

Natick Public Schools  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
**January 23, 2023**

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday, January 23, 2023, at 6:00pm via a virtual meeting. Chair Collins called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:07pm. Members stated they were participating remotely.

Members Present: Cathi Collins, Dr. Shai Fuxman, Hayley Sonneborn, Dr. Donna McKenzie, Elise Gorseth (arrived at 6:09pm), Julie McDonough (arrived at 6:19pm), Catherine Brunell (arrived during executive session)

Others Present:	Dr. Anna Nolin	Superintendent
	Mr. Tim Luff	Deputy Superintendent
	Ms. Rose McDermott	Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary
	Ms. Sue Balboni	Director of Teaching, Learning & Innovation
	Ms. Beth Altchek	Teacher Representative

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

1. To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto;
2. To conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; (Superintendent)

Dr. McKenzie seconded. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

It was approved unanimously by those present 5-0-0.

Chair Collins stated that they would return to open session at approximately 6:45pm.

The School Committee returned to open session at approximately 7:25pm.

### **Announcements**

Dr. Nolin reminded the community that this is digital learning month. Public can see workshops that we are having for staff to get relicensed and staying fresh with their digital tools. Dr. Nolin introduced her intern, Hallie McEnaney. She will be joining us in many of our meetings. Dr. Fuxman announced that on Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, there will be a SPARK event – Differently Wired. There will be a great speaker. This event is being co-partnered with SEPAC.

### **Action Items**

1. Acceptance of Dictionaries from Natick Rotary: Dr. Fuxman moved to accept the Rotary's donation. Chair Collins seconded. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. McDonough – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

2. METCO Expansion Discussion and Vote: Ms. McDonough motioned to expand enrollment in the METCO program to Natick elementary schools in the 2025-2026 school year. Dr. Fuxman seconded the motion. The members debated regarding the need. A member felt the enrollment in the schools is known enough to expand it next year. She would be uncomfortable expanding since we didn't open School Choice due to enrollment. In the 25-26 school year, Johnson School will be closed at that time, and we will know what all of the transitions are. In the spring of 2025, we would have applied possibly for the 4<sup>th</sup> time to the MSBA. This would allow us to plan for an expanded building, should we need it. Chair Collins put a competing motion on the table to expand METCO to add 3rd grade in FY24 as proposed. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Chair Collins stated we were one of the first to join METCO in 1968 and we are only one of two districts that don't have elementary school. We have space at Ben Hem to do this. She can't support waiting. It's just wrong. She asked for support for at least grade three to start next year. Dr. Fuxman is going to support the motion Chair Collins put forward. The expansion isn't only going to benefit the students being enrolled but all the students in Natick. The second goal in our strategic plan is to break down barriers. Dr. McKenzie is supporting to start next year. Ms. Gorseth will support the 25-26 motion by Ms. McDonough. Several METCO alumni attended the meeting, explaining their positive experiences. Ms. Rasheedah Clayton explained while she understood the motion for the 25-26 school year, we may not have the funding at that time to wait that long. We have been receiving excessive funding to increase our program for several years. However, with the change of the new administration at the state house, we don't know what that funding moving forward will be. We would be able to petition DESE for the funding right now. We don't know if that will be available in the 25-26 school year. Chair Collins asked for a roll call vote on Ms. McDonough's motion:

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – No

Ms. McDonough – Yes

Dr. McKenzie – No

Ms. Sonneborn – No

Chair Collins – No

The motion failed by a vote of 3-4-0.

Chair Collins asked for a roll call vote on the second motion to expand METCO:

Ms. Gorseth – No

Ms. Brunell – No

Ms. McDonough – No

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

The motion passed by a vote of 4-3-0.

### **Public Speak**

Chair Collins had received a request. Ms. Colleen McCarthy spoke about her daughter's acceptance of a mentor position in the ASAP program and two hours before she was to begin, she was informed that she couldn't start because she had not been vaccinated for COVID. Ms. McCarthy believes she was discriminated against.

### **Representative Updates/Concerns**

Teacher Representative, Ms. Altchek stated that the most excitement was the snow hitting the ground. Everyone is working hard, staying healthy!

### **Subcommittee/Liaison Update**

Mr. Brunell gave an update on the Parent Coordinating Council – not much has changed except for addressing the five topics that they are working on this year. They would like to bring Policy KF back to change the facilities rental policy.

### **Consent Agenda**

1. Donations
2. Approval of School Committee Minutes and Executive Session minutes of December 5, 2022. Dr. Fuxman moved to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Gorseth seconded. Ms. Brunell asked for the Executive Session Minutes to be pulled out of the consent agenda. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:  
Dr. McKenzie – Yes  
Dr. Fuxman – Yes  
Ms. Gorseth – Yes  
Ms. McDonough – Yes  
Ms. Sonneborn – Yes  
Ms. Brunell – Yes  
Chair Collins – Yes  
It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Executive Session minutes were discussed. Ms. Brunell stated there were two people taking minutes that evening and wanted to know why only half of the minutes were presented. Ms. McDermott stated that she put forward the minutes that she was responsible for. Dr. McKenzie motioned to wait to approve the minutes until the second half is there. Chair Collins seconded. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:

- Dr. McKenzie – Yes  
Dr. Fuxman – Yes  
Ms. Gorseth – Yes  
Ms. McDonough – Yes  
Ms. Sonneborn – Yes  
Ms. Brunell – Yes  
Chair Collins – Yes  
It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Minutes will be brought forward again once Dr. McKenzie submits her half.

### **LGBTQ+ Resolution**

Dr. McKenzie and Dr. Fuxman worked together to create this resolution and expanded it with the ongoing situations we have. Ms. Gorseth moved that we amend the resolution to remove the word tolerate. Seconded by Dr. Fuxman. She feels that word doesn't align with full support of everyone in our community. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote on the motion to amend:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. McDonough – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Dr. McKenzie read the Resolution as amended.

### **SCHOOL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON INCLUSION AND BELONGING IN NATICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The Natick School Committee re-affirms its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our schools and in our community. As part of this commitment, we strive to foster a sense of belonging among all of the students and adults who are part of the Natick Public Schools community. Belonging provides individuals with the sense of safety, social and emotional wellbeing, and support required for academic, professional, and life-long success. This commitment includes supporting policies and practices that promote a sense of belonging for students of all racial groups, religious and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities and expressions. Every individual in our community deserves to feel safe and supported, free of discrimination and harassment. We pledge to do our part, through the roles and responsibilities in our purview, to ensure this is the case for all members of our school community. Likewise, we affirm our trust and confidence in our superintendent, our administrators, and our teachers in their efforts to create safe and supportive environments where learning can take place. And furthermore, we applaud and will continue to encourage their efforts to teach our students the critical values of inclusion, and acceptance. Ms. Sonneborn moved approval of the statement. Chair Collins seconded the motion. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. McDonough – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

### **Warrant Review**

Chair Collins signed three accounts payable warrants and one payroll warrant for the January 24<sup>th</sup> payroll tomorrow.

### **FY24 Technology Budget**

Dr. Nolin introduced Dennis Roche, Director of Technology and Herbert Williams, Assistant Director of Technology. They presented their proposed budget. They began with an Inventory summary and

reconciliation of the 2021-2022 school year. He reviewed the department's goals. Mr. Roche also reviewed his requested budget for supplies, new equipment and equipment replacement, audio visual equipment, purchase of services, software, LAN/WAN management and system wide copier equipment.

#### **FY24 Transportation Budget**

Dr. Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent for Finance gave a presentation. Transportation includes both regular education busing and in-district special education busing. We have contracts with Connolly Bus and with JFK Transportation. We also provide out of district transportation with several other providers. Both of our in-district contracts were renewed for three years beginning on July 1, 2021. Dr. Nolin informed everyone that she and Jillian Wilson Martin are working on helping bus companies obtain grants or incentives for them to pursue. It is not common for a full fleet of buses. We are working as a region to push that in the market. Dr. Gray reviewed the budget request of \$3,280,817.00. We are purchasing new software that will give parents real time notifications as to where the bus is on their route. That cost is \$8,000.00.

#### **FY24 NPS Budget**

Dr. Nolin and Dr. Gray presented their budget request. They will be making this presentation to the Finance Committee. They gave some framing points. They are trying to assess where we are going with the grant positions that we have put in place. They are having conversations with all the principals, looking at student data, and how they are progressing. We are in a regular cycle of curriculum audits. This is the slated spot to review the math curriculum. It's a six-year cycle for audits. We are also looking at trends in all the other places. We are looking at a transfer of positions from Johnson to other schools. There is funding for social emotion learning across the board to all the schools. We still don't know what our Title I funding is going to be or what healthcare is going to cost. There is still \$1,000,000.00 in ARPA funding left. Dr. Gray reviewed the meritorious budget award and pathway to the MSBA. We are closer than ever to being able use Munis to its potential. Dr. Nolin reviewed how the budget was developed. She reviewed the primary budget and program drivers. 90% of our budget is fixed, legally mandated, or fixed on a contract. Dr. Gray reviewed the FY24 budget assumptions. He reviewed the cost of inflation that has affected the district. Out of district tuitions, utilities, fuel escalation for buses etc. Dr. Nolin reviewed proposed new staff additions. She also reviewed the positions she believes will transfer within the district. Dr. Nolin reviewed significant new updates to the FY24 budget. Dr. Gray gave a final summary which ended with the proposed budget of \$84,496,436.00. The Town has proposed \$83,096,768.00. The variance is (\$1,399,668.00). This variance may be addressed by utilizing additional circuit breaker offsets, potential increase in state funding or use of some revolving account funds. Chair Collins reminded everyone that the public budget hearing is on March 6, 2023.

#### **Update on the MSBA Statement of Interest**

Dr. Nolin informed the Committee that we will need to submit again. There've been a lot of changes with MSBA due to inflation costs, lack of supplies, etc. Dr. Nolin will come back to the School Committee and then the Select Board will have to vote again in order for us to submit again. We are very fortunate to have Brian Lynch, our Assist Director of Finance who worked for the MSBA and has great insight. Dr. Gray stated they only accepted 10 buildings this year.

### **Student Services Staffing Update**

Dr. Nolin discussed a memo Ms. Erin Miller, Director of Student Services had provided but was unable to attend this evening's meeting. Her memo details that she has been unable to hire in three position areas. She is now seeking to hire a special education testing position for the elementary level to address the backlog of assessments being done. This will also allow our learning center teachers to be in the classrooms with their students vs. doing more testing.

### **Update on Holiday and Homework Calendar**

Dr. McKenzie gave an update. The Policy Subcommittee had come up with a proposal of adding two holidays (Diwali and Eid al-Fitr) and providing accommodations for other holidays as deemed necessary by parents. Another option is to not recognize any holiday. Some towns are doing that. It doesn't put one religion over another, but the decision is put on families. We don't believe Natick is ready or wants this choice. We currently have two Jewish holidays and one Christian holiday. This decision was made from an equity framework. There has been discussion about a community survey. However, that may put one religion up against another. Our recommendation includes reexamining this in five years and having a survey to see how this is working. We do expect this to be vetted fully by this Committee. Dr. McKenzie asked the Committee what they needed in order to make a decision on February 6th? The debate ensued. Dr. Fuxman motioned to adjourn. There was no second. The debate continued. Dr. McKenzie appreciates and encourages everyone to share their opinions with Dr. Nolin.

At approximately, 10:35pm, Dr. Fuxman motioned to adjourn. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Chair Collins called for a roll call vote:

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Ms. Gorseth – Yes

Ms. McDonough – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Chair Collins – Yes

It was approved unanimously 7-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

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, LGBTQ+ Resolution, Donation Report

School Committee Minutes and Executive Session minutes of December 5, 2022

Memo from Ms. Miller – Student Services Staffing Update

Proposed FY24 Technology Budget, Proposed FY24 Transportation Budget, Proposed FY24 NPS Budget

Holiday Calendar and Homework Policy Documentation