposal has not changed since the previous meeting. Dr. O’Neill and Mrs. Hadfield will meet with the Town Manager on Monday and anticipate getting a firmer number on the increase he anticipates the School Department will receive. The final proposal is due to Town

Hall on March 18th. The Public Hearing and vote on the budget are scheduled for the next meeting on March 14th. Presentations to the Finance Committee begin in April.

The Committee tabled further discussion. The Administration will provide additional School Choice analysis prior to the Committee's vote on participation for the 2024-2025 school year.

Other Business:

Mr. Schleicher reported that he had reached out to US Representative Jake Auchincloss, Senator Paul Feeney, State Representatives Jay Barrows and Steve Howitt seeking an open forum educational session to address state regulation guidelines, school choice, and unfunded state mandates. Updates will be provided as available.

Adjourn:

MOTION: by Mr. Savas to adjourn meeting and Enter into Executive Session not to return to Open Session

SECOND: by Mr. Schleicher

ROLL CALL VOTE: Sheri Cohen-yes; Deniz Savas-yes; Nick Schleicher-yes; Justine Callanan-yes; Dan Sheedy-yes

5 - 0 Motion Carries

The meeting was adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Next Meeting:

- Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in the NMS Library

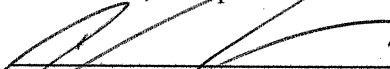
Documents and Other Exhibits Used at Meeting:

- MSBA SOI Approval NMS Roof Project
- FY25 Budget Book Page 16
- School Choice Reimbursement Summary


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




Sheri Cohen, Chairperson




Deniz Savas, Vice-Chairman



Justine Callanan



Nick Schleicher



Dan Sheedy