

NATICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

School Committee Meeting

March 4, 2024

6:30 PM

Public Budget Hearing - School Committee Room - 3rd flr, Town Hall

Posted Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 @ 3:30 PM.

Open Meeting 6:30PM. Virtual Meeting Accessed Via: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2038566119?pwd=TmtsdxgXenQ0YXRlN1FicHVpd3hEZZ09> Meeting ID: 203 856 6119 Passcode: 987179 One tap mobile +13126266799,,2038566119# US (Chicago) +16465588656,,2038566119# US (New York) Dial by your location +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) Meeting ID: 203 856 6119 Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/u/keAEm9sL> . If any member of the public, attending the meeting virtually, wishes to take advantage of public speak, they should email the School Committee Chair, Shai Fuxman at (sfuxman@natickps.org), one hour prior to the start of the meeting. Your email should include your name, town and your request to be called upon during the public speak portion of the agenda. The School Committee Chair will then announce your name and you will be unmuted and prompted to turn on your video for your opportunity to share your remarks. Per our public speak policy, each speaker will have up to 3 minutes.

Posted In Accordance with Provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Sections 18-25

OPEN SESSION

- Roll Call
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Moment of Silence
- Announcements

PUBLIC SPEAK

Public Speak is scheduled for a period of fifteen minutes. Each speaker will be permitted a maximum of three minutes during which time they can speak about topics within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the School Committee Chair. Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee.

- Teacher Representative
- Student Representative

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the School Committee Executive Session dated: 11.6, 12.18.23, 1.8, 1.22, 2.5.24
2. Approval of the School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated: 1.8, 1.22, 2.5.24

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. Public Hearing - FY25 Budget
2. FY25 Budget Discussion

3. Natick Adoption of Specialized Code as Specified in the Warrant Article for Spring Town Meeting

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. District Communications - Corrie Kerr-Director of Communications

ACTION ITEMS

1. Approve School Committee FY25 Budget
2. Vote on School Committee Support of Adoption of Specialized Code as Specified in the Warrant Article for Spring Town Meeting

Agenda items will be addressed in an order determined by the chair. Times are approximate.

ITEM TITLE:

Approval of the School Committee Executive Session dated: 11.6,
12.18.23, 1.8, 1.22, 2.5.24

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND

INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ITEM TITLE: Approval of the School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated: 1.8, 1.22, 2.5.24

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY: LINK - 1.8.24 open session minutes
LINK - 1.22.24 open session minutes
LINK - 2.5.24 open session minutes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	File Name	Type
Approval of the School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated 1.8.24	1.8.24_OPEN_SESSION_School_Committee_Meeting_Minutes.pdf	Cover Memo
Approval of the School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated 1.22.24	1.22.24_OPEN_SESSION_School_Committee_Meeting_Minutes_(1).pdf	Cover Memo
Approval of the School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated 2.5.24	2.5.24_OPEN_SESSION_school_committee_meeting_minutes.pdf	Cover Memo

Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING **OPEN SESSION** MINUTES
January 8, 2024

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday January 8, 2024, at 6:03 pm via an in-person and virtual meeting. Chair Fuxman called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:03 pm.

Members Present:

- Chair Shai Fuxman - present
- Elise Gorseth - present
- Julie McDonough – present
- Cathi Collins - *not present*
- Matt Brand – present
- Catherine Brunell - present
- Kate Flathers - present

Others Present:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Dr. Bella Wong | Interim Superintendent |
| Tim Luff | Deputy Superintendent |
| Susan Balboni | Asst. Superintendent for Teaching, Learning & Innovation |
| Matthew Gillis | Asst. Superintendent of Finance |
| Linda McGrath | Recording Secretary |

OPEN SESSION

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence - To honor those who have sacrificed for our country.

Chair Fuxman made a motion to move into Executive Session at 6:04 PM for the following purpose:
To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel (Superintendent)

Mr. Brand second the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

- Chair Shai Fuxman - yes
- Elise Gorseth - yes
- Julie McDonough – yes
- Matt Brand – yes
- Catherine Brunell - yes

Kate Flathers - yes

Motion passed 6-0-0

Chair Fuxman resumed the meeting at 6:35

Announcements

Superintendent Wong thanked the Town of Natick for the wonderful job they did cleaning up after the storm.

Chair Fuxman made an announcement that we are being recorded.

Chair Fuxman made an announcement from Spark Kindness that they are having their annual Martin Luther King Day event at the high school on Monday, January 15 starting at 10:00 am. The event will also be available to watch on Pegasus and you can get more information on the Spark Kindness website.

REPRESENTATIVE UPDATES/CONCERNS

Teacher Representative - Ms. Kristen McEneaney

Ms. McEneaney read a statement from the EAN regarding the MTA statement that was released on December 9, 2023. She stated that they have reached out to the regional board representative with feedback and will follow up with a letter to the MTA board.

Student Representative - Kendall Hacker

Kendall stated that midterms are this week and that this is the first year since COVID that they are back to the regular amount of midterm exams. She also stated that the Student Council will be holding their flower and blood drive.

Ms. McDonough asked what the decision was about going back to the same amount of midterms pre-COVID and why? Superintendent Wong said she would look into it.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated [10/2/23](#), [10/16/23](#) and [10/23/23](#); Executive Session Minutes Dated 10/2/23.
2. [Approval of overnight field trip to UNH for High School Band](#)
3. [Approval of Donation from PaperStore Fundraiser](#)

Mr. Brand motioned to approve the Consent Agenda. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took role call for vote:

Ms. Flathers - yes

Ms. Brunell - yes

Mr. Brand - yes

Ms. McDonough - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 6-0-0

PUBLIC SPEAK

Chair Fuxman reminded everyone that Public Speak is scheduled for a period of fifteen minutes. Each speaker will be permitted a maximum of three minutes during which time they can speak about topics within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the School Committee Chair. Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee.

1. Josh Ostroff (virtual) - Wanted to express his support in regards to the community values in the Superintendent Search. He wants to uphold the principles of kindness, inclusion, diversity, and respect and wants to make sure that the newly elected Superintendent and all staff uphold these values as well to bring out the best in the students and community.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Superintendent Search Update:

1. Announcement of Finalists for Permanent Superintendent - Mr. Brand did a recap regarding the Superintendent Search agenda:
Mr. Brand stated that in the fall, we engaged with NESDEC to help form a series of Focus Groups (around 9) and survey to collect information from the community. This information was used to create the Superintendent profile which was given to the Screening Committee to use as a guide. Mr. Brand said they received 32 applications and from what he was told, the average number of applications is usually around 20/25 which shows how desirable Natick is for employment.

Mr. Brand talked about the Screening Committee and said they met a few times in December and everynight last week to conduct preliminary interviews and deliberations on Friday to result in the 4 finalists. He commended the Screening Committee for all their efforts and dedication to the process and thanked each one by name.

Ms. Brunell wanted to thank the Screening Committee and the candidates as well for submitting their applications. She then shared the four finalists which are as follows:

- a. Melissa Spash, Deputy Superintendent, Lawrence Public Schools
- b. Priya Tahiliani, Superintendent of Schools, Everett Public Schools
- c. David Thomson, Superintendent of Schools, Norwood Public Schools
- d. Sandra Trach, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Wellesley Public Schools

Chair Fuxman thanked Ms. Balboni, Ms. Brunell and Mr. Brand plus the rest of the Screening Committee as well.

2. Announcement of events and timeline for finalists to the district

Chair Fuxman went over the rest of the agenda for the Superintendent search. He said an email went out tonight at 6:00pm to staff regarding the 4 finalists and the public will receive the email at 7:00 pm. In the email there will be a link for each candidate's resume for viewing as well as a plan for the week. Chair Fuxman also said that the email will have a link to the feedback form.

Ms. Balboni stated that every candidate will have an opportunity to visit the high school, a middle school and an elementary school for tomorrow along with School Committee members to meet with staff. In the afternoon, they will join our district leadership and Administrative Counsel for a meet and greet. From there, they will go to the high school for a forum that starts at 5:30 pm in the auditorium at the high school and will be broadcast on Pegasus.

Each candidate will have an opportunity to introduce themselves and provide answers to preset questions that were provided by the community, staff and a student. Chair Fuxman explained how the questions were chosen. He said they took the main topics that were sent by all in the Google form. Chair Fuxman reminded the School Committee members that the forum tomorrow night is not a meeting and therefore can not be deliberated amongst each other.

Chair Fuxman said for Wednesday night, the School Committee will start at 5:00 pm for an open meeting to interview all the candidates. All the candidates will have the same questions that were selected from the School Committee members and from the community.

Chair Fuxman talked about the feedback forum that has three questions about each candidate and it's one form for all 4 candidates. He encourages all to provide feedback but suggested waiting on answering the questions until after watching the interviews. The deadline for submitting feedback is this Thursday at noon and that NESDEC consultants are conducting reference checks this week. Chair Fuxman said this Friday at 6:00 pm, the School Committee will reconvene for an open meeting in the School Committee room to deliberate then vote on the candidate that they will offer the role of Superintendent to. He then went over the agenda for that meeting and how the process will work and stated that there will be public speak but not public comment.

Ms. Gorseth questioned the NESDEC reference checks and would they share the information they receive with the School Committee? Mr. Brand thought they would receive a report.

Ms. Brunell mentioned revisiting the candidate profile (still on the website) that was based on community input when you go to the forum and listen to the interviews.

Public - Dr. Donna McKenzie suggested that we post on social media the letter that is published to the school community to get as many people as possible. She also asked if the community would be able to know what the input was that was submitted by the community? Chair Fuxman stated that the data will be coming in late on Thursday and would be hard to get it out by Friday.

Chair Fuxman wanted to thank the following for their work involved in the Superintendent Search:

The NESDEC representatives - Ms. Sally Diaz and Ms. Judy Paolucci

Mr. Matt Brand
Ms. Brunell
Ms. Balboni
The other 10 members of the Screening Committee
The community
Corrie Kerr - Director of Communications
Linda McGrath - Recording Secretary

3. Discussion of TEC change in capital reserve

Superintendent Wong went over the modification of the TEC Capital Reserve Fund. This was to change the capital reserve fund from \$750,000 to 3.5 million. She thought that overtime they would build up sufficient reserve funds to be able to put a down payment on property instead of leasing. Superintendent Wong said that it does require a vote and that after the 45 days, it will be deemed approved.

Mr. Brand reiterated that we don't need to vote or take any action and that it would default to an approval.

Chair Fuxman asked if anyone would object to it defaulting to an approval or would someone want to make a motion?

Ms. McDonough made a motion to approve the increase on the limited TEC Capital Reserve Fund balance from \$750,000 to 3.5 million. Ms. Gorseth seconded the motion.

Ms. Brunell asked if this was just a policy change and not a budget change? Superintendent Wong said it wasn't but that it allows flexibility to grow beyond the already existing limit to the new limit.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Flathers - yes
Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. McDonough - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 6-0-0

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Wong introduced Mr. Art Fergusson who is the Director of Social-Emotional Learning and Equity for a presentation.

Mr. Fergusson discussed some updates (five outlines) from the past year.

1. Curriculum Instruction - Mr. Fergusson said he met with the subcommittee to discuss Tier 1 SEL Instruction and made a decision to move forward with everyday speech at the elementary level. He said they gathered feedback from Principals, counselors and teachers and from that conversation it became clear that there were limitations that needed to be addressed. The plan was to continue piloting for another year

Approval of Minutes

the everyday speech and explore an alternative curriculum. Mr. Fergusson said they have partnered with Wayfinder which is a curriculum that has built some traction over the past few years. Most of the schools with the exception of 1, are involved in the exploration with 2 classrooms looking at that curriculum and so far the feedback has been positive. Another aspect with exploring Wayfinder is that the high school will be piloting too. At the middle school level, one of items that has been explored is a positivity project that continues to be ongoing.

2. Multi Tier Systems and Universal Screening - Mr. Fergusson said that over the past year, they have introduced Universal Tier 1 Screening across the district using a platform that assesses social, academic, emotional, and behavioral risk indicators at the middle and high school levels. Universal Screening allows us to identify students with vulnerabilities and then allows us to provide opportunities during RTI cycles to support needs from the results of the screenings. Additional screenings opportunities that we have engaged in are in collaboration with Tracy Gladstone from Brown University. A few years back, we have screened for grades 6th, 7th, 9th and 11th but this year based on updated recommendations from the United States Preventive Services Task Force, students should be screened after the age of 12. The screenings are complete and should receive the data around May. Last year's data showed out of the 1400 students that were screened, about 21 students initially reported suicidal ideation for the first time, Latino and Hispanic students were disproportionately represented, students who self identified as not be straight or hetrosexual, appeared to have also been disproportionately represented, and students in middle and high school who identified as non-binary or questioning, have been disproportionately represented. We participated in the Metrowest Adolescent Health Survey which is now complete and are planning on having a debrief meeting on January 18th to go over the data and learn about the outcome of that survey.
3. Culture and Climate - Mr. Fergusson mentioned that across the district, conversations and surveys at the middle and high school level are focused on teacher relationships in connection with students. But assessing how connected and how well students belong, has been an ongoing focus of the district and that continues through our assessment of culture and climate. Some highlights that are bringing some effort and energy around student connectedness and belonging, are the opportunities for leadership and student investment in health relationships where a course is being offered. Mr. Fergusson stated that while at the high school, he noticed how excited the students were about what was being taught and wanted to know if they could have the course extended. He said another experience he had at the high school was the work that was being done by Game Changers who help students to understand and take a leadership role against violence. Mr. Fergusson said some challenging areas were having students feel like they belong and feel safe. He also mentioned the ongoing efforts to respond to hate and bias. We need to continue to learn how to respond in more clear ways.
4. Collaborations - Mr. Fergusson talked about collaborations and the partnership with the METCO 2.0 program. He said that part of the leadership team is involved with focusing work on coaching and hopes to continue to engage in that work and bring it to the broader community in Natick. Mr. Fergusson stated that within Student Services they have taken a closer look at program evaluations and special program training around collaborative problem solving and how to bring those resources into our programs. He also mentioned that there is a need to engage in some revision of crisis management work and how staff/adults are responding to crises during school hours. Mr. Fergusson talked about the work that is going on around the university which has continued to be a significant place of interest in how we are supporting students and how they learn. He said they also have ongoing work around building resources with assessment of risk and suicide in the district. We need to work on integrating and introducing better screening tools to identify early warning signs. Mr. Fergusson said that there has been ongoing work with collaboration regarding school improvement plans that were submitted by Principals and how we are using school

Approval of Minutes

improvement plans as a way of promoting the work around SEL and equity in the district. The Assistant Principals are working on restorative practices, their training and conversations on how we provide opportunities for students to reflect, take responsibility and repair when harm is caused. This would help with the disproportionality that we see in student discipline especially by race. Mr. Fergusson said they continue to partner with Natick United, Spark Kindness, Natick 180 in many different ways to support the students.

5. Staff and Student Support - Mr. Fergusson talked about staffing and student support and the work with the counselors. He said there has been an increase in crisis and mental health needs which have increasingly been more complex than in years past. There is a need for professional development, collaboration, and consultations with outside providers have increased and as a result has dramatically increased their collateral contact which takes time away from the students. Mr. Fergusson said there has been an increase in the 504 referrals and evaluations with parents identifying needs within the students and are looking for support for their students. This is both in Special Education and General Education. As a result of that, we have had to work consistently with increasing our use of evidence-based interventions with students and to be sure to provide the resources they need. Mr. Fergusson said we are partnering with agencies, one being McLean Hospital which will provide support and PD and a more robust intervention.

Mr. Brand asked in terms of how the School Committee could help and what would be a top priority if funding wasn't an issue? Mr. Fergusson said the first two things that come to mind are more training for staff to better support the students and helping staff to be more available for the students.

Ms. Brunell mentioned the feedback about Thrively and that is being looked at and Wayfinder possibly having an SEL curriculum in the high school. She mentioned the possibility of having coaches for Tier 1 because she thought most of the students' development happens on teams. Ms. Brunell mentioned attending the METCO 2.0 conference and that she learned a lot and is grateful for METCO. She also mentioned when she talks to parents, that they are not sure what Natick has to offer for students who are in crisis.

Chair Fuxman stated that he is grateful for Mr. Fergusson and all involved who are paying attention to the issues, asking questions and moving forward to addressing them. He asked about SAEBRS starting in 7th grade but is there anything for the elementary schools? Are they using DESSA? Mr. Fergusson said "no." He said that they are moving away from that and want to send the SAEBRS down to the elementary schools as well and hopefully by the end of the year, they will have one trial at the elementary level. Chair Fuxman also asked Mr. Fergusson: What are the milestones to accomplish in a certain timeframe? And how are we handling the urgent needs now? Mr. Fergusson said the most urgent need is to identify the students in need, what help they need, and to make it available. Also, to equip teachers with the information for them to support the students. The long term needs are making sure that what we do can develop into a more systematic way so we are able to repeatedly have those effects of success with the students. He stated that engaging our communities in partnering with us in helping to identify and supporting students' needs is an ongoing challenge and that many students are going without.

Superintendent Wong mentioned that Mr. Fergusson is in the middle of his second year and oversees the services for our most vulnerable students. She mentioned that the work was harder for Mr. Fergusson as there was not a template already in place and commended his work.

Public - Dr. Donna McKenzie - She wanted to commend Mr. Fergusson with the work he does and asked if he had adequate staff? Mr. Fergusson stated that as the need becomes more clearly identified around mental health and students' social and emotional needs, and the staff's social and emotional needs, the capacity to do the work will require more resources.

Approval of Minutes

Superintendent Wong commented about the importance of training staff who are with the students all the time.

2. Enrollment Report - [January 1st Enrollment Report](#)

Ms. McDonough asked about addressing a classroom at Lilja that has 25 students and thinks it's too high. Mr. Luff said they are aware of that classroom and it will be addressed for next year.

ACTION ITEMS - [Approve 24-25 School Calendar](#)

Chair Fuxman stated that we have the two options to vote on and are there any questions?

Ms. Brunell asked about the number of half days and what are the contractually obligated days? Mr. Luff said that we are not contractually obligated and that it is not in the contract. Ms. Balboni said we try to do one half day per month and some are dedicated to parent/teacher conferences and others are for developing, checking in on, and reviewing the goals. There is also building based professional development on the opposite months.

Ms. Brunell also asked if there are a certain amount of professional development hours that are promised to the teachers or is it all discretionary? Mr. Luff said that it was discretionary but nothing in the contract for the amount of hours aside from NILS.

Ms. Brunell said she would like to make a motion to approve the option 2 24/25 school calendar. Mr. Brand seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman went over the difference between the two calendars.

Ms. Gorseth stated that she is troubled by both calendars and questioned the 30th and 31st days that are additional days off and what is the rationale behind it? Mr. Luff said it is a consistent practice amongst all the districts but practice more than logical. Superintendent Wong stated that it is a matter of attendance. Ms. McEnaney commented that it would be hard not having those two days off as it is a big travel time.

Mr. Brand said he has looked at past calendars as to when the holiday falls and so for the years going forward, the break will get shorter as the calendar rotates.

Ms. Brunell asked if we have to take February vacation? Mr. Luff stated that the Monday holiday is required to be taken off in that week. Superintendent Wong also mentioned that a lot of students participate in sports during that week and wouldn't be able to if we moved the vacation week.

Ms. McDonough asked about the holidays and observances in October and wanted to make sure that it was correct. Mr. Luff explained why certain days were marked as an observed holiday.

Ms. Brunell talked about the homework policy and that there shouldn't be anything due on those days. Mr. Luff said there is not but that there won't be any major assignments or tests due on those observances.

Ms. McDonough's recommendation is to remove the purple from the days where the holiday starts in the evening of the Jewish and Muslim holidays.

Public - Ms. Vickers talked about homework being due at 11:50 at night and didn't know if that mattered?

Approval of Minutes

Chair Fuxman suggested amending the motion to read something in line of “have this particular calendar but edit the visuals”. Mr. Luff said the voting for the calendar is about the amount of days and that we can edit the colors and such after.

Ms. McDonough asked if we thought about changing locations for voting? Mr. Luff stated that we have moved the voting out of Lilja and over to Wilson so the only two schools right now are Kennedy and Wilson Middle schools.

Ms. McDonough asked if there is a way to keep schools open? Mr. Luff said that we only close the schools on the major elections which happen every four years and having schools open while people are on the property for voting, is a security issue. Ms. McDonough said she was worried that people would take off the Monday before the voting day if school was closed.

Ms. McDonough commented about having an early release day on Good Friday instead of having the whole day off.

Superintendent Wong suggested not voting on the calendar tonight if we are thinking about changing Good Friday and that we should let the public weigh in because it is such a significant change.

Chair Fuxman recapped and said there is a motion on the table for option 2 and at least 2 ideas for possible amendments that are: changing the visuals for sundown holidays and switching Good Friday to an early release day.

Public - Dr. Donna McKenzie suggested getting input from the community before making any changes to the calendar.

Ms. Flathers wanted to confirm not voting on the calendar tonight and to get input from the community.

Ms. Brunell mentioned that Good Friday was talked about in the Subcommittee meeting back in March 2022 and that they talked to a father from the Natick Catholic community and he thought it would be a slippery slope to make Good Friday a half day.

Mr. Brand asked if there is a deadline to vote on the calendar and Superintendent Wong said there is not. It is just a courtesy to the community so they can plan vacations and such.

Mr. Brand thinks we should wait on voting and get the community input first. Ms. McDonough agreed on waiting to vote.

Chair Fuxman commented that making this change about Good Friday would only add 1 more day in June and doesn't see the benefit of changing the day to an early release day. He also said that we need to focus on just the 24/25 calendar right now and knowing that there will be more planning for future years.

Mr. Luff suggested that we could make a modification regarding Good Friday when the day draws near if there haven't been any snow days.

Mr. Brand mentioned that camp would most likely start the last week in June and if we pushed the end of the year out by one day, and with snow days, it could affect that.

Ms. Gorseth mentioned how we evaluate the impact of learning from having these days off? She suggested a future meeting to have on the agenda where there can be a discussion about feedback that is gathered.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Fuxman mentioned a Task Force for the calendar and wondered if there could also be volunteers from the community and teachers.

Mr. Brand made a motion to table the calendar decision until two weeks from now.

Mr. Luff stated that looking back at absenteeism he found that the absentee rates were relatively stable for days before the holidays. He said that it was around 95% participation.

Chair Fuxman stated using option 2 as a framework for decision making and that the concern right now is the April 18th date.

Mr. Brand revised his motion to table the calendar decision until January 22nd where we will continue the conversation about refining option 2 to consider specifically Good Friday, April 18th and potentially converting that to an early release and to potentially consider moving the conference schedule for November 6th to November 13th. Those two specific changes for option 2. Ms. McDonough seconded the motion.

Ms. McDonough suggested making the option 3 calendar with both the changes.

Mr. Luff stated that we can have our Communication Director communicate with the community with the different options.

Chair asked all those in favor of the motion. All were in favor - 6-0-0

Mr. Brand made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:02 pm. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman asked all in favor -

Dr. Shai Fuxman – yes
Ms. Elise Gorseth – yes
Ms. Julie McDonough – yes
Mr. Matthew Brand – yes
Ms. Catherine Brunell – yes
Ms. Kate Flathers - yes

Motion passed - 6-0-0

Respectfully submitted by:
Linda McGrath - Recording Secretary

Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING **OPEN SESSION** MINUTES
January 22, 2024

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday January 22, 2024, at 6:05 pm via an in-person and virtual meeting. Chair Fuxman called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:05 pm.

Members Present:

- Mr. Brand - present
- Ms. Collins - present
- Ms. Gorseth - present
- Chair Shai Fuxman - present
- Julie McDonough – present participating remotely at 6:07
- Catherine Brunell - present at 6:06
- Kate Flathers - present participating remotely at 6:07

Others Present:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Dr. Bella Wong | Interim Superintendent |
| Tim Luff | Deputy Superintendent |
| Susan Balboni | Asst. Superintendent for Teaching, Learning & Innovation |
| Matthew Gillis | Asst. Superintendent of Finance |
| Linda McGrath | Recording Secretary |
| Dennis Roche | Director of Technology |

Chair Fuxman made a motion to move into Executive Session at 6:07 PM for the following purposes: Ms. Collins second the motion.

1. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with Non-Represented Personnel (Permanent Superintendent and Campus Aides)
2. To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Chair Fuxman took roll call:

- Ms. Brunell - yes
- Mr. Brand - yes
- Ms. Collins - yes
- Ms. Gorseth - yes
- Chair Fuxman - yes
- Ms. McDonough - yes

Chair Fuxman stated that we have returned to Open Session at 7:06 pm and that this meeting is being recorded by Pegasus for future viewing.

OPEN SESSION

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence - To honor those who have sacrificed for our country.

PUBLIC SPEAK

Public Speak is scheduled for a period of fifteen minutes. Each speaker will be permitted a maximum of three minutes during which time they can speak about topics within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the School Committee Chair. Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee.

There was not anyone for public speak.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Superintendent Wong wanted to thank Spark Kindness and Mr. Art Fergusson for the organization of the Martin Luther King ceremony from last Monday. Chair Fuxman said it was a wonderful celebration with the community coming together and a very meaningful day of unity to honor Dr. King.
2. Ms. Brunell talked about how there was an effort made to understand diversity with disabilities. She also mentioned that this was the last time that the Peace Makers would be performing at the Martin Luther King celebration. Ms. Brunell mentioned that there were alumni students from METCO that shared their poetry and art.
3. Superintendent Wong wanted to acknowledge Brian Casey and the highway department for DPW with the challenging weather from last week.
4. Ms. Flathers and Mr. Luff talked about the School Health Advisory Committee. Members of the committee are the Social Workers, Nursing Department, Town Health and Recreation Departments, and they go through the details with health conditions that are occurring in the schools and create the Wellness Policy which is delivered every two years.
5. Superintendent Wong and Jefferson Wood talked about the Johnson School Legacy Project. Mr. Wood said it is an exercise in project based learning. The idea is to have the current population at the Johnson School work on a project to memorialize the school.

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE - Jefferson Wood

Did not have comments for tonight.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

1. Town Administrator's Report - James Errickson and John Marshall
 - a. Financial Overview

Superintendent Wong introduced James Errickson, Town Administrator and John Townsend, Chief Financial Officer are here to present an overview of the FY25 budget.

Mr. Errickson stated that they are still receiving updates for the budget which came in just this past Friday and weekend as the budget is due at the beginning of February. He stated that it was going to be a very tight year and they are trying to make sure they are covering the needs of the Town and that there are some considerations.

Mr. Errickson mentioned one consideration that was highlighted in the November forecast is the use of the one time funds will be going away after this year. These funds came from the ARPA funds which helped sustain some of the revenue loss from the pandemic. Another consideration is the continuation of the use of free cash. Mr. Errickson said that the Town has been relying on the use of free cash for years to the sum of 2 to 3 million dollars and is built into the upcoming budget.

Mr. Errickson said that the forecast from the November timeframe had an estimated shortfall deficit of 2.3 million. There were a number of assumptions for when the budget was built, we would have a better handle on such items as a 3 to 3.5 increase for expenses and a similar increase for revenue. A lot of this was driven by the lack of one-time funds. Mr. Errickson said once they started building the FY25 budget and got some real numbers, there were some other items that became factors for both revenue and expense drivers.

Some of key revenue drivers are:

1. ARPA Funds
2. Free Cash
3. State Aid
4. Local Receipts

Mr. Marshall stated that will not be using stabilization funds this year.

Some of the key cost drivers:

1. Keefe Tech - They are anticipating an additional cost as more students from Natick are attending the trade school. They are looking at a 35% increase but that is not the final number. There is a possibility that number will increase when they release their budget.
2. Fringe Benefits - There have been more employees being added to the health care plan plus the health care costs are rising. Currently they are budgeting for a 9.5% increase with an anticipation that it could be less.
3. Overall Insurance - They are estimating a 5% increase for property and liability insurance.

Mr. Errickson stated that they have asked the Town department heads to look at a level service budget and level funded in a category they can keep level funded.

Mr. Errickson reiterated that the FY25 budget will be a tight year. He mentioned that prior to the pandemic, there was talk of a potential need for an override but for FY25 they believe they can get through without the override. There will need to be a serious discussion moving forward about not relying on the one-time funds.

Mr. Gillis questioned the potential override would be for FY26? Both Mr. Errickson and Mr. Marshall said “yes”.

Ms. Collins asked, with the Governor’s 9C cuts, is anything changing for FY24 on the town side that would put pressure on the FY25 budget. Mr. Errickson stated that they have not seen a lot of impact on the 9C cuts. He stated his concerns about the remainder of this fiscal year. Ms. Collins also asked if the town would adjust their budget according to the Governor’s budget that is generally out by the end of January, or would they wait until they pass the budget in August. Mr. Marshall said they would use the Governor’s budget.

Ms. Gorseth asked a question in regards to the local receipts. She mentioned where we were in FY19 and that perhaps things might plateau? She questioned the restructuring of the mall space going to a retail and recreational space, and do we anticipate that we will only get to FY19? Or will some of these spaces be more profitable than retail was?

Mr. Errickson stated that the local receipts were not just meals but the motor vehicles was a larger portion of that. Mr. Errickson said that we would see more of an impact with people purchasing cars.

He mentioned that a lot of the commercial properties had refinanced their loans when the rates were low to a 5 or 10 year term and those terms are now coming to an end and need to restructure their debt. He stated that they are more interested in learning more about that in the coming fiscal year, and how that would impact the properties in Natick.

Ms. Brunell asked about the one-time funds and were they reappropriated this year? Mr. Errickson stated that we received the free cash certification number but not in time for the town to appropriate any of them. He stated that it will be part of the budget.

Ms. Brunell also asked about the State Aid and that it was anticipated to be at 1.5 but as of Friday, is it going to be higher? Mr. Errickson stated that it will be adjusted in the budget book that will be out on February 1st.

Chair Fuxman thanked both Mr. Errickson and Mr. Marshall for the presentation.

Superintendent Wong mentioned that districts across the state are facing the end of covid based funding and how we navigate the next stage. Superintendent Wong expressed her appreciation to both Mr. Errickson and Mr. Marshall in that their conversations have been supportive and efficient.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE - Inkyoung Lee - virtually

Mr. Luff read Inkyoung’s transcript as there were technical difficulties.

“Last week we wrapped up the first semester with mid term exams and projects. This week we have three shows for 13 the musical by our theater program for this Friday at 7:30 pm and Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 pm.”

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - continued

2. Discussion of the 2024-2025 School Calendar

- a. [Option 2](#)
- b. [Option 3](#)

Chair Fuxman wanted to start the conversation regarding the calendar and how the discussion about changes started approximately two years ago by the Administration and School Committee. The goal was to make the calendar more inclusive that represents all the different communities that form the NPS mosaic of cultures. There were days off that were added and a change in the homework and assignment policy so families were able to celebrate their holidays.

Chair Fuxman mentioned some of the challenges for the 24/25 calendar were: one holiday that falls on the weekend, the US Presidential election, NILS, and Christmas and New Years both fall on a Wednesday which makes for a longer winter holiday.

Chair Fuxman went over both options of the calendar and the difference between them and thanked everyone for their feedback. He also proposed that the committee decide on two different decisions. The first decision would be for next year and what will we be doing with the two options of the calendar and the second decision (that will be presented by the Task Force which consists of: Ms. Brunell, Ms. McDonough and himself) will be how to decide on the calendars for future years.

Ms. Collins asked how many snow days did NPS declare in the last five years? Mr. Luff stated that he has been with the district since 2012 and that we have never used all 5 allotted snow days.

Ms. Collins mentioned in regards to next year's calendar, the Administrative Assistants are given Good Friday off per their contract and all but one of the Administrators contracts that run through June 30, 2025 (same as the Administrative Assistants), and all but two of those (whose contracts run till June of 2028) are given Good Friday off. So how do you open a school without Administrative Assistants and an Administrator for even a half day?

Superintendent Wong suggested renegotiating their contracts.

Mr. Brand commented that there were approximately 36 different emails from parents and teachers with results being about 50/50. He stated that at this moment, he supports option 2 which has Good Friday as a day off as he doesn't know enough about the holiday and is just learning of some Administration and Administrative Assistants contractually having the day off.

Mr. Luff stated that we needed to take a small break so Pegasus could reboot at 8:00 pm. Meeting resumed at 8:03 pm.

Ms. Gorseth stated she understands the difficulty with making Good Friday a half day but does like moving the half day in November from the 6th to the 13th.

Ms. Gorseth made a motion to vote for calendar option 2 with the amendment of moving the half day from November 6th to November 13th. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Public - Father Chip spoke in regards to Good Friday.

Chair Fuxman took roll call to vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed - 6-0-0

3. Update on the Permanent Superintendent Search

Chair Fuxman stated that an announcement was made last week that the School Committee voted to enter into negotiations with Dr. Melissa Spash for the permanent Superintendent position and is currently in the process.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Wong stated that there are several reports for tonight and all are related to budget and finance items.

1. FY25 Budget Request:

Technology Department - Dennis Roche

Mr. Roche stated the discussion tonight would be on the following 4 agenda items:

1. Annual Technology Reports
2. School Technology FY25 Operating Budget Request
3. School Technology 5 Year Capital Plan
4. Technology Staffing Plan - Town and Schools

Mr. Roche went over the annual report regarding inventory of all devices. He showed the device count trend and for this year, it is at its lowest even lower than before the pandemic.

Mr. Roche then went over the budget request with the top goals for FY25. He said that we are up about \$280,000 from last year with the biggest line item being equipment replacement.

Mr. Roche stated that there was a new line item which is a new ask for the elementary schools for Ipads for \$60,000 for students to share. He mentioned that there was an increase in the teacher laptop lease that went from \$100,000 to \$130,000 and that new costs figured around \$230,000.

Mr. Roche stated that in regards to the AV account, there was an increase of \$20,000 with the biggest item for an increase were the projectors as they are near their end of life. He also stated that the account for purchase of services had an increase of \$32,250.

The software account had a decrease of \$20,500 and the Lan/Wan maintenance account had an increase of \$30,000.

Mr. Roche went over the 5 year Capital Plan and mentioned that some of the projects apply for Erate which will give the district a 40% discount for anything that is eligible.

Mr. Roche discussed the staffing plans since he has now taken over town operations in addition to the school operations. He stated that there are two shared roles and one town role that he is actively trying to fill and two requests for FY25 for two positions.

Mr. Roche mentioned that there is a lot of potential moving forward.

Mr. Brand questioned how many Ipads does \$60,000 get? Mr. Roche said it would be 30 Ipads per school. Mr. Brand asked about the PowerSchool plug in and is it a subscription? Mr. Roche said that it was an annual subscription costing around \$5,000. Mr. Brand also questioned the network engineer on the town side in regards to the infrastructure and wondering if they are helping since the school side is without and how is that work getting done? Mr. Roche said they are having those conversations currently and he will decide how the workload gets done and distributed. Mr. Brand's last question was in regards to replacement costs and how many devices across the district are required to be replaced because of misuse? Mr. Roche said there was a fair number of flatpanels at Kennedy that failed due to misuse and are not covered by warranty. He also stated that they try to prepare for those sorts of events.

Ms. Collins questioned if all the One to One Macs are out of the system yet? Mr. Roche said they were. She also questioned the equipment replacement sustainability line with the teacher replacement and the figures regarding the leases. Mr. Roche said that roughly it device costs about \$1,000 to lease and he estimated how many he could get in an order each year with his revised estimates. Mr. Roche also commented that it would be for full-time employees and the part-time employees were excluded.

Ms. Brunell questioned the flatpanels at Kennedy being misused and thought we should take a look at the policy ECAC which states when it is not an accident it is considered vandalized and should be compensated for instead of increasing our budget to replace.

Superintendent Wong stated that this presentation that Mr. Roche has presented since being appointed Chief Technology Officer for the Town. She said that there are costs and increases that are embedded in the budget that he has presented but that it is a sustainability level service.

Ms. Collins commented that during her visits, she could see how much the technology is being used.

2. Transportation Bid

[Transportation Bid](#) (Matthew Gillis)

Mr. Gillis stated that on January 16th he opened up the transportation bid along with Robin Agostinelli-Solivan (our transportation coordinator) and Brian LeBlanc for all the services except for the out of district services but aside from the Collaborative. He said the Collaborative is an extension of the member school system and we are able to secure a better price. Mr. Gillis stated that it was sent out to 13 entities and received one bid for all the contracts except for one contract, they received two bids.

Mr. Gillis then went over following changes that were made to the contract:

1. Contract term moved from 3 years to (a probable) 5 years.
2. Bid forms adjusted to encourage more competition.

3. Location of garage no longer restricted to zip code 01760 - must be able to meet 1 hour requirement when called for emergency service.
4. Fuel adjustment clause revised from \$2.92 per gallon for all fuels in 2021 to \$4.24 for diesel and \$3.20 for regular unleaded.
5. Real time GPS access to be provided to NPS Central Office.
6. Video cameras to be added to all buses that didn't already have them.
7. Dry run of routes required before school begins.
8. Penalties for late service for conditions within the contractors control.
9. Required Prices for Performance Bond to get direct cost option for NPS:
 - a. JFK services \$10,555, - 1.5% the value of Year 1
 - b. Connolly bus \$20,059, - 0.9% the value of Year 1
 - c. Please read performance bond summary before voting on page 3

Mr. Gillis then went over the bid results for both buses and vans. - [Connolly Bus Bid](#)

Mr. Gillis also requested a motion on the bus bid.

Mr. Brand asked about the fuel adjustment clause and how it works? Mr. Gillis said it is not how much fuel they use but how much it is per gallon.

Ms. Collins questioned about the METCO van for next year? She thought that we were just having two large buses and not using the van? Superintendent Wong stated that when it was discussed about losing the van and gaining another bus, there would have been more students but that improvement didn't go through so we have the same amount of students. Superintendent Wong commented that there will be the same amount of students overall.

Ms. Collins asked about electrification and is there anything in the bid document? Mr. Gillis said no because of the time it would take to get there. He said that it is being explored for the future but the need to find a sizable space and power for the buses will take some time. Superintendent Wong stated that the district should continue to consider that option but the inventory isn't available, it's cost prohibitive.

Ms. Collins asked if there is anything we can do to move in that direction. Superintendent Wong stated that hopefully there is a way to subsidize the cost in the future.

Ms. Brunell asked for clarification regarding the METCO van/bus for next year and asked about GPS for parents for next year. Mr. Gillis commented on the GPS and said it would come to the Central Office first but that the vendors weren't that excited about the idea.

Ms. Brunell commented about the percentages and mentioned that JFK had gone up zero percent for FY25 and that FY26 and FY27, had not gone up that much either.

Ms. Brunell asked about the Performance Bond and his rationale for recommending it for one company and not all of the companies? Mr. Gillis explained that because JFK is a small company with fewer customers and could be impacted faster as opposed to Connolly who is in multiple towns and is pretty secure financially.

Mr. Gillis addressed the committee and asked if they would want a bus or a van for METCO? Superintendent Wong mentioned that the Director of METCO, Rasheedah Clayton, had verified that she would want a bus and a van.

Ms. Brunell questioned the late buses and does the contract allow for "wiggle room" in regards to how many days a week they can run? Mr. Gillis stated that the contract allows us to go up or down about 20% but should not exceed 3

times a week. Ms. Brunell also asked if it's possible for the late buses to pick up the students closer to the end of the activity? Mr. Gillis stated that they are working on that.

Chair Fuxman stated that we have a couple of motions.

1. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, Connolly Bus Company, for regular school day bus services per their per diem bid, estimated not to exceed \$7,327,800 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

2. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, AA Transportation, Inc. for METCO bus services per their per diem bid, estimated not to exceed \$721,700 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

3. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, Connolly Bus Company, for Athletic and Field trip bus services per their bid not to exceed the hourly or annual bid price based on the bid from 1/10/2024 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

4. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, JFK Transportation Services, for in-town van services per their per diem bid, estimated not to exceed \$1,949,984 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

5. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, AA Transportation Services, for METCO elementary van service per their per diem bid, estimated not to exceed \$303,300 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

6. Mr. Brand made a motion to award a new three year contract to the low responsive and responsible bidder, JFK Transportation Services, for van services to the Vocational Agricultural High School per their per diem bid, estimated not to exceed \$192,051 for the next three years. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

7. Mr. Brand made a motion to approve the Assistant Superintendent to sign all transportation bid contracts as voted and approved by the School Committee. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

Superintendent Wong thanked Mr. Gillis for running a clean bid process and reiterated that there will be GPS services and cameras on the buses.

[FY24 Second Quarter Update](#) - Matthew Gillis

Mr. Gillis went over the update for the second quarter and talked about the general fund. He said the aggregate was in pretty good condition and should have around \$300,000 left at the end of the year but could be used quickly.

Mr. Gillis talked about the revolving funds being mostly user fees but sometimes reimbursement programs or private grants. He stated that we started out the year well and continue to do well.

Mr. Gillis went over the grants report and stated with the federal grants we still have some of the closeouts from FY23 in this year.

Ms. Collins asked about the disaster claims that were put in during COVID and have we received those monies? Mr. Gillis didn't know at this time but would look into it.

[FY25 Budget: Preliminary Report](#) - Superintendent Wong

Superintendent Wong went over the preliminary budget information for FY25. She stated the following:

1. Allocations for FY24 - \$83,279,143.00
2. Level Service Projection for FY25 - \$89,862,102.00

Superintendent Wong stated that this already assumes an offset of 3.4 million against available circuit breaker and reflects the recent bid for transportation. This represents a 7.9% increase over FY24 and a dollar increase of \$6,582,954.00.

Superintendent Wong mentioned that there will be some additional program improvements related to the specialized services whether in Special Education or EL but that would be the only considered improvement.

Superintendent Wong commented that we are still waiting on the health insurance rate which we should have in February and not likely to cover the 7.9% increase. She also mentioned that the major drivers for the school department can be tuition and/or transportation. Superintendent Wong stated that a largest part of the budget is in personnel and that the projected staffing increase is just over 10%. She said that a lot of positions that were funded by the one-time grants are being incorporated into the FY25 budget.

Superintendent Wong commented that the impact from the pandemic for students and staff regarding students' loss of learning, social and emotional learning has been significant. There was a lot of investment for support and we will do our best to maintain that support in the budget moving forward.

Chair Fuxman asked about the staffing being one of the biggest drivers, is it regarding positions or change in salaries? Superintendent Wong stated that for the personnel costs, it is more in the 5% range as you need to consider step increases, lane changes and COLA so the increase in the excess of the 10% reflects an increase in a number of positions.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. [Approve Overnight Baseball Field Trip to Cooperstown, NY - High School](#)

Mr. Brand made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Collins seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

ACTION ITEMS

1. Approve the 2024-2025 School Calendar - (see above)
 - a. [Option 2](#)
 - b. [Option 3](#)
2. Approve Update to Non Representative Salary Schedule

Ms. Collins moved to approve an update to the Non Rep salary schedule with the addition of campus aids as previously discussed. Mr. Brand seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes

Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

3. Approve transportation contract 2024-2027 with options to extend (see above)
4. Approve Update on the Permanent Superintendent Search (see above)

Chair Fuxman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Brand made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 pm. Ms. Collins seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call for vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Flathers - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passes - 6-0-0

Respectfully Submitted by:
Linda McGrath - Recording Secretary

DRAFT

Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE OPEN SESSION MEETING MINUTES
February 5, 2024

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday February 5, 2024, at 6:02 pm via an in-person and virtual meeting. Chair Fuxman called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:02 pm.

Members Present:

Chair Fuxman - present
Elise Gorseth - present
Julie McDonough – present
Cathi Collins - present participating virtually
Matt Brand – present
Catherine Brunell - present
Kate Flathers - present participating virtually at appx 7:00

Others Present:

Dr. Bella Wong	Interim Superintendent
Tim Luff	Deputy Superintendent
Susan Balboni	Asst. Superintendent for Teaching, Learning & Innovation
Matthew Gillis	Asst. Superintendent of Finance
Linda McGrath	Recording Secretary
Josepha Blocker	Principal - High School

OPEN SESSION

Roll Call

Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of Silence - honor those who have sacrificed for our country

Announcements

Superintendent Wong mentioned that they went to the State House last week to lobby with the legislators for funding for the METCO program.

Chair Fuxman made an announcement that Spark Kindness has a program running next week on February 14th called “Real Self Care” and to register you can go to Spark Kindness’s website.

Chair Fuxman made a motion to move into Executive Session at 6:06 PM for the following purpose(s). Mr. Brand seconded the motion.

1. To Conduct Strategy Sessions in Preparation for Negotiations with Non-Represented Personnel (Permanent Superintendent)
2. To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Chair Fuxman took roll call to vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand – yes
Ms. McDonough – yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Collins - unable to hear
Chair Fuxman - yes

Chair Fuxman reopened the meeting at 6:40 PM

TEACHER REPRESENTATIVE - Kristen McEnaney

Ms. McEnaney stated she had no comments for tonight.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE - Kendall Hacker - virtual

Ms. Hacker stated that they had a flower drive this past week for Valentine's Day and that it will run till the end of the week. She also mentioned they had a musical last weekend that was a big success with a great turnout.

PUBLIC SPEAK

Public Speak is scheduled for a period of fifteen minutes. Each speaker will be permitted a maximum of three minutes during which time they can speak about topics within the scope of responsibility of the School Committee. All remarks will be addressed through the School Committee Chair. Public Speak is not a time for debate or response to comments by the School Committee.

No public speak ~

ACTION ITEMS

1. Approval of the Permanent Superintendent Contract

Chair Fuxman talked about the 7 month process for the Superintendent search and at the January 12th's meeting, they voted to enter into negotiations with Dr. Melissa Spash with her contract. He said that they are pleased to say the negotiating team and Dr. Spash have reached an agreement on the contract.

Chair Fuxman asked for a motion to approve the contract for the permanent Superintendent.

Mr. Brand made a motion to approve the contract for the permanent Superintendent. Ms. Brunell seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call to vote:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand – yes
Ms. McDonough – yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Ms. Collins - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 6-0-0

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

1. Formation of a Calendar Task Force

Chair Fuxman mentioned that over the past two years there have been various conversations from both School Committee members and the Policy Subcommittee members regarding the calendar for the 24/25 school year to be more inclusive and accommodate the growing number of religious holidays.

Chair Fuxman talked about having a more long-term planning process for calendars in the future. Last year they passed a motion to form a task force that included School Committee members, teachers, staff and community to see what the calendar should look like in future years.

Ms. McDonough stated that the motion from last spring was to form a working group that comprised of School Committee members, Administrators, teacher, staff, parents, care givers, and students. The work should have been done in the fall but was delayed until the spring. She said what they need as a committee is to determine how they are going to identify those members and if there are any additional members that they want to add other than who was in the original motion. Ms. McDonough said the thought was to have this be a task force with meetings that are posted.

Ms. Brunell mentioned that they have learned from the Superintendent search and thought to follow that same process. She said that they would ask the groups that participated in the Superintendent search to nominate a member from their group. This would be similar to the Screening Committee members but some suggestions for the members would be:

- 3 Parents
- 2 from Unit A
- 1 from the Administrative Assistants’ union
- 1 from the Central Office
- 1 Principal
- 3 Students
- 2 School Committee members

Ms. Gorseth questioned the timeline for conducting the work and would this start before or after Dr. Spash starts? Chair Fuxman said the plan was to start as soon as possible and that it would be before Dr. Spash starts. Ms. Gorseth also questioned what the scope and remit was of the task force?

Chair Fuxman stated that the scope was to develop a long term plan for future calendars. He said that this task force would define the values they wanted to focus on and to be respectful to all religions and have everyone be able to be comfortable with celebrating their holidays. Chair Fuxman stated the reason for the delay was to learn from the Superintendent search.

Ms. Brunell commented that last year they voted on:

- The community impact of changes to the school calendar.
- The impact of the changes to the school calendar on the consistency of educational programming.
- The needs assessment of specific communities related to the school calendar through discussion groups, focus groups, town hall and other community engagement methods.
- Additional background and specific information on religious and cultural holidays.

Mr. Brand questioned what the time commitment would be? Ms. Brunell said the suggestion was that it would start in March and thought about 4 or 5 meetings max.

Mr. Brand asked if there was discussion and do we think it's valuable to make sure in the selection of the members that there is religious diversity without being discriminatory? Chair Fuxman's recommendation is to vote first on the two School Committee members to do the outreach and invitations.

Mr. Luff commented to be careful about choosing members based on their religion but instead you can say we want to make sure we have input from all the population that this will affect.

Ms. Gorseth commented that the remit that we have is to gather data about the impact of the calendar and need to ensure that with the focus groups that we are attracting from all the groups.

Superintendent Wong mentioned perhaps inviting experts for that kind of perspective to speak for and be objective.

Chair Fuxman commented that between the focus groups and the feedback forum, it is the way to collect the data for a range of use.

Chair Fuxman asked the School Committee members if any of them would be interested in being the two members. Ms. McDonough said that she would like to volunteer as did Ms. Gorseth.

Chair Fuxman stated that it should be voted on next week as Ms. Flathers was not present at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Brand thought that perhaps voting tonight as there will not be another meeting until February 26th.

Ms. Brunell thought the invitation letter could come from Chair Fuxman inviting the groups and asked how we should solicit the parents?

Chair Fuxman asked how the experience was for soliciting parents? Ms. Brunell said the leadership in all the parent groups knew of parents that would be interested in those topics.

Mr. Brand commented that sending the communication out soon would be more helpful so people can meet and plan before the work needs to get started.

Chair Fuxman suggested that Ms. McDonough and Ms. Gorseth could work on the letter together and send it out right away.

Ms. Brunell made a motion to appoint Ms. McDonough and Ms. Gorseth to the calendar task force as the School Committee representatives. Mr. Brand seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman asked all those in favor:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. McDonough - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 5-0-0

Mr. Luff stated that the calendar for 24/25 that we have been working had a day missing in April. The 30th day was added which then made the school year shorter by one day.

Chair Fuxman asked to vote on the consent agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of a one time donation of \$1,500 to the Natick Robotics Club from Greg Rich of Vivantio, Inc.
2. Approval of a donation of \$1,000 to the Natick Robotics Club from Andrew Blanchard of Teradyne, Inc.
3. Approval of a donation of \$300 to the Chinese Culture Club from Sunrise Montessori, Inc.
4. Approval of a donation of \$600 to the Chinese Culture Club from Sun Tree Early Education, LLC
5. Approval of a donation of \$300 to the Chinese Culture Club from Jessica Allain
6. Approval of School Committee Open Session Minutes Dated 11.6, 11.20, 12.4 and 12.18.23
7. Approval for Change of High School Class Dues from \$100 to \$125 starting with the Class of 2028

Mr. Brand made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Ms. Gorseth seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman asked all those in favor:

Ms. Brunell - yes
Mr. Brand - yes
Ms. McDonough - yes
Ms. Gorseth - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 5-0-0

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. MA Educators Tour - Helsinki/Tallinn (Tim Luff-Deputy Superintendent, Josepha Blocker-High School Principal, Karen Ghilani-Ben/Hem Elementary Principal)

Finland and Estonia Trip 2023 Presentation

Superintendent Wong stated that Mr. Hoye was unable to attend tonight's meeting but will participate at the next meeting.

Superintendent Wong then introduced Deputy Superintendent, Tim Luff and Principal, Josepha Blocker for their presentation on a trip to Finland.

Ms. Blocker talked about their trip to Finland and Estonia and the purpose for the trip. She stated that Finland and Estonia are the highest ranked countries for the PISA exams scores which is an international test of students.

Ms. Blocker said that there were six Massachusetts districts (including Natick) for a total of 16 educators that were there and made for a well rounded group with rich conversations.

Mr. Luff first off thanked the School Committee for allowing them to travel to these countries. He then talked about the five schools that they visited which were all various levels of education as well as other educational environments.

Mr. Luff stated that they had a follow up meeting in January to process the takeaways from the trip.

Ms. Blocker mentioned that a High School Instruction and Learning Working Group was created for all the Principals of each town that were on the trip to continue what they learned while on the trip.

Mr. Luff talked about the towns Helsinki and Tallinn and went over the population and ethnic composition for each.

Ms. Blocker commented that a lot of what is talked about in Finland is their trust in educators. She stated that Finland has one teacher contract for the entire country and that there is very little ranking amongst schools.

Ms. Blocker commented how there is a high level of trust amongst students and teachers, staff and parents, and vice versa and that it is very clear when you enter the environment of such. She also commented that the phones never rang while she was there and that students have "home cooked" meals in a buffet set up.

Ms. Blocker stated that there is a lot of flexibility in the curriculum and that the teachers are highly qualified which makes it a very competitive and sought after field to get into.

Mr. Luff then talked about students that have needs and the kind of support they have which is called "Diagnosis and Support Plan". He said there are three levels of support - basic support, intensified support and special support which is similar to what we offer.

Mr. Luff mentioned that essentially there are not any grades or years but that it is considered basic education and there is not any testing in those 10 years. Once you've reached 10 years, you then either move on to a vocational education or an academic education. He did mention that vocational education is about 46% of the students and is highly valued as is the academic education. From there, you can decide to go to an academic college or a

polytechnic school. Mr. Luff commented that there was no athletics in the schools but that it is run by the communities alone.

Ms. Blocker mentioned that their preschool is free of charge and about 80% of the population opt in. She then talked about the national core curriculum with the general and subject specific guidelines.

Mr. Luff talked about the Transversal Competencies and that everything is based on these competencies. The teachers are given these competencies and are instructed to work on them in the classrooms. He also commented that teachers are put on the same level as a doctor or lawyer as a profession just not paid as well.

Ms. Blocker stated that the teachers have these transversals linked to standards but that within each standard, one or more are linked to academic standards. The teachers see equal importance to teaching about self care and everyday life versus teaching academics.

Mr. Luff reiterated the high trust and teaching autonomy which equals no teacher evaluation, no high stakes tests, and no teacher recertification. He commented that they never have administrators in the classrooms and thought the kids did not feel stressed at all. Ms. Blocker commented that the Principals mainly work on the budget, getting to know the students and learning the culture.

Ms. Blocker talked about differentiation and what it looked like in the classrooms with students learning at different rates. She shared two separate math books that look similar but one has more instruction to guide students who need it and the other with less instruction. This way the teacher can teach the same lesson to all the students and allows everybody to access the same content at the same time.

Superintendent Wong stated that the one time they do have test scores is at the end of tenth grade and find that the results are similar.

Mr. Luff talked about Estonia's education system that is similar to Finland's but with a smaller percentage of students that attend the vocational side. Ms. Blocker mentioned that they are more technologically focused than Finland.

Mr. Luff stated the similarities of challenges between Estonia and the US regarding migration from Ukraine. He then talked about the highlights of the two countries such as safety and well being, happiness and is shown everywhere they went. Ms. Blocker commented that they do not have childcare after first grade and the big sense of safety.

Ms. Blocker shared some photos that captured the experience such as students not wearing socks, extremely clean, foosball tables in the hallways, students leaving laptops and backpacks in the halls and not worried about them being taken. She said the students had a lot of control with autonomy in the spaces that they were given.

Ms. Blocker commented that the students from a very young age start learning Swedish and Estonian and then by grade 6 will have learned about 4 languages.

Mr. Luff mentioned that when they were talking to the students, the students questioned why the US has so many school shootings. He said they do not have the concerns about safety as we do.

Ms. Blocker talked about some key takeaways from the trip such as calm and clean learning environment, the impact of high trust, early learning of second and third languages, and that Massachusetts rivals Finland in results.

Ms. Blocker also talked about parts of Finnish and Estonian systems that could be transferable to Natick. She thought of the idea of a consistent focus on building trust, and curricula on multidisciplinary learning in early

grades, world language at earlier grades, connecting the “profile of a graduate” competencies to core curricular competencies and standards and increased autonomy and agency for students.

Mr. Luff discussed the social-emotional part of the Finnish and Estonian system that are transferable to Natick such as shared leadership, more opportunities for agency at younger ages, executive functioning especially with transportation since there are not any buses, vocational training, reduce distractions and the idea that “there are no dead ends”.

Mr. Luff thought about having a 3 to 4 year pilot with a few teachers who would not have to be evaluated and see what the results would be.

Superintendent Wong mentioned that the classrooms have built in playtime in the classrooms and that Ms. Ghilani appreciated that. She also stated that these two countries are fairly new and were established around 1917 and formerly dominated by Russia.

Superintendent Wong talked about another trip to Ireland in the fall to see how they teach reading.

Ms. Gorseth mentioned that at Lilja they do have “looping” (having the same teacher for multiple years) and the experiences that were described are the experiences that happened in the classroom.

Ms. Brunell commented that she was fascinated by education and their “home-like” feel and appreciated the thought of us getting out of our comfort zone and thinking of education in a different way.

Ms. McDonough asked about the length of the school day? Superintendent Wong said that they have shorter days and less homework. Ms. McDonough commented that she would be happy to continue to support that sort of work.

Chair Fuxman talked about visiting our own schools and that he was impressed with what we have. He wondered about the trust part and how do you build that trust? Ms. Blocker commented that the country takes care of everyone, such as a place to live, a pension, etc...

Superintendent Wong commented that what we see in Finland is a result of about a 40 year education reform. She said their results were very poor and decided as a country to come together and develop an education policy reform.

2. [Findings of an Entry Plan](#) - High School Principal Josepha Blocker

Ms. Blocker discussed her entry plan goals for the high school. She talked about her timeline which started with meeting the Superintendent, 8th grade step up night, shadowed the Deans/Vice Principals and met with the leadership team and went to the last faculty meeting in June.

Ms. Blocker talked about her time during the summer months that consisted of 1-on-1 meetings, presented the State of the Union data, parent/caregiver coffee, and surveys to parents, students and staff. She then talked about the opening of school on the first day and meeting the new staff. She then talked about what happened in the fall such as developing the School Improvement Plan, creating a Steering Committee for DESE, visiting PLCs, classrooms, clubs, activities, plays, concerts, athletics and met with Principals Roundtable, School Council, Principal’s Advisory Committee and Class Advisors.

Ms. Blocker discussed her takeaways from the Entry Plan and those were Challenging Coursework, Preparedness, Academic Help. She then talked about belonging in regards to a trusted adult, families that feel belonged, students feeling cared for by staff and whether they have at least one close friend.

Ms. Blocker discussed the PLC's and felt they are effective at improving practice and also the communication where a large portion of both staff and caregivers felt positive about. She then talked about what is going well with the faculty, resources, and community.

Ms. Blocker went over areas for growth with communication for caregivers and staff such as website needs a redesign, improving the organization of the newsletter, greater access to information, earlier communication, and belonging. She also stated other areas for growth that are related to student soft skills (similar to Finland) and behaviors.

Ms. Blocker summarized her Entry Plan by stating that the high school is an amazing school with dedicated, highly qualified teachers. She commented that many students and families feel a strong sense of belonging and that there is support available to them.

Ms. Gorseth questioned vaping and substance abuse and whether it emerged in the high school or is it carrying over from the middle school. Ms. Blocker said that they are not allowed to track that data internally.

Mr. Brand commented about feedback that he received from other parents stating how Ms. Blocker's emails are well written and that they feel informed.

Ms. McDonough stated first that she appreciated all that Ms. Blocker has done to get a sense of what is happening. She then commented about the guidance newsletter, the location, and the content of it. She then questioned if the students really asked about a later start time? Ms. Blocker said "yes, they did".

Ms. Brunell commented about the surveys at the high school prior and that they were not usually well received and she wondered if Ms. Blocker's surveys were representative of the 1600 students? Ms. Blocker stated that there were about 250 students. Ms. Brunell commented about the slides that were presented tonight and the results were about a 70%/30% split. Ms. Blocker stated that the data tells us if the systems are working but doesn't tell the story of every student.

Ms. Brunell also commented about having consistency of experience for the high school students because there are students that are thriving and there are some who struggle. She is hoping that we can continue to provide resources for those students who are struggling. She also mentioned making the high school a smaller experience and if Ms. Blocker had any ideas for that? Ms. Blocker agreed and talked about house structure but that would require more investigation and there are costs to think about.

Chair Fuxman talked about the students that advocate for what they need which connect to the soft skills and wondered what was Ms. Blocker's thoughts? Ms. Blocker talked about the inclusive academy grant (praise to Sue Balboni for that) and said that it's a wonderful opportunity for universal design for learning or ULD strategies is a way to create learners and give students choice and voice.

Superintendent Wong commented that having Ms. Blocker as the high school principal is a very coveted asset and that it has been a privilege and honor to work with her.

3. [FY25 Budget Update](#)

Superintendent Wong went over the preliminary FY25 budget summary and thanked those in the Central Office for their help.

Superintendent Wong started with the enrollment projection and that the middle schools are at a slight decline for the next few years whereas the high school has an incline over the next 5 to 7 years.

Special Education Enrollment - Superintendent Wong stated that because of the pandemic impact on our students, the students needing more service has gone from 17% to 19.4% who are on IEPs. She also commented on the overview for Special Education students across the district and that they have done a good job.

Superintendent Wong talked about the English Language Learners (ELL) and that 259 have gone up 43% in one year and the 504 Accommodation Plans could have a 40% increase by the end of the year.

McKinney-Vento Enrollment - Superintendent Wong stated that even though the numbers are small, they have gone from 41 to 65 which is a significant increase for which a lot are receiving services.

MCAS results for grade 5 - Superintendent Wong stated that Natick has done well compared to the State for middle and high school.

Superintendent Wong went over the preliminary budget for FY25 and stated that the biggest driver is the salaries which have risen 10.2%. She also stated another increase was in athletics and health services and that transportation was at 44.6% which is an outcome from the bid. An overall increase of 7.9% from FY24.

Superintendent Wong went over the “Profile of a Natick School Graduate” which consists of Recovery of Academic and Profile of a Graduate Vision, Title I and RTI Support Restructure, Literacy: Science of Reading/Dyslexia Informed Instruction Reliable Intervention Procedures and Communication, Curriculum and Assessment, and Whole Child and COVID Brain Recovery: Career Pathways, Athletics, Arts, and Health.

The next item she went over was the Key Budget Elements to understand the 7.9% over the prior year such as Transportation, Grant funding positions to support student needs, Trending need for services, Athletics, Out of District Tuition, Use of one time funding, and staff reductions. The grant funding staffing positions to support student needs were on the ESSER grants.

Superintendent Wong discussed the changing in new staff for the trending need for Student Services which consists of Elementary Library Media Specialists, Elementary Assistant Principals, Elementary and Middle School Math Coaches, Elementary Math Interventionists, Digital and Personalized Learning, Elementary School Counselors, and Director of Social and Emotional Learning and Equity. She said that the biggest impact from the pandemic was in the lower grades and they are in need of more support so best to invest in the early years.

Superintendent Wong went over the overview of FY25 Funding Gap. She stated that she appreciates the partnership with the Town that includes Jamie Errickson, John Townsend and John Marshall. Superintendent Wong commented that they are looking at a stipend for a Library Head from present staff - not looking to hire new. She mentioned that there will be vacancies that will not be refilled and positions that are going to be eliminated.

Superintendent Wong covered the Entitlement Grant Summary. The ESSER I and III grants are COVID related grants. She said that Natick invested well in using the one time funding to address the immediate needs of the students and that a lot of the grants are coming to an end.

Superintendent Wong talked about the Circuit Breaker Revenue over a period of time. She said that it has been a healthy reimbursement coming from the State.

Superintendent Wong commented that use of the one time funding that Natick has benefitted from has bolstered the programs we have offered. The chart for DESE Cohort Comparisons shows the per pupil spending with neighboring districts.

The budget hearing is scheduled for March 4, 2024.

Ms. Gorseth questioned the enrollment projection for entering kindergarten and does that take into account the Town census data? Mr. Gillis explained how they came to an estimate for entering kindergarten enrollment. He said it is hard to predict not knowing how many children will be born each year plus the moving in and out of the community. Ms. Gorseth stated her concern for the amount of children under the age of 5.

Ms. McDonough commented that she was uncomfortable with the reductions which we haven't seen in years. She feels there should be room to go back to the Town for us using less of the circuit breaker or us not having to cut as many positions and would like to see some ongoing negotiations with the Town in regards to that.

Superintendent Wong commented that initially the Town allocation is higher than where we started. The Town is also facing the end of the one time funding. She said that she is very sensitive to the fact that the district has not experienced any thought of staffing reduction for over the last few years.

Ms. McDonough asked if there are positions that should not be reduced and if we are feeling anxious about it, can we talk to the Town and say that we don't want to do this? Superintendent Wong commented that there was a lot of thought put into this matter and we are still advocating for additional funds but it would be to decrease the dependency on circuit breaker.

Ms. McDonough commented about having an adequate budget to fund the district and the contract.

Superintendent Wong stated that everyone here offers value and that we will try to use vacancies as much as possible but it's a necessary step to try and decrease the base moving forward for a bigger margin to use for FY26.

Ms. Brunell questioned the amount of money that was to be saved from the closure of the Johnson School because the amount that was originally stated was a lot more than what was put into the budget line. Superintendent Wong stated that she hadn't done the analysis but thought over the period of time from when Johnson had all their classrooms (6) to the amount of classrooms now which is about three, and that could be the reason.

Mr. Brunell questioned the improvements that were discussed in past meetings for an enrollment study and a turf field. Are those improvements not being suggested for the coming school year? Superintendent Wong stated that part of the allocation to a higher amount in the operating budget had come out of free cash earmarked for capital and was reallocated to the operating budget. She also commented that the FY25 Capital is still being worked on at this time. Superintendent Wong stated that she thought the design work for the field would be able to get done but probably won't be able to fund the field on the same timeline. Fundraising could be possible?

Mr. Gillis stated that Town had sent a list for discussion for the following: furniture at \$50,000, school switch replacement at \$100,000, design for the high school field at \$200,000, and WiFi replacement project at \$400,000.

Ms. Gorseth asked if the enrollment study got pushed forward or not currently on the long term capital? Mr. Gillis said it has been pushed to FY26.

Superintendent Wong mentioned that the deadline for the MSBA for Memorial is April 12th.

Ms. Brunell asked what happened to the bus subsidy and why it disappeared for FY24? Mr. Luff said that we agreed to it and that we had increased bus fee revenue (because of COVID) so we had used those monies to offset for the year.

Ms. Brunell wondered about the prepay? Superintendent Wong stated that prepay is dependent on the availability of surplus at the end of the year so it will not be an option.

Ms. Brunell questioned when we will know the reimbursement rate for the circuit breaker? Mr. Gillis stated not until the State budget has passed. Superintendent Wong commented that it would be in the fall.

Chair Fuxman asked about the circuit breaker and that it is projected to go down in 2025 because of the reduction in tuition so if tuition is going down, is it a net reduction to our budget? Mr. Gillis stated that it's a reimbursement program so it's a cold comfort to get a high circuit breaker even though we have been able to benefit from it.

Superintendent Wong commented that we always want to try and keep students in the district but if not, it's in their best interest.

Chair Fuxman commented about staff reductions which we haven't seen in a long time and that it is concerning. He also stated that the reductions will not have an affect on the quality of education for the students.

Ms. Brunell asked about the budget going forward and if it is available for the public? Superintendent Wong said not at this time.

4. [February 1st Enrollment Report](#)

Ms. McDonough asked about the larger class sizes (high school) and that she didn't see any addition of staff in the proposed budget for FY25 so is it an assumption that we will be able to manage those class sizes? Superintendent Wong stated that there \$137,000 for improvements related to Student Services and there is a .5 FTE allocated to the high school embedded in that number spread out to different departments.

Ms. McDonough then asked about the elementary level? Superintendent Wong stated there are no additional FTEs for the elementaries. Ms. McDonough mentioned that in the past we were able to budget to add a teacher (due to class size) usually for the elementary level, and are we able to? Superintendent Wong stated that it is not in the budget for this year but if we needed to add a teacher, we would then go over budget. She also commented that one of the middle schools is higher in enrollment so there will be a reallocation of staff.

Chair Fuxman asked for a motion.

Mr. Brand made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:38 pm. Ms. Gorseth seconded the motion.

Chair Fuxman took roll call to vote:

Ms. Flathers - yes

Ms. Brunell - yes

Mr. Brand - yes

Ms. McDonough - yes

Ms. Gorseth - yes
Chair Fuxman - yes

Motion passed 6-0-0

DRAFT

ITEM TITLE: Public Hearing - FY25 Budget
DATE:
ITEM TYPE:
ITEM SUMMARY: LINK - FY25 Budget Hearing
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:
RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	File Name	Type
FY25 Budget Hearing	3.4.24_Natick_Public_Schools_FY25_Budget_Hearing_March_4__2024.pdf	Cover Memo



Natick Public Schools Preliminary FY25 Budget Summary

February 5, 2024 (First Presentation)

February 26, 2024

March 4, 2024, PUBLIC HEARING



ENROLLMENT

Natick Public Schools Cohort Survival Only - THREE Year Avg - Post COVID Shutdown Year

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Live Births	417	390	394	397	364	356	380	360	360	360	360	360
School Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
	Multiplier											
		10/1/2021	10/1/2022	10/1/2023								
		Actuals										
PK	0.3227	132	138	124	128	117	115	123	116	116	116	116
K	0.9385	406	356	359	373	342	334	357	338	338	338	357
1	1.0360	359	418	354	372	386	354	346	369	350	350	350
2	1.0054	382	368	426	356	374	388	356	348	371	352	352
3	1.0164	421	395	371	433	362	380	394	362	354	378	358
4	0.9885	394	420	392	367	428	358	376	390	357	350	354
5	1.0149	413	405	429	398	372	434	363	381	396	363	379
6	0.9873	409	411	404	424	393	367	429	358	376	391	350
7	0.9982	434	404	412	403	423	392	367	428	358	376	358
8	1.0152	412	442	414	418	409	429	398	372	435	363	396
9	0.9939	394	420	433	411	416	407	427	396	370	432	379
10	1.0116	384	395	427	438	416	421	412	432	400	374	365
11	1.0116	387	380	381	432	443	421	425	416	437	405	442
12	1.0034	381	394	378	382	433	445	422	427	418	438	380
Pre-K		132	138	124	128	117	115	123	116	116	116	116
k-4		1962	1957	1902	1900	1891	1814	1829	1807	1770	1767	1770
5-8		1668	1662	1659	1643	1597	1623	1556	1540	1564	1492	1482
9-12		1546	1589	1619	1664	1708	1693	1686	1670	1625	1649	1566
k-12		5176	5208	5180	5207	5197	5130	5071	5017	4959	4908	4818
Total All		5308	5346	5304	5335	5314	5245	5194	5133	5075	5024	4934
Change				-42	31	-21	-70	-51				

Calculation based on cohort survival method - HOUSING GROWTH NOT YET INCLUDED

Live Birth Data from Town Clerk 2017 forward, 2023 births forward is estimated, 273 reported thru 9/30

children born, but not yet enrolled

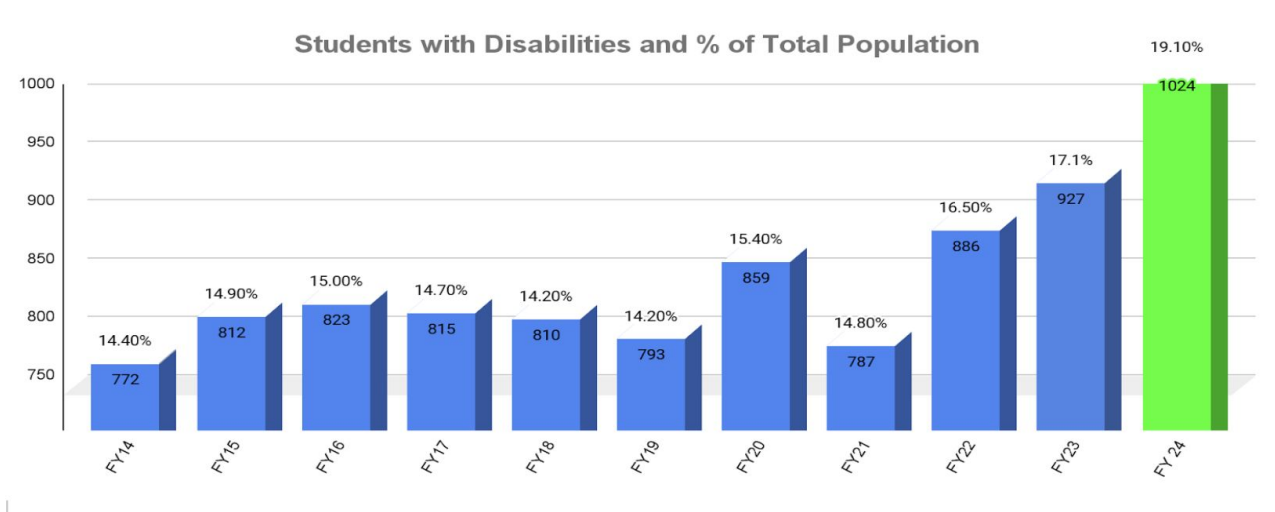
Shaded birth rates and enrollment projection data based on estimated births;

Multiplier is a THREE year average from most recent history available, COVID year and prior not factored in



SPECIAL EDUCATION TREND

SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

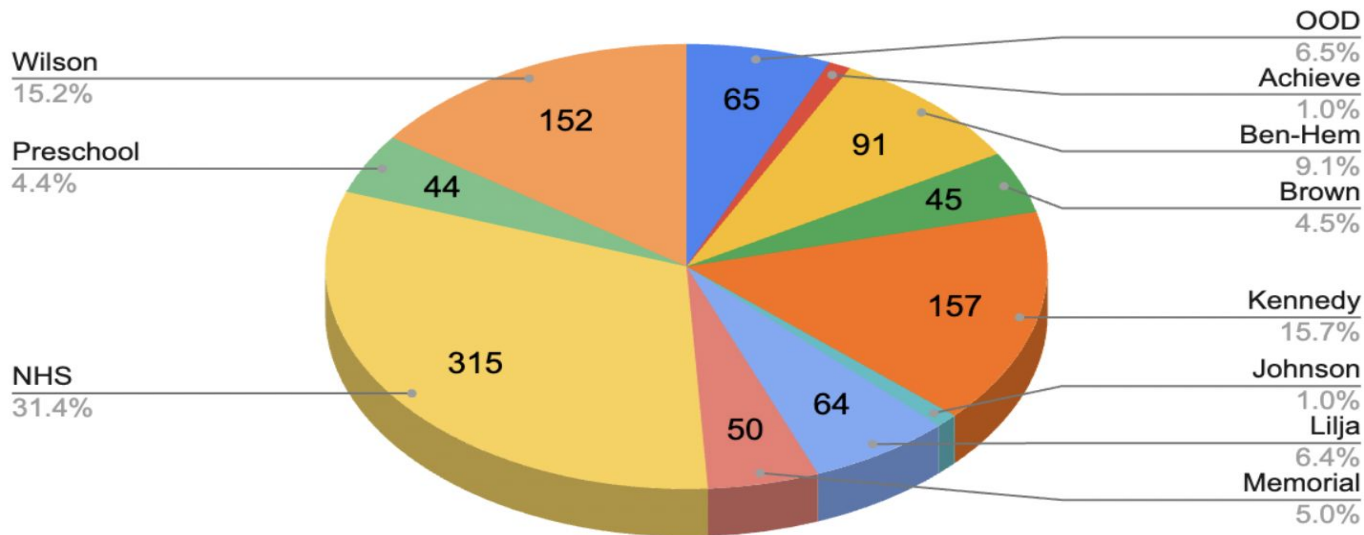


Statewide: 19.4



SPECIAL EDUCATION

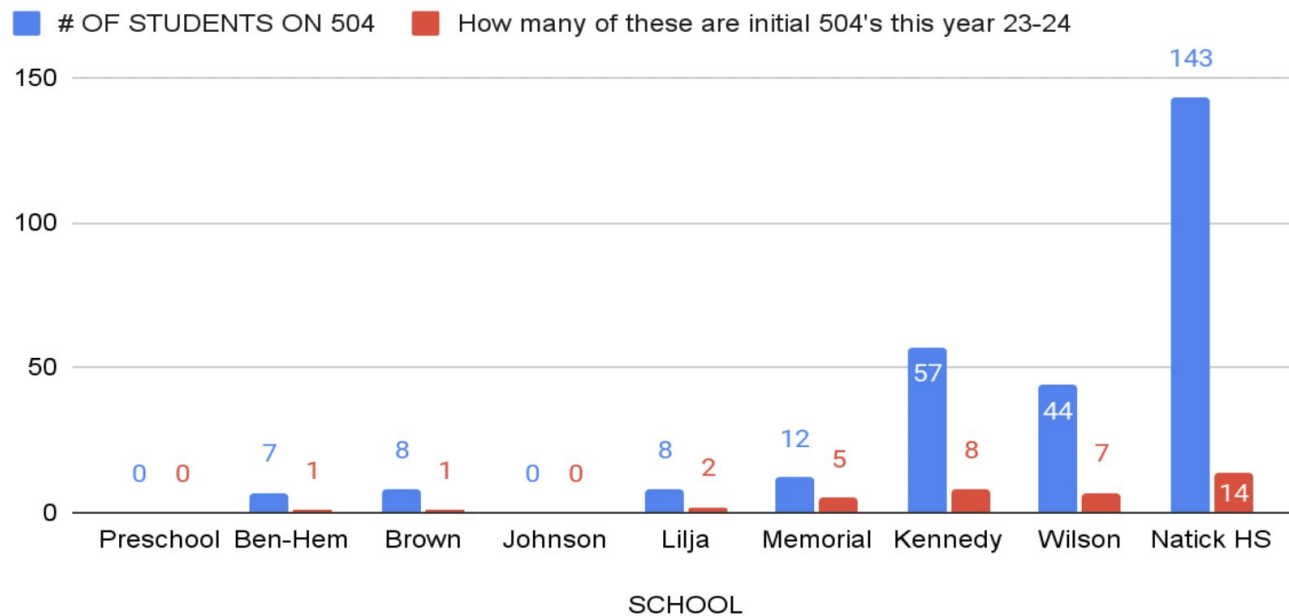
Special Education Population by School





504 ACCOMMODATION PLANS

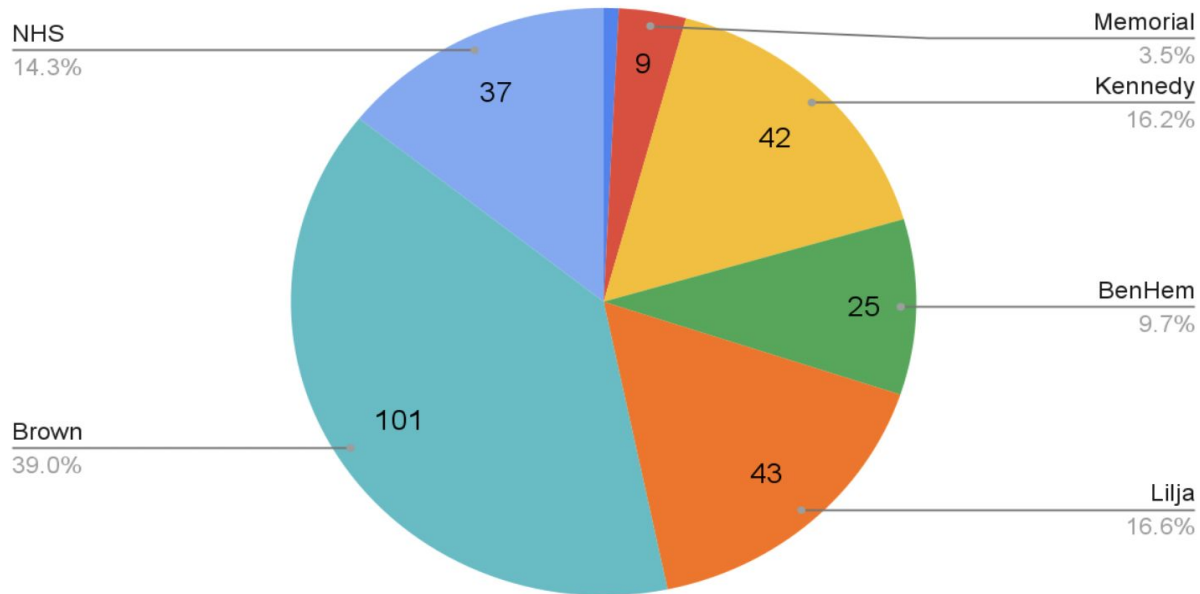
2023-24 504 Plan Info: Total Plans=281 to date





ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS SUMMARY

23-24 ACTIVE EL STUDENTS; TOTAL=259





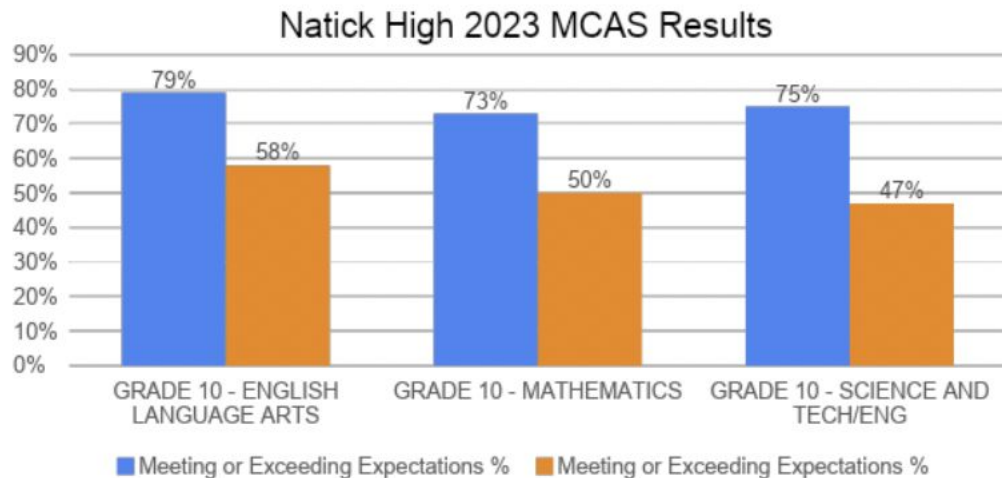
HOMELESS STUDENT ENROLLMENT

McKinney-Vento 2020-2024

YEAR	20-21`	21-22	22-23	23-24
Population	41	43	45	65



GRADE 10 MCAS 2023



Note: "Partially Meeting Expectations" scores are good enough for students to graduate provided they continue to take advancing courses in Grades 11 & 12.

Grade 10 Students will be given 5 opportunities before their Class June Graduation to retake the test to achieve a passing score. **About 96% of NHS students graduate in 4 years, about 97% in five years.**

Grade 10 MCAS is required for Graduation.

Grade 10 students scored:

- 36.2% higher in ELA
- 46.0% higher in Math
- 59.6% higher in Science

than the state average in the combined Meeting or Exceeding Expectations category.

NHS students that score proficient or advanced on the all facets of Grade 10 exam will be considered well prepared for a 4-Year State College or University

https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/achievement_level.aspx?lkid=32&orgcode=01980000&orgtypecode=5&



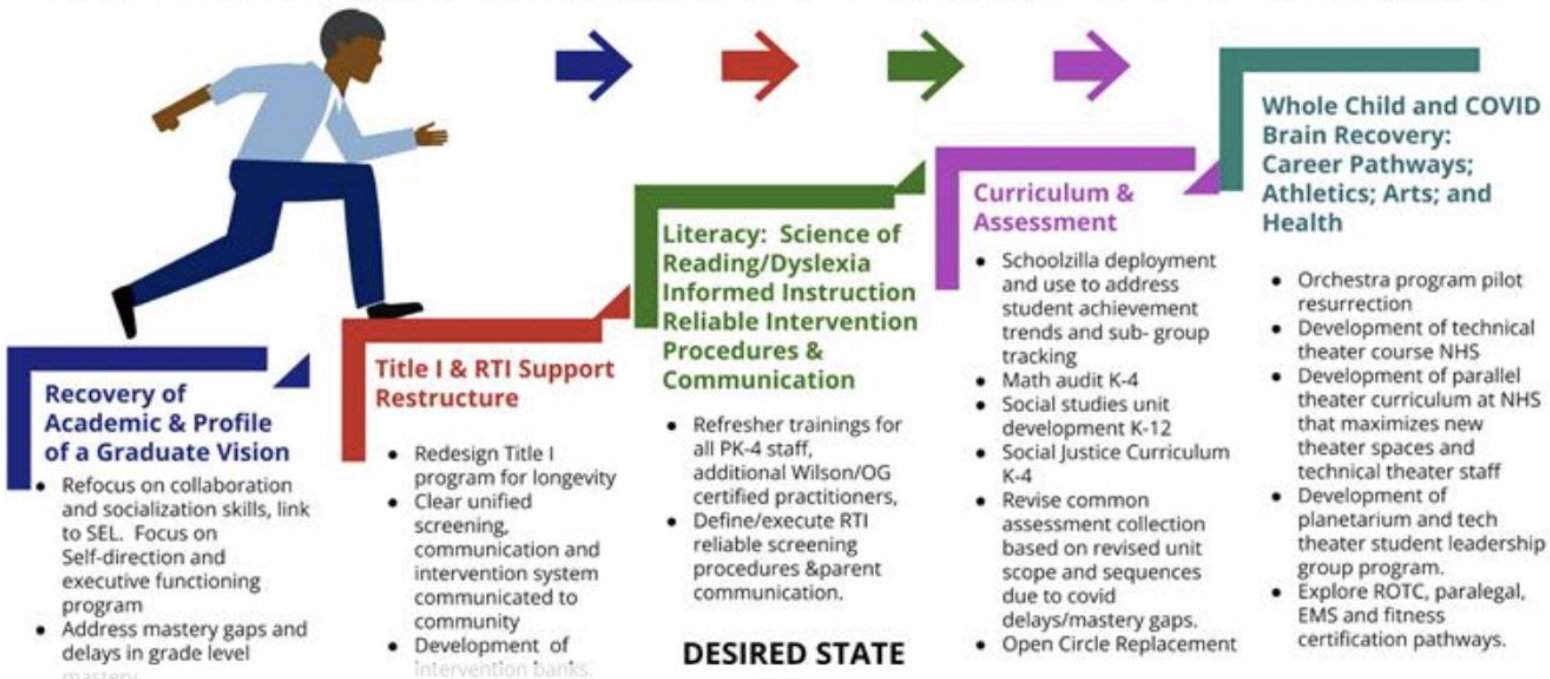
FY25 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

SALARY OR			Sum of FY24	Sum of FY25 LS	Sum of FY25 LS	% Change
NON-SALARY	NPS Categories	Sum of FY23 Actual	ORIGINAL APPROP	Budget Request	Dollar Change	from FY24
SALARIES	ADMIN & SUPPORT	\$ 3,687,484	\$ 3,773,551	\$ 4,054,171	\$ 280,621	7.4%
	INSTRUCTION	\$ 57,333,271	\$ 59,231,202	\$ 65,202,101	\$ 5,970,899	10.1%
	ATHLETICS& ACTIVITIES	\$ 1,300,715	\$ 967,708	\$ 1,201,585	\$ 233,877	24.2%
	HEALTH SERVICES	\$ 1,131,949	\$ 1,132,451	\$ 1,281,758	\$ 149,307	13.2%
	FACILITIES	\$ 60,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
	TECHNOLOGY	\$ 168,550	\$ 192,247	\$ 195,600	\$ 3,353	1.7%
	BENEFITS & EQUIP	\$ 30,650	\$ 30,118	\$ 35,658	\$ 5,540	18.4%
SALARIES Total		\$ 63,712,618	\$ 65,327,277	\$ 71,970,873	\$ 6,643,597	10.2%
NON-SALARY	ADMIN & SUPPORT	\$ 646,556	\$ 1,113,115	\$ 1,201,045	\$ 87,930	7.9%
	INSTRUCTION	\$ 2,947,444	\$ 3,381,111	\$ 3,403,708	\$ 22,597	0.7%
	ATHLETICS& ACTIVITIES	\$ 235,718	\$ 111,872	\$ 110,678	\$ (1,194)	-1.1%
	HEALTH SERVICES	\$ 148,886	\$ 165,140	\$ 195,140	\$ 30,000	18.2%
	FACILITIES	\$ 2,395,243	\$ 3,108,734	\$ 2,719,750	\$ (388,984)	-12.5%
	TECHNOLOGY	\$ 1,004,326	\$ 1,098,900	\$ 1,149,650	\$ 50,750	4.6%
	BENEFITS & EQUIP	\$ 3,235	\$ 3,332	\$ 3,332	\$ (0)	0.0%
	TRANSPORTATION	\$ 3,249,400	\$ 3,280,817	\$ 4,744,066	\$ 1,463,249	44.6%
	TUITIONS	\$ 4,602,983	\$ 5,688,836	\$ 4,370,860	\$ (1,317,976)	-23.2%
NON-SALARY Total		\$ 15,233,791	\$ 17,951,857	\$ 17,898,228	\$ (53,629)	-0.3%
Grand Total		\$ 78,946,409	\$ 83,279,134	\$ 89,869,102	\$ 6,589,968	7.9%



PROFILE OF A NATICK SCHOOL GRADUATE

Excel in academic achievement, and Profile of a Natick Graduate (POG) competencies for all groups and subgroups of students.





KEY FY25 BUDGET ELEMENTS

- Transportation
 - New bid
 - Bus subsidy
- Incorporates grant funded staffing positions to support
 - student needs and
 - district STP goals
- Increased and increasing need for services
- Out of District Tuition
- Use of one time funding
- Staffing reductions
- Modest improvements



HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT NEW STAFFING

- Increased need for student services
- Elementary Library Media Specialists
- Elementary Assistant Principals
- Elementary and Middle School Math Coaches
- Elementary Math Interventionists
- Digital and Personalized Learning
- Elementary School Counselors
- Director of Social and Emotional Learning and Equity



STAFFING CHANGES FOR FY25

Elementary

- 3.0 Professional Support (related to Johnson closure)
- 4.0 Instructional Support
- + 1.0 Special Educator (specialized program)

Middle School

- 1.0 Classroom Teacher (decreased enrollment)
- 3.0 WMS will move to KMS (shifted enrollment)
- + 1.0 Student Services (EL)

High School

- + .5 Classroom Teachers (EL, math, health and wellness)

Central Administration

- 3.0 (Administration, finance, and operations)



OVERVIEW OF FY25 BUDGET FUNDING GAP

Original FY24 Appropriation	83,279,134		
FY25 level service at 7.9%	89,869,102	[incl CB offset = 3,381,994]	
Difference	6,589,968		
Proposed available funding 4.22%	3,516,165	86,795,299	[Incl 1.6 mi ARPA]
Bus .52%	429,844		
Remainder	2,643,959		
	2,000,000	Additional CB offset	
	+149,780	Improvements	
		137,280 SS	
		12,500 Gen'l Education	
	793,639	Remaining Gap	
	-135,000	Johnson Closure	
	-658,739	Possible staff reductions	
Revised FY25 Budget at 7.1%	0.00	Remaining Gap	

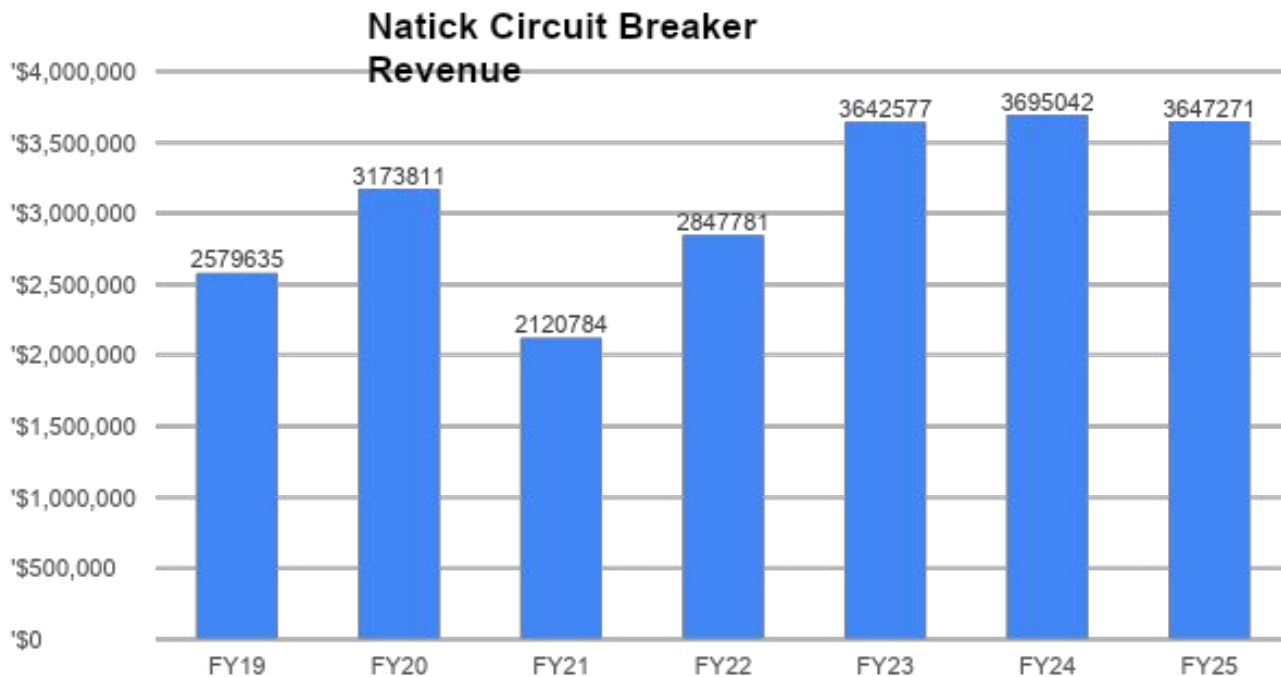


ENTITLEMENT GRANT SUMMARY

Grant Name	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25 Est.
ESSER 1	\$ 279,511	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
ESSER III	\$ 464,968	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
ESSER III	\$ -	\$ 1,022,514	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Title II - A - Teacher Quality	\$ 86,820	\$ 85,836	\$ 86,906	\$ 77,194	\$ 77,194
Title II :ELA Acquisition -EL Migrant	\$ 25,654	\$ 26,952	\$ 25,166	\$ 32,777	\$ 32,777
Federal: IDEA	\$ 1,277,806	\$ 1,335,270	\$ 1,373,398	\$ 1,488,851	\$ 1,488,851
ARP: SPED	\$ -	\$ 305,273	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Early Childhood Special Ed - Fed	\$ 33,559	\$ 34,003	\$ 35,975	\$ 36,934	\$ 36,934
ARP: SPED Early Childhood	\$ -	\$ 28,447	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
ARP: Homeless	\$ -	\$ 9,010	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Title I	\$ 198,875	\$ 206,448	\$ 464,052	\$ 210,028	\$ 210,028
Title IV, Part A: Student Support & Enrichment	\$ 24,749	\$ 10,000	\$ 14,772	\$ 34,005	\$ 34,005
Total Entitlements	\$ 2,391,942	\$ 3,063,753	\$ 2,000,269	\$ 1,879,789	\$ 1,879,789
% Change From Prior Year		28%	-35%	-6%	0%



CIRCUIT BREAKER REVENUE





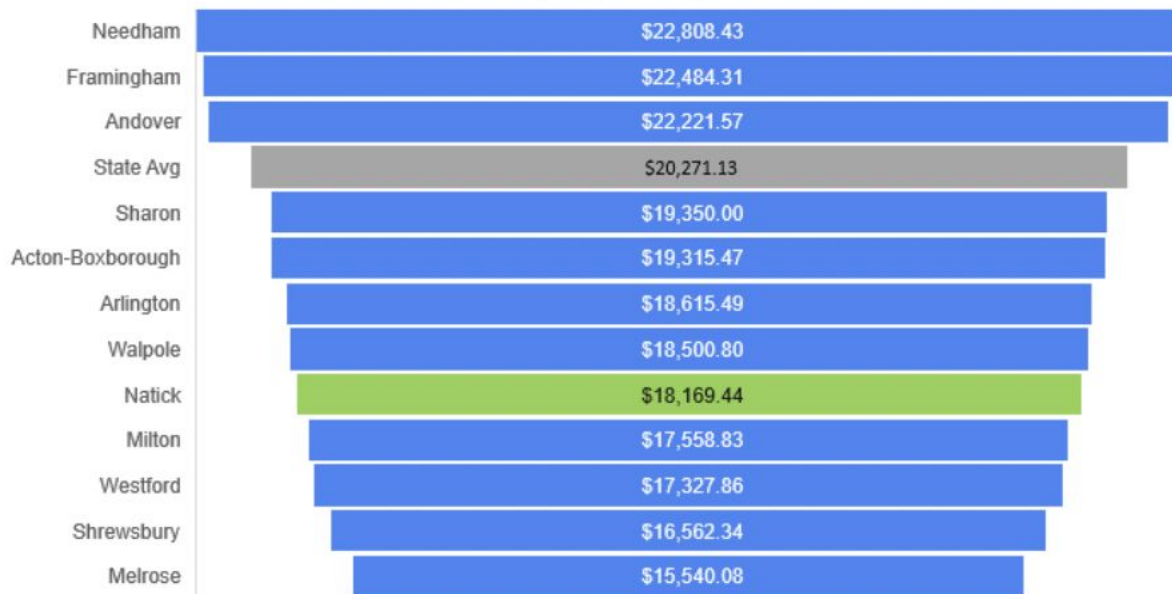
CIRCUIT BREAKER OVERVIEW

- To be received in FY24: 3,647,271
- Projected use of circuit breaker for FY24: 3,943,821
- Projected amount to carry forward to FY25: 2,700,000
- Projected to be received in FY25: 3,647,271 (70% Reimb)
- Projected offset for FY25: 5,381,994
- Projected remaining in FY25 to carry forward to FY26: 965,277
- Projected to be received in FY26 will be less than for FY25 due to decrease in tuition costs in FY25



DESE COHORT COMPARISONS

FY22 Total Per Pupil Spending, DESE Cohort





FY25 BUDGET REVISED 2/26/24

SALARY OR NON-SALARY	NPS Categories	FY23 Actual	FY24 ORIGINAL APPROP	FY25 LS Budget Request	FY25 LS Dollar Change	% Change from FY24
SALARIES	ADMIN & SUPPORT	\$ 3,687,484	\$ 3,773,551	\$ 4,054,171	\$ 280,621	7.4%
	INSTRUCTION	\$ 57,333,271	\$ 59,231,202	\$ 65,202,101	\$ 5,970,899	10.1%
	ATHLETICS& ACTIVITIES	\$ 1,300,715	\$ 967,708	\$ 1,201,585	\$ 233,877	24.2%
	HEALTH SERVICES	\$ 1,131,949	\$ 1,132,451	\$ 1,281,758	\$ 149,307	13.2%
	FACILITIES	\$ 60,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%
	TECHNOLOGY	\$ 168,550	\$ 192,247	\$ 195,600	\$ 3,353	1.7%
	BENEFITS & EQUIP	\$ 30,650	\$ 30,118	\$ 35,658	\$ 5,540	18.4%
	Salary Net Modifications			\$ (644,969)		
SALARIES Total		\$ 63,712,618	\$ 65,327,277	\$ 71,325,904	\$ 5,998,628	9.2%
NON-SALARY	ADMIN & SUPPORT	\$ 646,556	\$ 1,113,115	\$ 1,201,045	\$ 87,930	7.9%
	INSTRUCTION	\$ 2,947,444	\$ 3,381,111	\$ 3,403,708	\$ 22,597	0.7%
	ATHLETICS& ACTIVITIES	\$ 235,718	\$ 111,872	\$ 110,678	\$ (1,194)	-1.1%
	HEALTH SERVICES	\$ 148,886	\$ 165,140	\$ 195,140	\$ 30,000	18.2%
	FACILITIES	\$ 2,395,243	\$ 3,108,734	\$ 2,719,750	\$ (388,984)	-12.5%
	TECHNOLOGY	\$ 1,004,326	\$ 1,098,900	\$ 1,149,650	\$ 50,750	4.6%
	BENEFITS & EQUIP	\$ 3,235	\$ 3,332	\$ 3,332	\$ (0)	0.0%
	TRANSPORTATION	\$ 3,249,400	\$ 3,280,817	\$ 4,744,066	\$ 1,463,249	44.6%
	TUITIONS	\$ 4,602,983	\$ 5,688,836	\$ 4,370,860	\$ (1,317,976)	-23.2%
NON-SALARY Total		\$ 15,233,791	\$ 17,951,857	\$ 17,898,228	\$ (53,629)	-0.3%
Grand Total		\$ 78,946,409	\$ 83,279,134	\$ 89,224,133	\$ 5,944,999	7.1%

ITEM TITLE: FY25 Budget Discussion

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ITEM TITLE:

Natick Adoption of Specialized Code as Specified in the Warrant Article
for Spring Town Meeting

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND

INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ITEM TITLE: District Communications - Corrie Kerr-Director of Communications

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY: LINK - Communications Presentation

BACKGROUND

INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ATTACHMENTS:

Description	File Name	Type
communications presentation	CK_Presentation_3.4.24.pdf	Cover Memo



Corrie Kerr, Director of Communications

Presentation to NPS School Committee

March 4, 2024

Role & Responsibilities

The Natick Public Schools Director of Communications is tasked with:

- Managing **internal** and **external** communication channels.
- **Engaging stakeholders** through communications **tools** and **strategies**.
- Handling and overseeing **media relations** and **crisis communication**.
- Providing **editorial guidance** and **communications counsel**.



- Evaluating **technology tools** and maximizing the utility of existing digital resources **to enhance communications impact**.
- Analyzing relevant **data** to guide short- and long-term communications projects.
- Maintaining **brand** visual identity, brand integrity and consistent **messaging** where applicable.
- Seeking out **grant opportunities** and writing or assisting with applications.



- Communicating **the story of NPS**, its **staff** and **students** to
 - celebrate **accomplishments**
 - share **what's going on** at NPS
 - highlight event and engagement **opportunities**
 - **link** news, initiatives and developments to Strategic Plan; Natick Portrait of a Graduate; as well as to SC, Superintendent, Central Office priorities
 - effectively support **change management/transitions**



Audiences

Internal Audiences

Staff
School Committee

Blended Audiences

Town of Natick – municipal government
Students
Parents and guardians

External Audiences

Community members	Legislators
Media	Prospective Natick families
School partners/ Non-profit organizations	Prospective NPS employees



Channels

- District and school websites
- Email broadcast notices
- Engage (Family + Community) and Insider (Staff)
E-Newsletters
- Social media
- Individualized emails/form responses
- Print publications
- Shared drives (& Intranet)
- Surveys
- District mobile app (mirrors website)
- External media opportunities
- Staff engagement events
- Family engagement opportunities

Audience Behavior Data: Newsletter



Open rate for
The Engage
e-newsletter

Source: SchoolMessenger
Communicate
E-mail Broadcast software



By 5 days after send,
view count on Smore =
90 percent of recipients

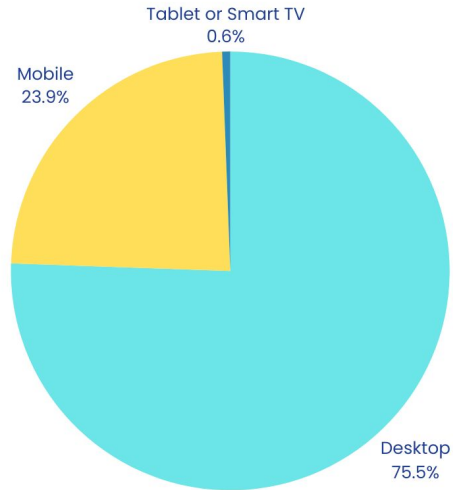
Source: Smore.com
Newsletter creation/hosting software

Likely reality:
Portion of views
from readers looking
2x or so

Device preference:
60% Desktop
40% Mobile

Audience Behavior Data: Website

Users by Device Category

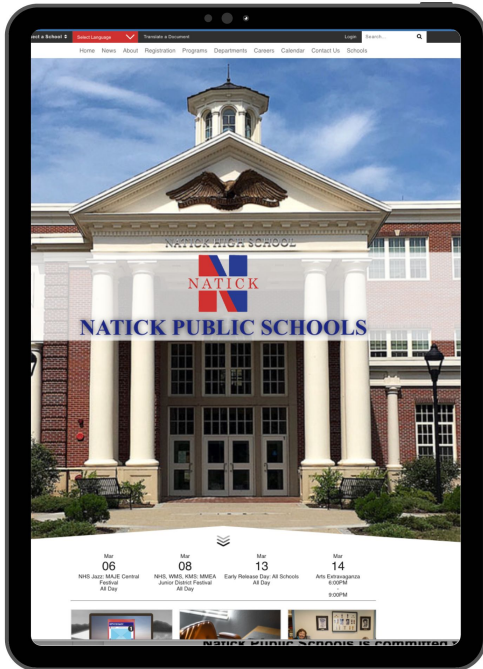


Number of
Unique monthly visitors

26,000

Source: Google Analytics

UX Improvements: With Users in Mind



SEO Fixes

BEFORE

URL is not on Google
This page is not indexed. Pages that aren't indexed can't be served on Google. See the details below to learn why it wasn't indexed. [Learn more](#)

VIEW CRAWLED PAGE Page changed? REQUEST INDEXING

Page indexing Page is not indexed: Blocked due to access forbidden (403)

Discovery

Sitemaps No referring sitemaps detected

Referring page <http://www.domainorgan.com/natickps.org>
<http://www.whois.com/natickps.org>

Crawl

google.com/search?q=natick+schools&rlz=1C5GCEM_enUS1076US1076&oq=natick+&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWU...
SchoolMess LOGI... NPS Web NPS Web Login Visual Thesaurus Merriam-Webster Bitly

Google natick schools

News Images Calendar Maps Ranking Closed Jobs Shopping Email

About 8,410,000 results (0.38 seconds)

Results for **Natick, MA** · Choose area

Natick Public Schools
<https://www.natickps.org>

Natick Public Schools

AFTER

Natick Public Schools
<https://www.natickps.org>

Natick Public Schools: Home

Discover excellence at **Natick Public Schools**, an innovative and high-performing district in the MetroWest region of Massachusetts.

Calendar
Access the Natick Public Schools' 2023-2024 school year ...

For Parents
Quick Links · PowerSchool Parent Portal · Classlink Portal ...

Departments
Teaching Learning and Innovation · Digital Learning · Athletics · Art ...

Natick High School
Calendar - Programs & Activities - Contact Us - School Info - ...

[More results from natickps.org »](#)

Looking Ahead

Among goals & projects considered are:

- Increasing opportunities for 2-way communication, collaboration & input
Extensive Internal and external discussions, workshops and more
- SMS notification capability
- New website vendor
- Robust Communications Plan – Including efforts directed toward aligning communications across the district (& with other entities)
- Updated Communications Guide
- Additional content audits and progress dashboards



Contact Info

Corrie Kerr
Director of Communications

ckerr@natickps.org
communications@natickps.org



ITEM TITLE:

Approve School Committee FY25 Budget

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:

ITEM TITLE: Vote on School Committee Support of Adoption of Specialized Code as Specified in the Warrant Article for Spring Town Meeting

DATE:

ITEM TYPE:

ITEM SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND

INFORMATION:

RECOMMENDATION:
