

Natick Public Schools  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
February 27, 2023

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday, February 27, 2023, at 6:00pm via an in-person and virtual meeting. Chair Collins called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:03pm.

Members Present: Cathi Collins, Dr. Shai Fuxman, Elise Gorseth, Dr. Donna McKenzie, Catherine Brunell  
Julie McDonough

Members Missing: Hayley Sonneborn (arrived at 6:08pm during Executive Session)

Others Present:

Dr. Anna Nolin	Superintendent
Mr. Tim Luff	Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Rose McDermott	Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary (Remote)
Dr. Peter Gray	Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Sue Balboni	Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation
Mr. Jefferson Woods	Teacher Representative
Ms. Inkyoung Lee	Student Representative (remote)

Chair Collins moved for approval for the School Committee to enter into Executive Session for this purpose:

1. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (Superintendent)
2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (ASAP and Non-Represented Salary Adjustments)

Dr. McKenzie seconded.

It was unanimously approved 6-0-0.

Chair Collins stated they would be returned to open session at 7:00pm.

The School Committee returned to open session at approximately 7:13pm.

### Public Speak

Chair Collins had not received any requests via email. There was no one in person requesting to speak.

### Announcements

Dr. Nolin, due to inclement weather, sent out a two hour delay a little while ago. There is no morning preschool and no early risers. METCO families please check your emails for a notice from Ms. Clayton. Parents will hear from Dr. Nolin tomorrow morning if there's a closure. She announced that our Facilities Director and department are acting in partnership with Keefe Tech students. A collaboration with them allows us to have student interns and to mentor them. Dr. Nolin congratulated all the band and choral students and teachers. They participated in town wide programs. It was a huge deal, and we are really proud of those efforts. On March 6th we will be welcoming our wrestling team and coach of the year Bob Anniballi. Dr. Fuxman reminded the community of a SPARK kindness event on March 7<sup>th</sup> for social justice parenting.

### **Representative Updates/Concerns**

Teacher Representative, Jefferson Wood, had nothing new to share at this time. Student Representative, Inkyoung Lee, informed the Committee that next week some of the juniors will be taking their first official SAT test. It's coming up and it's on a lot of peoples minds. Next week the March edition of the paper, Nest will be coming out.

### **Subcommittee/Liaison Updates**

Ms. Brunell gave a huge shout out to PCC and PTO members – they combed through large amounts of documents and added contents collaboratively. They now have enough information to meet with Administration. They have made great progress. Ms. McDonough gave an update on the scheduling and start time committee. They will be coming with a presentation to the next meeting with a summary presentation and background information. They will discuss, view, and then vote two weeks later. The intention is to go back into negotiations with the unions. They reviewed the time frame moving forward.

### **Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of Donations
2. Approval for Wayland Public Schools to Join ACCEPT Collaborative
3. Approval of School Committee Retreat and School Committee Meeting Minutes of January 9, 2023

Ms. Brunell motioned to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Gorseth seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

### **Action Items**

1. Second Reading and Approval of Policies (JHA Observances of Religious Holidays, IKB Homework Policy, IC/ICA School Year/School Calendar) – Mr. Tim Luff, Deputy Superintendent reviewed the changes. A member asked if we should add the word cultural to the actual name of the policy (JHA)? Mr. Luff asked her to define cultural? There are many cultural observances. Religious ones are protected by law, cultural are not. He would caution against adding that word. Cultural observances can be at any given time. Where holidays are added and prepared by the Superintendent and given to School Committee to approve. Mr. Luff stated that there are two different parts to this. One is a personal observance when school is in session but not on the school calendar. This policy is for something not on the calendar. Dr. Nolin stated we do make concessions for families. We are trying to make it here in a reliable way for people to do what they need to do. Ms. McDonough would like two edits – regardless as whether they are identified as major religious holidays or major religious observances on the NPS calendar. She would like to change throughout the policy to change holiday to observances. And the second sections, outlined be changed to identified. Mr. Luff doesn't want the staff to have to determine what an observance is. Mr. Luff stated There has been case law against using cultural. Ms. Brunell wants to bring it back to policy subcommittee. Mr. Luff asked that they approve this and then can bring it back later. Dr. Nolin reread the policy with the amended changes. Dr. Fuxman moved to approve Policy JHA with those edits incorporated. Dr. McKenzie seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0. Dr. Nolin asked if she could apply the same standards of editing to the wordsmithing of this policy, like the last policy. Dr. Fuxman motioned to approve policy IKB with the edits incorporated. Ms. McDonough seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0. Policy IC/ICA School year/school calendar: Dr. Nolin reviewed the policy. We can change the word holiday to observances. Dr. Fuxman moved to

approve policy IC/ICA with the edits incorporated. Dr. McKenzie seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

2. Approval of the 2023-2024 School Calendar - Dr. Nolin reviewed all versions of the calendar. They all agreed that the formatting needs to be changed to be clearer to anyone looking at it. Dr. Nolin recommends they approve version three of the calendar. This is calendar she sees that fulfills our equity, inclusion, belonging and cherishing of students in the Natick Public Schools. The signal that we give to the community is that their child will not be penalized for us recognizing their holiday. The Committee reviewed the third version in detail. Mr. Luff stated that some of the policies the School Committee just voted on, alerts teachers that they cannot assign major assignments. By these being on the calendar, teachers will understand this. Dr. Nolin feels Diwali and Eid al-Fitr are two important religious holidays that have been reinforced by members of our community as needing to be acknowledged as other major religious holidays. This is the recommendation by the school department that these are important holidays. Ms. McDonough moved to add the religious and cultural observances of Diwali, Lunar New Year, Eid-al-Fitr, and Eid-al-Adha to the Natick Public Schools school year calendar. For the 2023-24 school year, these observances will be days in which school is in session (where applicable) but would be formally recognized on the published calendar. With this recognition, the revised homework policy for religious and cultural observances will be applied and enforced. The School Committee will convene a calendar working group in the spring of 2023 to examine the calendar as a whole. The working group will be comprised of:

- School Committee members
- Administrator(s)
- Teachers/staff (including EAN representative)
- Parent/guardian
- Student

And would be charged with providing information to the Natick School Committee on the following:

- Community impact of changes to school calendar
- Impact of changes to school calendar on consistency of educational programming
- Needs assessment of specific communities related to school calendar (through discussion groups, focus groups, town halls, and other community engagement methods.)
- Additional background and specific information on the religious and cultural holidays celebrated and observed in Natick.
- Options and alternatives for the school calendar.

The working group will provide regular updates to the School Committee of work conducted. A final report will be due to the School Committee no later than October 15, 2023. The committee will use the information provided to make changes to the 2024-25 school year calendar. Ms. Gorseth seconded. Dr. Fuxman proposed a friendly amendment to strike the first paragraph of the motion. Chair Collins seconded. An alternative friendly amendment was made by Ms. Gorseth. She suggested that we keep the first paragraph but remove Diwali and Eid al-Fitr because they are in the calendar but include these two additional observances as non-days off from school this year - Lunar New Year and Eid al-Aha. Ms. Brunell thinks Easter should be listed. Dr. Fuxman withdrew his motion.

At approximately 9:11pm, the SC took a recess. They will return at 9:16pm. The Committee returned at approximately 9:20pm.

Dr. Fuxman motioned to approve the third version of the 2023/2024 school calendar, third draft. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Dr. Nolin listed the edits the Committee would like made to the formatting. Dr.

Fuxman motioned to approve the third version of the 2023/2024 school calendar, third draft with the edits that were just mentioned. Chair Collins seconded. It was unanimously approved 7-0-0.

Dr. Fuxman made a friendly amendment to delete options and alternatives from the school calendar.

McKenzie seconded. Dr. Fuxman motioned to approve Julie's motion as amended. Chair Collins seconded. It was unanimously approved 7-0-0.

3. Approval of the 2023 MSBA Statement of Interest – Dr. Gray refreshed everyone that we made our formal interest last year. We must continue applying every year until accepted. We reached out to find out what we can do to strengthen our statement of interest. We have asked for them to consider memorial school however, their feasibility study will determine which building. This statement is a repeat of last year except for the dates. We will be inviting their senior members to come visit and take a tour.

Dr. Fuxman moved to approve the MSBA Statement as it reads as follows:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 27, 2023, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Natick, 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 April 14, 2023 for the Memorial Elementary School located at 107 Eliot Street 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 future:

- Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments
- Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility
- Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements

With the closure of the Johnson Elementary School scheduled for June 2025 and consistent with several studies that have concluded that due to the age, lack of ADA accessibility and required serious code upgrades, makes further investment in the building financially cost prohibitive. The Natick Public Schools is seeking funding to either modernize and upgrade their existing Memorial Elementary School to accommodate potential increases in enrollment with upgrades to the school facility systems along with the construction of an additional educational wing to accommodate both enrollment and Pre-K needed classroom space or explore the possibility of construction of a new elementary school at a site to be determined; 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 Natick to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Chair Collins seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

4. Approval of Salary Adjustments to ASAP and Non-Represented Personnel – Dr. Nolin summarized what was discussed during Executive which was salary adjustments to our ASAP staff and non-represented staff. They are not covered by unions. They focused on changes that were necessary due to market forces. We have done what it takes to remain competitive in the region. Chair Collins moved approval of the ASAP and non-rep salaries as proposed. Ms. Sonneborn seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

### **Review and Discussions of Proposed Changes to Fees**

Dr. Gray had provided a memo with details regarding fee increases in the instrumental music program, the ASAP Program, preschool at a 2% increase, change to late fees in transportation and a reduction in laptop fees. When asked who gets charged for a late registration in transportation? Dr. Gray explained that it will be charged to families that regularly use the bus and didn't register. It was their choice not to register. It's not for changes of circumstances. Dr. Fuxman motioned to approve the proposed fees outlined in the memos. Dr. McKenzie seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

### **Final Review of the Proposed FY24 Budget**

Dr. Nolin responded to some clarity around a few items. There had been a handout a couple of meetings ago, whether the School Committee would like to explore a preschool/METCO option in the future. Dr. Nolin wanted to share that it may be an option in the future. It wasn't on the table when we

had that conversation previously. Dr. Nolin reviewed the change in order to create a LEVEL 1 registrar position. Mr. Roche, Director of Technology, Mr. Errickson, Town Administrator and Mr. Townsend, Director of Finance, have been discussing further alignment between the Town and schools for the position of a Data Manager. To help with the kind of integrations and aligning the ways our systems work together. The School Committee had asked for an analysis on intramural sports. Dr. Nolin provided that information and the staff were all present to answer all the questions. Dr. Gray gave a public update on the Governor's budget. The governor has proposed funding chapter 70 with an additional \$800,000. Mr. Errickson, Town Administrator, is also very hopeful that the state will give more financial support for our Town. There are two positions which are above and beyond. Their pay ranges are included in the non-represented memo. Those positions will be covered with circuit breaker funds. It's fully funded right now. We can still cover the current request. There's an increase in circuit breaker by Governor Healey's budget. Ms. Balboni, Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation, received a warning letter that they may receive a reduction in Title One funding. Tim Collins, Director of Athletics, was asked to and he reviewed the complicated part of a coaching staff's year and season and regarding an athlete's playing time. We don't ever plan on having an exact number of players that people can keep on their roster. As they advance through the program, their playing time is mandated by their performance. One example is the boys ice hockey program. Instead of cutting players, they tried a platooning plan. That's tricky and they tried to communicate that to the team that they wouldn't dress for each game. There are certain sports that have a specific number of players on the court. If you can have 11 players on the field, you can keep a larger roster. That is determined by the coach and can be changed every year. A School Committee member would like to see an intramural program for NHS.

**Warrant Review**

Chair Collins has signed 3 accounts payable warrants which totaled \$1,457,890.00 and one payroll warrant of \$2,816,661.83.

At approximately, 10:16pm, Dr. McKenzie motioned to adjourn. Dr. Fuxman seconded. It was unanimously approved 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:
- Superintendent's Presentation
- Donation Report
- Drafts of Proposed 2023-2024 School Year Calendars
- FY24 NPS Budget and Assumptions
- Policies: JHA, IKB, IC/ICA
- School Committee Minutes and Retreat Minutes of January 9, 2023