

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING RETREAT MINUTES
January 9, 2023*

The School Committee held a retreat on Monday, January 9, 2023, at 6:30pm in the School Committee room, third floor, Town Hall. Chair Collins called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:35pm.

Members Present: Dr. Donna McKenzie, Catherine Brunell, Chair Collins, Elise Gorseth, Dr. Shai Fuxman

Members Missing: Hayley Sonneborn (arrived at 6:50PM), Julie McDonough (participated remotely)

Others Present:	Dr. Anna Nolin	Superintendent
	Mr. Tim Luff	Assistant Superintendent
	Dr. Peter Gray	Assistant Superintendent
	Ms. Sue Balboni	Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation
	Ms. Erin Miller	Director of Student Services
	Rasheedah Clayton	METCO Director
	Ms. Rose McDermott	Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary
	Dr. Arthur Fergusson	Director of Social Emotional Learning and Equity

Public Speak

Chair Collins asked if there was anyone present who wanted to participate in public speak. There was no one in person.

Open Meeting Law and Minutes Training

Mr. Tim Luff, Deputy Superintendent, gave a presentation and training. If you are new to the School Committee, you must review open meeting complaints for the last 5 years. Open meeting law defines deliberation as “an oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction”. He reviewed what is a “public record”. He reviewed the Open Meeting Law and deliberation. He reviewed the laws surrounding meetings with other committees. He reviewed social media communications. Yes, you can post on social media--even on topics within your jurisdiction. Just direct it to the public and do not respond to fellow member comments. Natick Public Schools has a requirement to retain electronic communication that is considered a public record, in order to comply with the Public Records Law. He reminded the School Committee to follow the “Staff and Elected Officials/Committee Appointments Responsible Use Policy”. This includes School Committee communications made or received as a member of the Committee. It would also include any text messages sent or received on personal phones. Mr. Luff completed the training and informed the Committee that really any document or communication that you make or receive in public service, is a Public Record under the Law.

METCO Expansion Discussion

Ms. Rasheedah Clayton, METCO Director for Natick Public Schools and Dr. Arthur Fergusson attended in order to speak to the School Committee regarding the program. They would like to expand the METCO program and have students begin their education in Natick when they are younger. Dr. Nolin reviewed the METCO program from its inception. We began this program in Natick in 1968. She discussed other towns that have many, many more staff to manage the same number of students. Ms. Clayton informed the

Committee that we have been doing the same model since 1968. Ms. Clayton had received many questions prior to the meeting. She stated that this conversation makes her feel badly. This is to make the METCO program forward. We are not doing right by students by starting them in middle school or high school. At the age they attend Natick, they have been educated by another district for 8 years. We aren't giving them a Natick Education. While she appreciates the questions, let's consider what's right for these students. She gave feedback about the family/friends program. Dr. Fergusson asked why didn't this program work? Because students are too old when they arrive. It's more challenging. He believes we need a little more effort in this. There's an end of year cookout in Franklin Park for all the families. We have a back-to-school meeting in the fall, and a mid-year meeting that School Committee members may attend. There are many opportunities to continue the relationship and meet these families and connect with them. Families now get to choose within three districts. Ms. Clayton requires parents to engage in parent groups. We have many alumni that come back and work for us and/or offer internships in their professional practice to our students. Dr. Fergusson stated that we are looking to diversify our student population. Authentic relationships are organically begun when students are younger. It's difficult to do when you're in middle school. This will also give them an equal playing field. Funding the program would be removing a guidance position from the grant. Because we absorb salary, benefits, operational costs and transportation. The only cost Ms. Clayton could foresee would be transportation depending upon the number of students. We gave up an additional \$500,000 in funding from METCO by not expanding the program. If we don't have sufficient funding, we can lobby at the State House. We also receive funding on their per pupil and additional choice money of \$5000 per student.

At approximately 7:45, Ms. McDonough left the meeting.

Ms. Clayton confirmed that we would always be mindful of class sizes and open seats. We just need to be able to say Natick is now in for the entire program. Our program would never affect class size. Dr. Fuxman believes the benefits might be lost by not expanding the program and additionally we have the opportunity to create diverse classes in a public-school setting. All students will learn or understand different experiences other than the town they live in. What it brings back is amazing. Alumni wouldn't even consider come back to be involved if they didn't feel so strongly about the education they received. This brings a global citizen mindset. Ms. Gorseth shared a piece of information - in Concord, they have METCO family members on the School Committee. She feels strongly that we should have an appointed METCO parent to the School Committee just like the teacher and student representatives we have. We also must have a connection between the METCO parents and the Town of Natick as a whole. Concord also has a support group to build connections with those families.

At approximately, 7:55pm, Dr. Fuxman moved to adjourn. Dr. McKenzie seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 6-0-0.

Anna Nolin
Superintendent
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Attest: _____

Rose McDermott
Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary

Documents Provided in Novus Agenda and materials used at this meeting: