

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
December 15, 2021*

The School Committee held a meeting on Wednesday, December 15, 2021 at 6:30pm in the School Committee Room and via Virtual Meeting. Chair McDonough called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:36pm. One member, Ms. Collins stated she was participating remotely.

Members Present: Catherine Brunell, Henry Haugland, Julie McDonough, Cathi Collins

Members Missing: Hayley Sonneborn, Dr. Donna McKenzie arrived at 6:45pm during executive session, Dr. Shai Fuxman arrived at 6:40pm during Executive Session,

Others Present:	Dr. Anna Nolin	Superintendent (attended remotely from her office)
	Mr. Tim Luff	Assistant Superintendent
	Rose McDermott	Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary
	Susan Balboni	Interim Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation
	Suzanne Kenny	Director of Human Resources
	Jefferson Wood	Teacher Representative – Participated Remotely

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

1. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations or to conduct collective bargaining sessions with Cafeteria Employees - Local #1116, Administrative Assistants Union, EAN Unit A, EAN Unit B, Unit S and Title 1

Mr. Haugland seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote. All in favor of entering into

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Ms. Collins – Yes

Ms. Brunell - Yes

Chair McDonough – Yes

It was unanimously approved by a vote of the four members present 4-0-0. Chair McDonough stated that the School Committee would be returning to the general session at approximately 7:00pm. The School Committee proceeded to the Training Room to conduct this session.

At approximately 7:04pm, The School Committee returned to open session.

Announcements

Ms. Brunell thanked the PTO's for getting information out to parents regarding the Morse Library survey for their strategic plan.

Public Speak

Chair McDonough did not receive any requests via email or in person.

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of School Committee Retreat Minutes of October 19, 2021 and November 9, 2021, School Committee Minutes of October 27, 2021 and November 1, 2021

2. Approval of New Nurse Hires
3. Approval of Nurse Pandemic Compensation

Ms. Brunell motioned to approve the consent agenda. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Ms. Collins – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Chair McDonough - Yes

It was approved by a vote of 6-0-0.

Prepay Savings and ESSER Funded Staffing Update for COVID Recovery

Dr. Nolin provided the fourth update she has provided since the school year began. She provided a staffing document for Covid recovery, and it details what's been hired and not hired at this time. We have been unable to fulfil all the hiring that we intended to do, like many other industries. Dr. Nolin also provided a memo with all the changes. She will continue to update the document with any new hires or changes.

Discussion: Indigenous Peoples Day

Chair McDonough spoke about the school calendar and that we have both Indigenous Peoples Day and Columbus day. She discussed the fact that there have been some other cities that have removed Columbus Day and changed it to Indigenous Peoples Day. We have not had a discussion in this town about making the change. We would need to write a letter to the Selectboard to make this request. There are other departments, including the library that have done this already. A couple of the Members feel strongly about changing the name. Dr. Nolin stated that in speaking with Mr. Errickson, Town Administrator, informed Dr. Nolin that the Selectboard has declined anything right now. However, they are keeping an eye on the state because there are two bills before for the Government to change it statewide. Chair McDonough believes we should send a letter to the Selectboard from the School Committee, and everyone concurred.

Review Draft of Proposed 2022-2023 School Calendar

The School Committee reviewed the calendar. Ms. McDermott reviewed the proposed calendar that is approximately identical to the school year prior to the pandemic. Dr. Nolin reminded the Committee that depending upon the snow days/pandemic issue closures, we may need to extend the school year. However, the calendar has flexibility at the end of the school year to do so.

Human Resource Update (Memorial Principal Search, Other Searches/Hires)

Suzanne Kenny, Director of Human Resources provided an update. As of last week, we have processed 184 new staffers since the start of summer. She had provided a memo prior to the meeting with the list positions hired and . Looking at all the changes as an opportunity. Looking at our practices with fresh eyes. Human Resources and the Business Office have been having regularly scheduled meetings. We are building a collaborative effort in the business office. Dr. Nolin gave a formal congratulations to Dr. Gray and Ms. Kenny. We have made an inroad in some of the longstanding projects we have wanted to work on with the Town. Dr. Nolin thanked the collaboration from the Town. The town team has been rocked as well with hiring. Dr. Nolin also congratulated Ms. Sue Balboni, whom she appointed as of this evening to become the Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation beginning on July 1, 2022. She has been the interim since July of 2020. Ms. Kenny gave a highlight of some of the big projects her department is working on. Ms. Kenny completed her update by providing a detailed description of the process in place to hire a new Principal for Memorial School.

Overview of Budget Process and Timeline

Dr. Gray gave a general overview and a presentation of where we are as we prepare our FY23 budget. He reminded everyone of the role of the School Committee. He went on to review the zero-based budgeting process that is used. Dr. Gray discussed the challenges for the FY23 budget. He went on to review the budget timeline and scheduled meetings. Dr. Gray rounded out his presentation with what a typical NPS budget review process looks like.

Update on Johnson Phasing Plan

Ms. Brunell recused herself from the discussion. Dr. Nolin informed the Committee about a website that has been created and the link is on the front page of our website. She had put together a memo prior to the meeting for the community's consumption which included the plan. She and Ms. McDermott have had meetings with 24 families in the last two weeks to help our incoming kindergarten, current kindergarten and first grade students. We are working with families to address any need that they have. They are able to decide when they would like to transition. Except for the incoming kindergarten students. Those students will attend the school that they have been redistributed to. Dr. Nolin doesn't believe a redistricting plan is necessary at this point. This is a redistributing of students. Dr. Nolin will be hosting forums for families so they can make decisions and understand what Johnson will look like next year. Dr. Nolin thanked some Johnson parents for their assistance in preparing our plan. Dr. Nolin reviewed all of the ways to support families and students to make their transition smoother.

Enrollment Update

Dr. Nolin provided an update. Six new students have been enrolled since last month. These changes are typical in keeping with enrollment fluctuations throughout the year.

Teacher Concerns

Mr. Jefferson Wood, Teacher Representative thanked his colleagues from around the district who had sent over some delicacies for the Johnson staff. He addressed the School Committee and feels that they made a mistake by voting to close Johnson. He believes the consequences are immediate and painful to the Johnson community. He believes the rosy picture being painted about the interviews with families is charming but it's not the reality he is hearing. The Johnson teachers are at the absolute mercy of circumstance and whim of the administration. He stated that this administration and this School Committee has lost trust and faith in the process of closing Johnson. He questioned when decisions were made. Were they made prior to any forums? What was the purpose of the forums? Was it to solicit feedback despite the fact it made no change or was it a public relations stunt? There is trust and faith that needs to be rebuilt by this Committee. Mr. Wood demanded that the School Committee engage more directly in the schools that are their responsibility to oversee.

School Committee Member Concerns

Dr. Fuxman raised a concern about things he has heard about his participation and other colleagues in this process. Dr. Fuxman can appreciate how difficult this has been for Johnson families and educators. Dr. Fuxman has great respect and admiration for Mr. Wood. However, this evening, Mr. Wood's comments were not appreciated. Comments questioning how we made decisions. Dr. Fuxman discussed when and why he made his decision to close Johnson. Dr. Fuxman listened, studied, examined, analyzed, thought/reflected and reached out to multiple families from all of Natick's school communities. He revealed that he made his decision the weekend prior to the vote. Dr. Fuxman doesn't think it's fair to put out false assumptions about how the School Committee members made these decisions. To questions the School Committee's integrity was unacceptable.

Dr. McKenzie found the continued questioning of the integrity of our Superintendent, disheartening. She doesn't rubber stamp everything Dr. Nolin says. But she does not question her honesty and transparency. Dr. McKenzie will not tolerate that anymore.

Mr. Haugland resents deeply the accusations against the integrity of this Committee and Superintendent by Mr. Wood. Mr. Wood is supposed to be the leader of our teacher's union that's responsible for all of our kids. Mr. Haugland is comfortable with the decision the School Committee made which was for the benefit of all students of Natick. It was the right decision, and he resents having his integrity being questioned.

Ms. Brunell discussed spending time reflecting back on memories and experience of joining this Committee. She continues to be concerned that this Committee uses practices that many other community Committees don't use, and we don't use practices that many of them use. She sees a difference and is asking that in the new year that a consultant be brought in to sure up what the definition is of the School Committee's role. She believes this will serve our Committee and students. Her most rewarding work she has done on this Committee is working on the Policy Subcommittee which has allowed them to utilize tools to create the working sessions that are needed to do the deep work.

Dr. McKenzie reminded the community about a Policy Subcommittee meeting occurring tomorrow.

At approximately 9:23pm, Ms. Collins moved to adjourn. Mr. Haugland seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote:

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Ms. Collins – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Chair McDonough - Yes

It was approved by a vote of 6-0-0.

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

School Committee Retreat Minutes of October 19, 2021 and November 9, 2021, School Committee Minutes of October 27, 2021 and November 1, 2021

Prepay Savings and ESSER Funded Staffing Memo

Draft of Proposed 2022-2023 School Calendar

Human Resource Memo

Presentation of the Overview of Budget Process and Timeline

Memo on Johnson Phasing Plan

Enrollment Report