

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE RETREAT MEETING MINUTES
August 25, 2022*

The School Committee held a meeting on Wednesday, August 25, 2022, at 6:30pm in the Conference Room, Room 201, at the Natick Community – Senior Center. Chair Collins called the meeting to order and took roll call at approximately 6:38pm.

Members Present: Cathi Collins, Dr. Donna McKenzie, Dr. Shai Fuxman, Catherine Brunell, Hayley Sonneborn

Members Missing: Elise Gorseth, Julie McDonough

Others Present: Mr. Tony Bent Consultant

Public Speak

There was no one in person requesting to speak.

**Discussion of School Committee Goals, Review and Approval of School Committee Norms
and Intra-Board Relationship Building**

The retreat began with an introduction to Mr. Bent by Ms. Collins. Ms. Collins said the goal was to work on norms and then goals for the School Committee. Mr. Bent used Stephen Covey's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* as a resource saying that it was the book that most influenced him. His advice is to be proactive and begin with the end in mind, put first things first, thinking win-win. He stressed our local environment is polluted by our National one. Think first to understand and then understand. Synergy. Sharpen input. We are all fallen meaning we must apologize and forgive "If I were Anna Nolin I would have my applications out". But it does not have to be this way.

We need a conversation to get in the same boat. This will take a while to fix.

Mr. Bent said this is about as bad as he has ever seen a School Committee and that he has talked to Dr. Anna Nolin and Dorothy Presser from MASC.

One shot deals will not fix this situation. You need someone to stay with you, watch a meeting etc.

Mr. Bent does not feel like the School Committee is a team and says we need adults in the room at all times. He said there is a path, and it will be uncomfortable at times. Two small group discussions ensued, and time was spent discussing them. Talked about section 4 of the agenda on the roles and responsibilities of the School Committee saying that the Superintendent's role does not need a lot of management. Dr. Nolin has about 65 hours' worth of work each week before even interacting with the School Committee. Superintendents are driven away by the unfairness of the School Committee. The School Committee Section of Agenda – School Committee goals are already established by the strategic plan. The goals must be the work of the School Committee only. Every School Committee and town decides how far down they will push the Superintendent. The difference between management and governance is important. There is no such thing as a budget without errors. The best of School Committee goals focuses on the School Committee, maybe

communication with the community. The School Committee has to be together with Dr. Nolin. The leadership hourglass means talking about norms before goals. The best norms are ones you can remember with slogans and acronyms. For example, Legal Seafoods used: "if it isn't fresh, it isn't legal." How does one person forgive and move on. Mr. Bent says each person says two things: this is how I get hurt and this is what I need to become better." The work starts with the heart. No speeches or accusations. Own what will make you a better School Committee member. All members are wounded at different times. What triggers hurt? Public tone of voice/berating tone of voice. Helpful to express appreciation for comments you don't agree with. There is a "decorum of held dignity" John Donohue Bent said: "The angriest speech you give us the one you will regret the most". Again, you need to be the adult in the room and not assume people are in the committee for nefarious reasons. Mr. Bent said, "never invade the soul of another human being." Dr. Fuxman and Ms. Brunell agreed to work on a draft of norms for the September 28th meeting.

At approximately, 9:30pm, Dr. McKenzie motioned to adjourn. Ms. Collins seconded. It was unanimously approved 5-0-0.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Dr. Donna McKenzie
Clerk, Natick School Committee

Documents Provided in Novus Agenda and materials used at this meeting: None