



NEWTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

RUTHANNE FULLER– EX OFFICIO	
Newton School Committee Members	
WARD	
I	Bridget Ray-Canada
II	Margaret Albright
III	Anping Shen
IV	Diana Fisher Gomberg
V	Steven Siegel, Vice-Chair
VI	Ruth Goldman, Chair
VII	Kathy Shields
VIII	Matthew Miller

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - **DRAFT Minutes**

Date: April 1, 2019

Location: Education Center 100 Walnut St., Rm 210, Newton, MA 02460

Meeting Called by: Chair Goldman at 6:30 pm

Members Present: Ray-Canada (left at 7:30 & returned at ?), Albright, Shen, Fisher Gomberg (left at 8:45), Siegel, Goldman, Shields, Miller,

Students Present: Fleishman, Mayor Fuller
Mathews, Halpern, Lopez, Jampel

Staff Present:

Toby Romer, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, **Mary Eich**, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, **Liam Hurley**, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, **Karen Shmukler**, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Jen Shore, Curriculum Coordinator.

Other Staff presenting:

Principals: Henry Turner (NNHS), Joel Stembridge (NSHS), Ayesha Farag (Williams), Diana Beck (Zervas), Rebecca Brogadir (Ward), Eric Sprung (Cabot), Joel Jocelyn (Franklin)
Teachers: Michele Leong (NNHS), Katani Sumner (NSHS), Gerry Gagnon (NSHS), Melissa Hanenberger

Chair Goldman opened the Public Hearing at 6:30 and heard from the following speakers:

Bill Hecht, 32 Oldham Rd, Newton – He believes the school budget is too expensive. He wants the SC to request reimbursement for out-of-district placements like non-residents and METCO students.

Josh Norman, 36 Rowe St., Newton – He believes the schools cost too much money and he had suggestions as to how to cut the budget. Also stated that out-of district costs too much and we need full reimbursement. Claims NPS can't afford to give 6% raises and step/cola raises should be limited to 1%.

Mike Zilles, 39 Nonantum St. Newton – He asked the SC to vote against the budget until a fair NTA contract is in place. He asked when the last time a new contract was in place before the old one expired. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the SC claiming there is no money every time contract negotiations come up. He said NTA members will be speaking to let the SC members how hard they work and how hard it is to make ends meet.

Lily Eng, 17 Hemlock Rd. Newton – Lily spoke about her duties as a teacher at NSHS including assisting seniors in need of recommendations for colleges and scholarships. She typically will not say no to students even if it's something she is not contractually obligated to do. She stated that they are all committed to their responsibilities as educators. She is sad and disappointed and feeling like she may have to say no to the extras.

Joe Golding, 19 May St., Jamaica Plain, Stated that he believes that Newton has a lot of money and the NTA has faced 176 years of bad contracts. Offering 1%-2% contracts makes it seem like NPS does not care about its educators. NPS can find the money for "new: things, but when it comes to contracts there's no money. The gap between NPS and the NTA is really big.

Sue Cohen, 124 Mt. Vernon St., Newton (speaking for **Laura DiMambro** - 22 Nottingham Rd). She stated that reducing the aide's hours from 35 to 32 hours a week is a reduction of 8%. Unit C aides get paid for direct student support only. All other work associated with their job: receiving/replying to emails, plan behavior plans, IEP's, meet with counselors and other staff is not taken into account. NPS has benefitted from the free, unpaid hours of these dedicated staff.

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Jaime Rinaldi, 38 Morrison Ave., Somerville – He states it is a privilege to work in Newton but not without limits. He feels we are at a moment where NPS will become a workplace and not a community. He wants to see educational support staff treated fairly.

Amy McMahon, 1224 Boylston St., Newton – Special educators at NNHS do not support this budget. Special Ed aides and Behavioral Therapists deserve a decent living wage. Without these dedicated staff classes would not function. Newton North and Newton South are well known for their special ed programs.

Barry Hershenow, 5 Village Rock Lane, Natick – He stated that he graduated from NSHS, Brandeis and Georgetown Law schools and has been a TA at NNHS for four years. He also is an Uber driver, a coach and a tutor. He's worked in all math courses, he cares that students are engaged and learning to problem solve. He said he's at a disadvantage because he has no laptop/chromebook and asks for a living wage that's fair and technology to do his job.

Jeremiah Hill, 11 Rose St., Somerville - He urges the SC not to approve the budget until a contract is approved. He is a graduate of NSHS and has worked there for 17 years. He claims that parenthood should not be a privilege of the 1% Stingy 1% COLS's show the city doesn't care. There was a time when the Newton brand mattered, but now teachers are leaving for other districts. He fears NPS will become a second rate school system.

Hillary Lannon, 47 Adams St., Medford – She is a BT at Zervas. She urges the SC not to approve the budget until a contract is reached with the NTA. She states that 2/3 of the BT's hold masters degrees. Need better incentives to attract/keep these aides. She needs to work a second job to make ends meet. The need for BT's is growing. She invited the SC to come see STRIDE before they decide how much they're worth.

Chris O'Rourke, 117 Sanborn Ave., W. Roxbury – He urges the SC not to approve the budget until a contract is reached with the NTA. Before he accepted the position at Zervas he had many other offers. He and his wife are teachers and their income is not enough. He doesn't feel valued by the city. He thinks the city can do better.

Margaret Stassen, 157 Beaufort Ave. Needham – She asks why veteran TA's have to take a reduction to increase new TA's pay. They're held to high standards, yet they barely have time for lunch/bathroom breaks. They are advocates at IEP/counselor meetings. TA's are a great value, but are not paid for their teaching experience as teachers are.

Faye Cassell, Boston – NSHS. Teachers are young, motivated and work hard. Volunteer before/after school, advise clubs. There is a decline in morale since the opening contract negotiations were so low. She claims NPS cares about education, but not educators. The School community is built on the good will of teachers, but NPS has lost that. She urges the SC not to approve the budget until a fair contract is reached with the NTA.

Kimberly Vanaman, 22 Columbia Ave., Newton – She has been a BT for 18 years at Memorial Spaulding and she works three other jobs to make ends meet. COLA's have not kept up with inflation. She urges the SC not to approve the budget until a contract with the NTA is settled. She opposes the proposed cuts to the pay scale of long-term TA's. 18 years ago salaries in Newton were at the top – sadly Newton is now at the bottom. She urges the SC to restore Newton's premiere status to attract and retain the best.

Jo Louise Allen, 24 Indiana Terr., Newton - She states that she has great respect for the teachers. She has some issues with the proposed budget, 1) 1% marijuana money. She feels NPS needs more than .5 FTE at each high school and wants NPS to add what is needed to reduce the burden on teachers. 2) \$200K for Chromebooks is a waste of money right now. She suggests they re-use the sophomore Chromebooks and don't spend the money on purchasing more.

John Curley, Bellingham – NSHS teacher proud to be part of NTA tonight. He urges the SC not to pass the budget until a contract is reached with the NTA. Teachers need adequate resources. His commute is two hours R/T, but he can't afford to move closer to work. Unit C colleagues work more than one job and he questions whether a career in education is sustainable.

Ariana Foster, 42 West St., Newton – Lincoln Eliot - She urges the SC not to approve the budget until a contract with the NTA is settled. She urges the mayor to follow through on her campaign promise when she visited Lincoln Eliot.

Terry Altherr, 32 Auburn St., Newton - He is a graduate of NNHS and American University. He is in support of teachers, especially the aides. States he would not have made it through high school without them. He was distraught to learn that teachers don't feel supported by NPS.

Donna Thayer, 138 Warwick Rd. Newton – She said she assumes the members are on SC because they care. But it seems you don't really understand what aides do. They work with the most challenging kids as their gift. They are the "kid whisperers," but they go home to ice bite marks, change soiled clothes and are assaulted. Their daily reality is that they are the first responders, as the teacher is removing the other students out of the conflict the aide is heading into it to de-escalate it.

Chair Goldman thanked all those that spoke and closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 pm. and opened the Regular School Committee meeting beginning with Dr. Fleishman.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Fleishman said after an extensive search, it was with great pleasure that he introduce the new Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, Khita Pottinger-Johnson. Also here to welcome her are elementary principals Ayesha Farag, Diana Beck, Becca Brogadir, Eric Sprung and Joel Jocelyn. Khita most recently served as executive director for social and emotional learning instruction and support services for the Boston Public Schools. Khita impressed the committee with her highly reflective leadership style, deep understanding of teaching and learning, and a strong record of addressing both the academic and social and emotional needs of students. We are looking forward to working with her when she starts on July 1. Welcome Khita.

Ruth welcomed the staff who came to update the Committee on Newton Public Schools efforts to close the achievement gap, and then turned the floor over to Dr. Fleishman. David spoke about NPS' initiatives, partially based on research highlighted in the book "Whistling Vivaldi," about African Americans & Latinx students affected by stereotype threats and the work in "growth mindset." Dr. Fleishman said Mary Eich and Jen Shore will be updating the Committee on the Calculus Project initiative, one of the initiatives in place to address the achievement gap. The Calculus Project, founded by Adrian Mims and who is now its National Director, is generously supported by the Newton Schools Foundation.

Race and Achievement Update

Document: [Race and Achievement Memo](#)
[Race and Achievement Presentation](#)
[Calculus Project Presentation](#)

CALCULUS PROJECT

Jen Shore gave a brief history of the Calculus Project which began in the summer of 2013 with eight rising 7th grade METCO students and one middle school teacher. After the formation of an Advisory Committee in the fall of 2016 a few changes were made to the program:

- Summer of 2017 tuition charged on a sliding scale
- Fall 2017 students joined the program as rising 8th graders instead of 7 graders
- Summer 2018 rising 12th graders take the NCE course, *Bridge to Calculus*
- Fall 2018 – Expectation that all 9th graders enroll in Accelerated ACP or Honors

The Calculus Project is fortunate to have a strong Public/Private Partnership with the Newton Schools Foundations' *Match Program* and *STEM Funds* as well as private donor support.

This summer, the program will be held at Newton North High School and will last 3 weeks, Monday – Friday from 9:00 – 2:00. There will be eight classrooms and 7 returning teachers and one new teacher.

Questions, answers and discussion followed.

LEGACY SCHOLARS

The Committee then heard an update on the Legacy Scholars programs at Newton North by Michelle Leong and Newton South by Katani Sumner and Gerry Gagnon. The program was designed for Black and Latinx students who are meeting educational standard and engaged in extra-curricular activities with a goal to provide support to students in an affinity group model. They gave brief histories on the programs beginnings, the makeup of the students and how the programs have grown over the years. North currently has 50 students from the sophomore, junior and senior classes and South has 56 students from the junior and senior classes. The programs basic supports are regular meetings, mentoring, clustering initiatives, facilitated discussions and special activities. The program is expanding to the middle schools with a pilot program at Oak Hill with 20 students in the 7th and 8th grades.

Questions, answers and discussion followed.

TRANSITIONING TOGETHER (T²) - Newton North

Melissa Hanenberger, Jen Garrity updated the Committee this program at Newton North.

Transitioning Together, or T² as it's known, is a program designed to support first generation college students in the college application process during their junior and senior years. This year there are 35 seniors and 36 juniors.

The basics of T² are:

- Students are paired with a mentor from the community to assist with the college application process
- Monthly meetings
- College visits and workshops

Prior to the formation of T² the percentage of NNHS seniors going to post-secondary education was never above 90%, but starting with the class of 2014, the first graduating class of T², North's post-secondary rate has consistently been over 90%.

ON OUR WAY TO SUCCESS (OOWTS) – Newton South

Hai Choi, gave a brief history of and an update on Newton South's after school program which was established in 2017 by former counselor Jenni King and Katani Sumner. It was designed to support first generation college-bound and METCO students. Class of 2018 had 23 students and the current class has 28 students.

- Meetings 2 days a week from 2:30 – 5:00
- Two school counselors, a college & career counselor and an independent counselor

NSHS's graduation rate in 2018 was over 90%.

Questions, answers and discussion followed.

Ruth moved on to the consent items on the agenda and asked Gerry Gagnon from Newton South to speak about the anonymous donation being made to NSHS.

Gerry explained that not only did NNHS get a brand new building, but they got all up-to-date, state-of-the-art equipment as well. This biology donation will help bridge the gap between the two schools and he asks the Committee to approve it.

Discussion and Vote: NSHS Anonymous Donation

Document: [NSHS Donation](#)

Ruth called for a motion to approve the donation.

Motion: Ray-Canada

Second: Siegel

Vote: 8-0-1 (Fisher Gomberg absent) to approve the anonymous donation to NSHS.

Discussion and Vote: Bus Loop at 225 Nevada St.

Document: [225 Nevada St Bus Loop](#)

Discussion on whether the tree and flag pole will be removed. Liam Hurley stated that they will remain. Ruth called for a motion to vote.

Motion: Siegel

Second: Shen

Vote: 8-0-1 (Fisher Gomberg absent) to approve the Bus loop at 225 Nevada St.

Discussion: FY20 Budget

Document: [FY20 Proposed Budget](#)

SC members asked several questions regarding the Chromebook Initiative as it relates to requirements, Unit C staff, recycling the devices, etc. which Mary Eich and Karen Shmukler answered.

Adjourned: 9:15 pm

Lisa Mazzola

School Committee Secretary

Date: 5-2-19