



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

87 Linwood Avenue, Whitinsville, Massachusetts 01588 (508) 234-8156 FAX (508) 234-8469 www.nps.org

Michael LeBrasseur, Chairperson, mlebrasseur@nps.org,
Brian Paulhus, Steven Falconer, Allan Richards, Kathryn Atchue

Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Tuesday, February 9, 2021 7:00PM

**Remote public attendance only via the Zoom Link in accordance with the Governor of
Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting
Law G.L. c. 30A, Section 20**

- I. Call to Order (7:00)
- II. Statement regarding Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law

III. Attendance

Michael LeBrasseur	Present
Steven Falconer	Present
Brian Paulhus	Present
Allan Richards	Present
Kathryn Atchue	Present

Also in attendance were Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance Melissa Walker

- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- V. Statement of Mission
- VI. Public Comment

Comments for this meeting may be emailed in advance of the 7:00 p.m. start time to school_committee@nps.org. All comments will be recorded in the record, and all attempts will be made to mention them live during the meeting. Any emails received during the meeting before the public comment period ends will also be attempted to be mentioned

Northbridge Middle School Principle John Diorio presented a certificate of appreciation to School Committee member Steven Falconer. Falconer spent a day in the middle school observing and John wanted to show their appreciation.

VII. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Amy McKinstry gave a report that addressed the recent concerns surrounding non-traditional snow days. Amy provided insight as to why she called remote days including addressing student regression and how with all of the instruction days already lost; she finds it difficult to deprive students of instruction. She is still trying to fit in 180 days of instruction and encourages teachers to build snow-related activities into the instruction. Amy also addressed the disparity between cohort days falling on snow days and will continue to monitor the balance and make adjustments as needed. Amy understands the concern regarding the cohort C students struggling on fully remote days and took the time to speak with the teachers. The finding was that the vast majorities of the cohort C students have been actively participating on fully remote days and also have assistance. To also assist with this concern, Greg Rosenthal is offering February and April vacation academies for those students. In addition to that, they are working to get more kids into the schools, reinstate learning hubs and recommend students who are struggling with their

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remote learning days, while having someone oversee them and help with technology. Amy will also be hosting parent forums for NES and Balmer parents where they will have the opportunity to share thoughts, ideas, and concerns for the new NES. These will be held February 16th for NES and February 17th for Balmer. There are fliers sent out and posted on the website. Amy also took the time to thank the nurses and facilities staff for all of their hard work. A moment of silence was held to honor the passing of Henry Baker, a long-time employee at the central office.

VIII. Student Representative's Report

Student Representative Ruby Holtz provided a NHS focused update this week. She advised that the second quarter grades are out currently and that today was a fully remote learning day due to the snow. The snow caused the basketball games to be postponed to this Friday with the girl's team playing in Grafton and the boy's team playing in Northbridge. Both teams hosted their senior nights last week and the games will be livestreamed. The Ski Club will be meeting on Saturday February 27th at Berkshire East Ski Resort and the engineering students are currently learning how to code and program robots. Sports registration for the Fall 2 season is open now and the English Department has started a book club. Their first discussion will take place Friday, February 26th at 2:15pm. NHS and Quinsigamond Community College are partnering up to host a virtual decision day and the AP exam this year will be the full exam. All students taking AP courses will be required to take the exam.

IX. Consent Agenda

- A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from January 26, 2021
- B. Warrant 41-30s 1/21/2021 \$477,378.92
- C. High School Food Pantry Donation

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Kathryn Atchue. The vote was taken by roll call vote and the following votes were recorded:

Michael LeBrasseur	Yes
Steven Falconer	Yes
Brian Paulhus	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative
0 members having voted in the negative
The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 5-0.

X. Presentation

- A. Northbridge High School Update – Timothy McCormick

Northbridge High School Principal Timothy McCormick provided an update on the high school. He applauded the students and staff for their ongoing effort to promote safety within the school and went on to address the current number of students within the building while recognizing that there is still a need to bring more struggling students into the building. He advised that 52 students were brought in from being fully remote and an additional 37 students who were in the hybrid model are now going in 4 days each week. He provided the committee with an update on how the school is trying to bring a sense of normalcy for the students by allowing the band programming to be done outside and in the auditorium while also bringing back some clubs and sports, as well as hosting a NHS induction virtually. The high school will also be hosting an academy option for February break for students struggling with ELA and math. Tim went on to discuss the 8th grade orientation set up, the study skills meeting for parents who may need to learn more about the educational technology, and the two year grant the school received to support the growing engineering program from Project Lead The Way.

XI. Discussion

- A. 2021-2022 School Calendar

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Michael LeBrasseur advised that there are nine school days in June and the calendar currently has 10 listed. This will need to be updated. Amy McKinstry advised that one of the changes made to this calendar in comparison to the 2019-2020 calendar is that the professional development days are spread out instead of being loaded into one portion of the year. This will become an action item for the next School Committee meeting.

B. Spring Town Meeting Requests/Warrant Article

Included in the packet was a draft of the language that will be used for what they will ask for at the Spring Town Meeting. There is currently no concern over the three items listed being on the same article. Melissa Walker advised that if the School Committee wanted to break these items up they are able to, but she does not foresee there being any conflict. This will need approval at the next School Committee Meeting. Melissa also addressed the move away from IPass to a new SIS. The amount currently budgeted for IPass is \$36,000.00 and the estimates for a new system are falling around \$20,000.00. This will not happen until 2023 and there may be some savings.

C. Superintendent's Formative Evaluation

Superintendent Amy McKinstry detailed each of her goals including her professional practice goal, student learning goal, and district improvement goal. For each goal Amy included what is currently being done to achieve the goal and upcoming plans to continue achieving the goals. For her professional practice goal included items such as the Sunday night videos, posting on social media, and utilizing family liaisons. She plans to start a district-wide newsletter, host parent forums, parent workshops, and end of year celebrations. Her student learning goal included but was not limited to items such as August acceleration academies, bringing more students into the buildings, and ST Math. She plans to reestablish learning hubs, implement summer learning camps, and revise courses for incoming freshman that will address the learning loss. Some examples of what were included in her district improvement goal were the diversity and inclusion workshop and survey, the virtual book club for the Balmer administration, and the MSAA/MIAA DEI Summit. She plans to enroll the middle school and high school administrators in the Anti-defamation league, create a voluntary book club for staff and parents to address bias in schools, and promote inclusive school culture training through Safe School during the next full professional development day.

D. Building Level Reports on Student Progress – 2nd Quarter

Jill Healy, John Diorio, and Timothy McCormick presented updates from the schools regarding student progress. Director of Curriculum, Jill Healy, provided the update on NES and Balmer by providing insight on the benchmark assessments. She described how the benchmark assessments differ from the normal chapter tests and how using this testing helps achieve the proficiency goal for students by the end of the school year. It allows teachers to see progress and address any weaknesses while reflecting on things the students did well on and what they struggled in. Benchmark testing data also helps teachers identify what is needed for students to reach proficiency. Jill also touched on the grant received for ST Math, a visual instruction program to assist students in solving math with the use of puzzles. Jill advised that by looking at the data so far, the students are on track but the mastery of the standards is not expected yet. John Diorio provided an update on the middle school, first advising that with the 2nd quarter switch to hybrid from remote, there was a big adjustment phase that accounted for a potential dip in grades. We may see an improvement come the 3rd quarter as students are adjusted. John advised that the 7th grade teachers and team saw the most failures in the 1st quarter; however they rose to the challenge and cut the failure rate almost in half. These teachers set up parent meetings and came up with a success plan for every student that was failing their classes. John also advised they would be starting non-evaluative instructional rounds and coming up with incentives for students attending the school vacation academies. Timothy McCormick expanded with an update on the high school student progress. He addressed how cameras not being on, students not turning in assignments, and lack of participation are contributing to the student failure rate. He believes that they need to engage the parents further in their student's education, and spend more time trying to bring students into the building. He also addressed that seniors seem to be losing interest earlier this year than in previous years. Amy also addressed that cameras not being on and students not participating in class is a problem currently for student progress.

E. Building Capacity Review

The building capacity review is a feasibility report. Amy McKinstry advised they walked through each building and gathered information on the spreadsheet using the calculator provided by DESE. The measurements start 4 feet away from each wall to account for potential heaters, furniture, and extra desks. The capacity also depends on the size and

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state of some of the older classrooms. With 6 feet of distancing, NES is at capacity currently, Balmer would not be at capacity if they utilized the stage and library for instruction, NMS and NHS are not currently at capacity. Transportation is proving to be the problem, as busses are nearing capacity and depending on the route a student would need when coming into school, that bus might be full. Until the transportation mandates change, there is not much that can be done about this, although DESE is looking at upcoming changes for busses. In addition to that, if more spaces were to be utilized within the buildings, there would need to be more staff. Staffing continues to be a challenge, and with vaccinations for educators continuously being pushed, this poses more of a challenge to bring all students back.

F. Athletics Update (Fall 2 Season)

Athletic Director, Jeffrey Kozik provided an athletics update, advising first that the winter sports season is finishing up and proved to be successful with not many incidents occurring within our teams. There are hockey games Wednesday and Saturday and basketball games Thursday and Friday. These games will be livestreamed. They are currently working on a plan for the fall 2 sports season which will include cheerleading, football, indoor track, and unified basketball. Football will begin February 22nd, cheerleading and basketball will begin March 1st, and indoor track is set to begin March 15th. The hard deadline for the football schedule will be February 26th and registration for this athletics season will close on February 19th. He also discussed snow removal plans and allowing other schools to use our fields.

G. FY22 Budget Update

Director of Business and Finance, Melissa Walker, provided an update on the FY22 budget. Based on the parameters set back in November, they are moving along in the timeline as planned currently. They are incorporating the new elementary school, reorganizing positions, and are taking further review upon notice of available revenue. The draft budget has been reviewed with the committee during the budget meeting on January 25th, February 4th, and will be discussed again on February 11th. Right now the draft level service budget comes out to approximately 28.9 million, close to a level funded budget. There is an \$81,000.000 increase with the main driver behind the increase being salaries. This is offset by the decrease in district tuition. The final reorganization plan will be presented next meeting and they are still discussing it. In regards to revenue information, we are slated to receive the minimum increase at \$30.00 per student, coming out to around \$60,960.00. With additional discussions with the town manager, there is a 2% increase in appropriations compared to last year coming out to around \$485,000.00. These numbers are still to be determined. We have a 28.9 million dollar operating budget and a 27.4 million corporation, so there is still a gap to make up for in funding. We are anticipating 1.1 million in grants, and the remaining can be made up with revolver funds of about 3 million. There are still budget savings from last year and our budget is currently trending under budget.

XII. Information

A. Cohort Information – Beginning of Hybrid vs. Today

XIII. School Committee Individual Comments

XIV. Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose not returning to Open Session:

- A. Purpose (2) to conduct collective bargaining with AFSCME Unit C - Custodial, specifically to hear the Custodial Level III grievance
- B. Purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, specifically to deliberate and determine a response to the Custodial Level III grievance

A motion was made by Allan Richards to move into Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose not returning to open session. Purpose (2) to conduct collective bargaining with AFSCME Unit C – Custodial, specifically to hear the Custodial Level 111 Grievance and purpose (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, specifically to deliberate and determine

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a response to the Custodial Level 111 grievance. The motion was seconded by Kathryn Atchue. The vote was taken by roll call vote and the following votes were recorded:

Michael LeBrasseur	Yes
Steven Falconer	Yes
Brian Paulhus	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Yes

5 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 5-0.

XV. Adjournment (9:28)

Note: The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Also, the timeframe for each topic is a general guideline and may not be strictly adhered to.