

*Natick Public Schools  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
May 5, 2020*

The School Committee held a meeting on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. via a Virtual Meeting. Chair McDonough called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and took roll call at 7:03 p.m.

Members Present: Julie McDonough, Haley Sonneborn, Henry Haugland, Shai Fuxman, Donna McKenzie, Matthew Brand, Cathi Collins

Others Present:

Dr. Anna Nolin	Superintendent
Mr. Tim Luff	Assistant Superintendent
Mr. Kirk Downing	Assistant Superintendent
Dr. Peter Gray	Assistant Superintendent
Rose McDermott	Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary
Mr. Jefferson Wood	Teacher Representative

### **Public Speak**

Due to the nature of a virtual meeting, the instructions from the Attorney General were to submit public remarks via email to Chair McDonough. Chair McDonough received an email from Kristin Reichman. The email was her concern for the state's recommendation for credit/no credit for remote learning grading.

### **Principal's Advisory Class: Fostering a Culture of Respect and Inclusion at NHS – Orientation, Mentorship and More**

Dr. Nolin introduced Brian Harrigan, Principal of Natick High School along with several students gave a presentation which outlined the orientation, highlighted changes made to mentorship, engagement in a mentorship lesson, mentorship feedback qualified and quantified as well as student leadership projects.

### **Instrumental Music Program Fees**

Mr. Craig Chisolm, Music Director K-12 presented and requested a much needed update to fees to the instrumental program. The lessons program is a stand-alone program and the rates haven't been raised since 2013 and they are operating in a way by tapping into reserves. He would like the program to be able to be self-sustained. Their reserves are depleted. The instructors are not paid commensurate with the value of the program trying to be achieved in Natick.

### **Vaping Program and Vaping Update**

Mr. Jason Hoye, Dean of Students and Jenn Garb-Palumbo, Nurse at Natick High School gave a presentation about this program that was developed in collaboration with UMass in response to the epidemic of youth vaping. They reviewed trends in key indicators, patterns by grade and response to student vaping. There was an overview of the Nicotine Diversion program and their results. Also reviewed was the development of the protocol and staff trainings. The next steps would be to redesign the diversion program to make educational components individualized (online), coupled with cessation component (counseling), follow the data, educate and have resources readily available for students, communicate and inform students about the program, build tool kits for students to use when feeling the urge to vape and to train more Staff (Academic & Guidance Counselors).

### **COVID-19 Closure Updates/Finance Issues**

Dr. Gray updated the community on Bus, Athletics, Parking fees, BOKS and ASAP fees. With the recent announcement of school closure to the end of the school year, the Business Office is working with all programs with fee refunds to develop a process whereby either:

- For those programs (i.e. school bus fees) where a credit can be given for the upcoming school year for those students who will still ride the bus
- All other programs who are not able to provide a future credit will be providing a list of eligible refunds
- In those programs where individuals wrote checks, many of those checks have not been deposited. Those program coordinators will contact individuals to determine the appropriate method (mailing or shredding) to refund those fees.
- In those programs where an online payment was made, we are working with the Town Comptroller's Office, to process refunds. This process may take time due to the remote working environment currently in place to refund several hundred payments.

A memo will be going out to seniors at the High School in regard to their reimbursements.

### **Action Items**

Approve 50% Reduction of Preschool Tuitions for May and June of the 2019/2020 School Year:

Dr. Nolin asked for the School Committee's support in the reduction to the preschool tuitions for the remainder of the school year. Mr. Haugland motioned to approve the 50% reduction of preschool tuitions for the 19-20 school year. Ms. Sonneborn seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman - Yes

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Mr. Brand – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Ms. Collins - Yes

Chair McDonough – Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of the seven members present 7-0-0.

### **COVID-19 Closure Updates/Finance Issues Continued**

Dr. Gray updated the School Committee about bus contracts. We are waiting back for the final modifications from our attorney. The NEF has been raising funds and have raised \$6000.00 for helping staff from NPS during this financial hardship. Dr. Nolin reviewed that Federal guidance from Devos around FAPE (Free and Appropriate Education) and Special Education expectations will be upheld by the Federal Government with no relaxation due to closure. CARES funding is coming and will come commensurate with Title 1 funding minus what we must share with private schools in our area. We will receive approximately \$250,000.00 which will be used towards costs/expenses associated with Covid-19. Dr. Nolin reviewed our existing personnel status. There will be a recommendation for a second round of furloughs effective May 8, part of the multi-tier personnel strategy you previously voted to support and 22 individuals that have been redeployed for various roles since closure but can no longer be fully employed.

### **Report on Remote Learning**

Dr. Nolin reviewed the discussions in process with our teacher's union. Based on Common Results from Staff, Student and Family feedback:

- Grading at secondary level (5-8 and then 9-12) New NCAA update
- Replacement for the ROSP at elementary level

- Revising schedules but keeping a balance of instructional and small group/check in days/independent work days (3 hrs per day)
- Defining best practices for office hour days/rebranding time to be small group focused --further enhancing the instructional model
- Creation of a one-stop page for engaging with Remote Learning
- Creation of more instructional and more independent work time at HS level to address the need to see classes more regularly.

Dr. Nolin also discussed returning student and staff belongings. She is hopeful for this to occur prior to Summer. The Board of Health met with us to discuss options today and we will share them with the community soon. Dr. Nolin has received lots of questions from parents about summer school and camps. May 18, 2020 is the supposed update from the state on camps and summer school. We are hoping to plan for both remote and in-person summer school services. NPS planning for an optional, free online program for all, and our online mandated summer school for Title I and ESY (extended school year for special education students). There is a desire to plan for some in-person work--especially for our sub separate special education students if this is allowed. Right now, it's not looking that way. We will also create a curriculum transition plan for the open of school to address key pre-requisite grade level and course skills to begin to make up the time. Finally, she will advocate for the elimination of MCAS for next year at the state level; doing so will make up a month of instructional time. The total package described here will help us to address what we have not been able to cover. We wait for the May 18th promised announcements on camp and summer before we put this out in firmer terms. Mr. Luff gave an update relative to Special Education. He reviewed the three phases:

1. Phase 1: Special Education Enrichment (March 9 to April 8)
2. Phase 2: Specialized Remote Learning (April 9 to Present Day)
3. Phase 3: Virtual IEP Process (April 27 through the End of the School Year)

Mr. Luff discussed the requested parameters for IEP meetings and the timeframes and types of meetings to be scheduled during April 27<sup>th</sup> - May 22<sup>nd</sup> and from May 25<sup>th</sup> – and the end of the school year.

### **FY21 Budget Update**

Dr. Nolin and Ms. Cathi Collins, School Committee member, reviewed and gave an update from joint meeting with the Board of Selectman meeting from the night before. The district would like to take advantage of the prepayment of OOD and Collaborative tuitions.

The following is a list of the Board of Selectmen decisions (May 4, 2020):

1. Use 25% (~ \$2.3 MM) of General and Operational Stabilization funds to support FY21 budget
2. Revenue scenario on which to build the budget: 20% decline in state aid and 30% decline in Local Receipts (v. FY20) This would be a reduction of \$8,692,947 ( 5.2%) v. FY20 total general fund revenue
3. Defer capital spending unless money has already been borrowed or project is to protect life, health and or safety of employees/community
4. Close out \$302,000 from completed capital projects to free cash

These only set the guidelines. We are still waiting for new preliminary budget from Town Administration. Free cash is still up in the air. There was 1.2 million freed up last year to help support the budget. There is still 3 million in that fund. Decisions have to be made around free cash and stabilization funds regardless. Dr. Nolin discussed the Public School system not being a revenue generating agency. However, she shared our core values and our process for financial decision-making during this Pandemic emergency:

- Provide and extend essential and emergency services to keep residents safe, healthy, and supported.
- Maintain and extend essential services such as health, safety, education
- Keep existing staff working at their current level, avoid further furlough and layoffs
- Avoid scorched Earth tactics that will require years of recovery
- Defer or redevelop/redeploy vs. destroy

Dr. Nolin has been in this district since 2003 and she went back and reviewed the playbook of the past. These included:

1. Froze additive hiring, save for legal requirements
2. Reduced unnecessary roles, expenses
3. Redeployed staff across organization for creative savings
4. Reduced COLA for existing contracts
5. Froze borrowing
6. Replaced only retirements and resignations after examination of need
7. Used stabilization--rainy day reserves
8. Reduced replacement of vehicles to cruisers and motorcycles
9. Offered early retirement incentives

Dr. Nolin feels we need to plan and put forward a budget whether we are doing a 1/12th budget or a budget for FY 21 that does not resign itself to that level of reduction. It is best to get a budget going prior to having to revert to a 1/12th budget scenario given the lack of understanding of how the 1/12th works, state aid is < 10% of our budget. Local Receipts < 12% of budget. We should take control of our budget and set it soon (1/12th begins scorched Earth process). Town meeting is possible in a variety of formats. We should and have helped to accelerate the planning of town meeting. Dr. Nolin made it very clear that ideas presented here are not presented as actual or happening. Ideas/reductions and associated budget numbers presented cannot be considered without weighing impact (it can't just be about the numbers). Ideas presented here are not to be used as weaponry but as possibilities. Ideas presented here may not be possible or needed as more resources and challenges unfold in coming weeks. Ideas presented here should only occur if actual deficits can be proven, not speculated. Ideas here should be implemented after stabilization funds are drawn as well. Dr. Nolin revealed that Town and school leaders did sit down and discussed Town capital and deferral and or redeployment. We have offered to try and combine town and school projects together: Fire Project? KMS: healthy contingency but we are in final process of project, where PCOs typically get addressed. KMS at 50% completion as of 4/28/2020. We could include Brown paving and sidewalk project (on capital deferral list) in the KMS project and transfer the Brown paving to the Ben Hem paving. Dr. Nolin reviewed the district's tier one and tier two decision-making. She reviewed the unknowns. Those would be the stabilization/reserve use, State aid, Medicaid reimbursement, SOA monies--DESE advised Monday that we do NOT fill out this application at this time even though there is a May 15 deadline and Title I reduction in poverty? This may be changed in this new environment. The impact of students returning from homeschool, private and charter schools due to inability to pay tuitions or homeschool (financial impact)--557 possible children. The State emergency monies and emergency education aid as well as compensatory services for special education. Dr. Nolin discussed the following options for School Committee consideration:

- Revisit on-budget Union contracts
- Whole district furloughs
- Closure of Johnson and redistribute staff and students to schools
- Savings on Johnson capital maintenance plans
- Eliminate after school club and athletic programs
- Eliminate world language program at middle school, implement directed studies (800 students)
- Eliminate Theater program (200 children per show x 6 shows a year) and classes (~15 per class), 15 classes at MS, 4 at NHS
- Cuts to general education and core classes (last resort)

Dr. Nolin stated that we cannot evaluate these options until we understand the use of town reserves and stabilization. Dr. Nolin also reviewed the impact of inadequately addressing student services.

### **Update on KMS Building Project**

Dr. Nolin gave an update. The COVID Procedures Compliance is in place All unions are back at work. There's a comprehensive system of health protective measures for workers. There was a meeting this morning to determine how to proceed with some abutter concerns not related to the project but which or could be solved in tandem with work being done at the school. We are ahead of schedule. The transition meeting with KMS staff tomorrow 5% with parameters of the moving company who will move teacher materials to new building. There is a training plan discussed for fall 2020. Important notice:

**KMS AND BROWN ELEMENTARY CAMPUSES ARE NOW CLOSED TO PUBLIC INCLUDING FOOT TRAFFIC**

### **Enrollment Update**

Mr. Kirk Downing, Assistant Superintendent reviewed the enrollment data including incoming Kindergarten. There have been no significant changes. We should be on par with FY20 enrollment figures.

### **Teacher Representative**

Mr. Jefferson Wood commented on the possibility of closing Johnson. In view of the proposals that have been suggested and discussed, he said no to closing Johnson, no to eliminating the afterschool programs that are the lifeblood of so many of our students, no to furloughing teachers or laying off any teachers. Rejected the premise that we have been asked to operate under. Mr. Wood felt that the Town administrator is not being creative. There are no creative solutions coming out only cuts. The stabilization funds should be used for what they were meant to be used, not to uphold our bond rating. Rainy day funds are created for this purpose.

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mr. Brand moved approval of the consent agenda. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes  
Dr. Fuxman - Yes  
Mr. Haugland – Yes  
Mr. Brand – Yes  
Ms. Sonneborn – Yes  
Ms. Collins - Yes  
Chair McDonough – Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of the seven members present 7-0-0.

At approximately, 10:56pm, Mr. Brand moved to adjourn. Ms. Collins seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes  
Dr. Fuxman - Yes  
Mr. Haugland – Yes  
Mr. Brand – Yes  
Ms. Sonneborn – Yes  
Ms. Collins - Yes  
Chair McDonough – Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of the seven members present 7-0-0.

Anna Nolin  
Superintendent  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Rose McDermott  
Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

**Documents Provided in Novus Agenda** and materials used at this meeting can be found here: [Agenda & Materials](#)