

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
August 19, 2021*

The School Committee held a virtual meeting on Thursday, August 19, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.. Chair McDonough called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:38 p.m.. All members stated that they were participating remotely.

Members Present: Julie McDonough, Donna McKenzie, Hayley Sonneborn,
Henry Haugland, Cathi Collins, Catherine Brunell, Shai Fuxman

Others Present: Dr. Anna Nolin Superintendent

Public Speak

Chair McDonough stated that no public speak comments were received by the Chair.

Continued Discussion of School Committee Operations and Norms

The committee reviewed the School Committee norms document. While some members wanted to extend the discussion to include a larger discussion about the meeting structure, the group decided to focus on reviewing the norms specifically and then hold a larger discussion about meeting structure in September. The committee agreed to update the title in the document to reflect the committee purview. The committee discussed the need to ask questions the questions necessary to make decisions for the district. While some questions are interesting or good to know, the committee wants to focus on the questions necessary to feel comfortable taking a position or vote.

The committee agreed to update the strategic plan paragraph to better reflect the current state of the district. The paragraph includes mention of both the strategic plan and the shorter-term yearly objectives. It also includes mention that the district and the committee should agree upon the plan. Committee members wanted to make it clear that no strategy of the committee as a whole should be decided by a subset of the committee. The committee added a paragraph to clarify that items on the agenda should communicate what action the committee should take and how it is relevant to the purview of the committee. If agenda items clearly relate to committee purview, they action the committee should take will also be clear and meetings will be more efficient.

It was agreed to add that agenda items requested by committee members will be shared at public meetings. This allows the entire committee to know which agenda items have been requested and when they will be scheduled on the agenda. Requests for agenda items can be shared in the open meeting or via email. The committee reaffirmed that all sub committees, liaisons, and smaller groups should share back information gleaned in other settings. This is important so that all committee members have the same information. Every effort should be made to regularly share information so that committee members are up to date.

The committee had a long discussion about the timing of the release of meeting materials. One member suggested that meeting materials should be released a week in advance. Other members felt that the current timeline of the Friday before the meeting was sufficient. While an earlier release would allow more time for committee review and more time for administration to make adjustments, it would also leave more time for information to change. In the end, the committee and administration agreed that every effort would be

made to release information on the Thursday before the Monday meeting. But, that Friday would also be possible. The members had some discussion about how information goes through the chair to the superintendent. While questions regarding meeting materials are sent directly to the superintendent with a copy to the chair, all other questions currently go through the chair. Some members felt this limited access to the superintendent while others felt it helped to streamline the process and ensure that the superintendent's time was well-managed. The committee ultimately agreed to keep the process the same but to be cognizant that all members should have a relationship with the superintendent and the chair should not serve as a roadblock to other members. All members agreed that the superintendent should not be responding to the same question from 7 different members and therefore, the current system worked well.

The committee ended the discussion due to the late hour and agreed to review the remainder of the norms in the September retreat.

At approximately 10:16 p.m., Ms. Collins motioned to adjourn. Dr. Fuxman seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Ms. McKenzie – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn - Yes

Ms. Collins – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Mr. Fuxman - Yes

Chair McDonough - Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of those present, 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie McDonough

Chair – Natick School Committee