

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 29, 2020*

The School Committee held a meeting on Wednesday, April 29, 2020 at 7:35 p.m. via a Virtual Meeting. Dr. Anna Nolin called the meeting to order because this is the reorganization meeting of the School Committee and took roll call at 7:43 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 no emails.

Action Items

Approval of Updated BDA/BDB/ BDC/BDD Policy:

Mr. Brand reviewed the policy update which included to allow the School Committee to reorganize at their discretion as well as introducing a second Vice Chairperson to the School Committee. Dr. McKenzie moved to accept the policy as amended. Mr. Brand seconded. Dr. Anna Nolin 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.

Reorganization of the School Committee

Dr. Nolin asked for nominations for the official roles of Chair, Vice Chair of Operations and Policy, Vice Chair of Finance and Clerk.

Mr. Haugland nominated Ms. McDonough for Chair of the School Committee. Mr. Brand seconded. Dr. Anna Nolin 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.

Chair McDonough asked for the nomination of a Vice Chair of Policy and Operations. Dr. McKenzie nominated Matt Brand as Vice Chair for Policy and Operations. 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.

Chair McDonough asked for a nomination of a Vice Chair of Finance. Mr. Brand nominated Cathi Collins to be the Vice Chairperson of Finance. Dr. Fuxman 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.

Chair McDonough asked for the nomination for the Clerk. Ms. Collins moved to nominate Dr. McKenzie for the position of Clerk. Mr. Brand 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.

Chair McDonough appointed Rose McDermott as the Recording Secretary. 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.

Vice Chair Collins motioned to retain Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehane as council to the School Committee. Mr. Brand 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.

Discussion of Refunds or Credits of Funds to Families for the Next School Year

Dr. Nolin reviewed the norms for the School Committee meeting. Dr. Nolin and Dr. Gray gave a presentation. 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. Dr. Nolin discussed the difficult decision on how to handle the preschool tuitions/contracts. The Commissioner of Education guided us all to hold families accountable to contracts. Dr. Nolin thanked preschool families for their patience while we are addressing this issue. Dr. Nolin proposed a 50% tuition reduction for May and June. If tuition was already paid, we will issue a refund unless you would like to donate their tuition. Dr. Nolin thanked the generous families that offered to do so.

Update on Bus Contracts

Dr. Nolin recognized Dr. Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance to address bus contract updates. Dr. Gray has a Memorandum of Agreement being drafted by our attorneys that addresses the following:

- Connolly Bus - contract statewide guidance and negotiation 56% of contract daily rate to cover only fixed costs.
- JFK--in negotiation--50% of contract of daily rate
- AA METCO Transportation--paid March bill, negotiating a reduced contract and stay of contract for the upcoming school year (no increase)

COVID-19 Closure Updates /Finance Issues

Dr. Nolin announced again that the NEF board has voted to move forward with the NEF Hardship Fund initiative (name to be finalized). They are happy to provide the Natick community with the opportunity to help those in need from NPS. Donation site: <http://www.natickeducationfoundation.org/donate>

Dr. Nolin gave updates as to decisions made at the State and Federal level related to the Covid closure: The MA Commissioner of Education cancelled this spring's regular administration of grade-level MCAS tests for students in grades 3-10. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted yesterday to temporarily modify the competency determination requirement for current high school seniors during the COVID-19 emergency. Under this change, seniors who have not passed one or more of the high school

MCAS tests will be able to earn the competency determination through successful completion of a relevant high school course. For current high school seniors, as well as other actively enrolled students who were on track to graduate in the 2019-2020 school year (including the summer of 2020), the competency determination would be awarded in each subject as follows:

- For English language arts and mathematics — upon district certification that the student earned credit this year for a course aligned to the curriculum frameworks in the relevant subject matter and has demonstrated competency in that subject. For students who were not enrolled in a course in the needed subject area during this school year, DESE will examine relevant coursework the district identifies for which the student received credit in previous school years.
- For science and technology/engineering – upon district certification that the student earned credit for a course aligned to the curriculum frameworks in the relevant subject matter and has demonstrated competency in one of the four tested disciplines (biology, chemistry, introductory physics, and technology/engineering) in either the current school year or a prior school year.

Remote learning recommendations continued to be executed this week. The Commissioner of Education updated state recommendations for remote learning include prioritized “essential” state standards (which may indicate they would shape MCAS to only address those standards, they also will be the key ones we have already prioritized as necessary to move to next grade or course). Dr. Nolin continues to lead the charge with the State Superintendents to recommend the cancellation of MCAS for next year. That would give a solid 3 weeks for making up time we have lost during this closure. Discussion of “soft” summer school opening to allow for testing of environment and any new recommended procedures with fall opening. Dr. Nolin continues to lead the charge with the State Superintendents to recommend the cancellation of MCAS for next year. That would give a solid 3 weeks for making up time we have lost during this closure. Dr. Nolin participated in the Tri-County Superintendents meeting and all Districts are struggling with the same things. Dr. Nolin discussed convening a task force to discuss reopening in Natick. There are a lot of considerations and we have to do things consistent across our community. Dr. Nolin gave an update to the personnel status.

- Hiring freeze until we determine financial status of the town/state, etc.
- Job postings are only for retirements, resignations, non-renewals
- No new positions at this time
- Looking at models for repurposing staff to address district needs and respect difficult financial projections

Dr. Nolin shared some core values and the process for financial decision-making during this pandemic emergency:

- Provide and progress with essential and emergency services to keep residents safe, healthy, and supported.
- Maintain and progress 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 discussed many students and staff suffering with deaths from the virus. Our counseling staff is in full throttle making sure that we check in and address social/emotional needs. Dr. Nolin discussed Covid SEL check ins and continuing Hey NHS, WMS, KMS How Are You? Next week, we will plan to begin reaching out to the parents of the approximately 70 9th grade students we were unable to screen to give them the opportunity to have their teen screened, and then we will follow up a week later (via email) with anyone who has not responded. Reminder: Hey NHS (WMS/KMS) is a Mental Health Screening tool

done by phone interview for all 7th and 9th graders. Mr. Luff discussed all the check ins that counselors are doing with all students. They are trying to reach each student. Dr. Nolin is trying to get student and staff belongings back from schools. They are putting in protocols together for this to happen.

Report on Remote Learning

Dr. Nolin gave a backdrop of Natick Public Schools Pedagogy.

Brick and Mortar Learning –

Group and Conferencing Dependent/Moved away from wholly lecture style teaching:

- Blended Learning
- Personalized Learning

Remote Learning –

- Synchronous Learning
- Asynchronous Learning
- Small Group/Office Hour Learning

At the start of remote learning teachers had to experiment to create personalized teaching and systems and experiences will be stronger and more consistent as we move forward. Blended Learning requires teachers to front load asynchronous content which may be readings, video lessons (recorded by teacher or curated by teacher). Synchronous content may then address front-loaded material, but students have to have digested that content, done the pre-work and, be engaged in the class (participating). Due to virtual environment (unlike brick and mortar) we cannot keep the student for follow up (stay after school, see me in small group, etc.) if they are not participating adequately. Currently we can, in some instances, not see the kids! They are “on” but not engaged. Office hour/small group days offer time to follow up, engage, tutor, intervene. Independent work is also assigned to practice, apply, integrate what has been presented in small group and large group. Feedback is given on progress or on engagement. The social nature of school, allows kids to push each other, have conversations, and teacher rides herd on groups (and this cannot be replicated currently). Dr. Nolin reviewed student feedback from focus groups:

- Less stressed out with the every other day format
- Need every other day format to allow all students access to laptops and wifi in homes
- Can manage my independent work time on the second day
- Learn more with less time due to reduced schedule
- Confused about enrichment vs. necessary
- Office hours idea is creepy, better in groups
- Understand the value of collaborative and group projects for learning, feel lonely without small student group discussions
- Feel students can handle more independent work, but class time is already different and not needed
- Fatigue and resignation are setting in, attendance 95% currently.
- People keep video off to do work, therefore no homework to do after.

Dr. Nolin shared the AP, College Board and NHS Schedule. AP and college board run prep classes every day from 12:30pm – 3:00pm. This affects: 60% of NHS seniors, 40% of NHS juniors 25% of NHS 10th graders, and 20 9th graders. AP tests begin next week and run for the next two weeks in the same time block. We will seat students for 1,000 AP tests.

Dr. Nolin invited and asked teachers from the elementary, middle and high school to share their experiences and professional educator recommendations. The guest teachers that spoke were Ms. Mattison, Ms. Neugarten and Ms. Waldron from Wilson Middle School, Ms. Sockalosky from Kennedy Middle School, Mr. Wood from Johnson Elementary and Mr. Russo and Ms. Gunduz from Natick High School. They all discussed what their typical day and experiences have been. Dr. Nolin reviewed the Thought Exchange results sent to families and staff. She felt we had great participation. Dr. Nolin took the themes that appeared in the surveys and there are some items to clear up. Those are as follows:

- Enrichment assignments now being used for different aims in phase 3 do count
- Ipass assignments recorded as enrichment are part of the credit/no credit scenario--they should be done
- If teacher assigns enrichment, kids should do it--this is how we differentiate and deepen learning according to individual student needs
- Long-term projects that were assigned in phase 2 do count, even if they started in enrichment phase. Teachers have done creative work to integrate standards and teach old and new material. It counts.

Dr. Nolin discussed some long-term projects that teachers created for students. These all count and were not optional. Dr. Nolin thanked parents for sharing with her. Dr. Nolin shared the common results from staff, students 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 workdays (3 hours 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 gave other updates:

- Student “videos on” in order to promote engagement in classes and promote connections. If issues with this are major, teachers will work out a plan with those individual students.
- Junior guidance seminars for college application/future planning
- Virtual IEPS
- Senior traditions, prom replacement ideas
- Graduation planning
- Student safety and welfare checks
- Community Read and Theme Days
- Virtual extra curriculars will be starting this week

Dr. Nolin made it very clear that there are only so many small groups that can be held. On average, middle and high school teachers have an average of 120 students. However, school is every day. We are trying to straddle a lot of competing demands. There is a consistent schedule that we are creating. Mr. Downing explained the schedule and why it runs the way it does. He also talked about the fact that we have had to rewrite the curriculum for online learning. No one has ever been trained for this moment. Over the course of 5 weeks we have created an entirely new learning world. It takes time to build stability and strength. Now knowing that we have closure for the rest of the school year, we can hone in to deliver our best to our students. Mr. Downing shared the curriculum transition plan that we have in its draft form. Dr. Nolin deeply appreciated the feedback from everyone. Dr. Nolin revealed opening up emails for 5th – 6th graders. This will allow them easier access. Dr. Nolin confirmed executing the same model of personalized learning for virtual school, the same way as it was for a brick and mortar school. There are suggestions that other districts are doing more or longer school days. Dr. Nolin said we are constantly being compared to other districts. All the Superintendents review and plan together. We are all doing the same amount of time, they are just labeled differently. We are all trying to hit the same target that has been put out by the Commissioner of Education. There is a range of activities and Dr. Nolin cautions people that this is not an apples to apples scenario. We want to do exactly what is best and most aggressive for students to master the most amount of standards. We need to be realistic about what we can achieve in this model. Chair McDonough is very proud of the model we have created and that has led the way for other districts to emulate.

Update on KMS Building Project

Dr. Nolin reiterated that Brown and Kennedy's campuses are closed , even to foot traffic because we are accelerating the construction schedule as if it were summer.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of School Committee Minutes of March 30, 2020
2. Report on Warrants Signed

Mr. Brand moved approval of the consent agenda. Dr. Fuxman 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, 10:31pm, 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

Ms. Collins – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Mr. Brand - Yes

Chair McDonough – Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of the six 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](#)