



# Northbridge Public Schools

## Northbridge School Committee

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Michael LeBrasseur, Chairperson, [mlebrasseur@nps.org](mailto:mlebrasseur@nps.org),  
Brian Paulhus, Steven Falconer, Allan Richards, Kathryn Atchue

### Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, October 13, 2020 7:00PM

**Remote public attendance only via the Google Meet 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 (7:03)
- 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. The motion was made by Steve Falconer to move into Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General laws Chapter 30A Section 21(a) for the Following Purpose returning to open session:
  - A. Purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel: NTA Ed. Eval. Side Letter. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards. 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.

- V. Return to Open Session (7:14)
- VI. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- VII. Statement of Mission
- VIII. Public Comment

It is the policy of the Northbridge Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, or homelessness in its educational programs, services, activities, or employment.

*Comments for this meeting may be emailed in advance of the 7:00 p.m. start time to [school\\_committee@nps.org](mailto: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.*

The committee received emails from Patrick Smith, Carl Cowen, Christine Dupuis, and Timothy McCormick. All 4 were specifically expressing concerns about transitioning from a fully remote learning environment to a hybrid model. These individuals spoke as well as two other individuals, John Swayze and Daniel Fung-A-Fat. Patrick Smith of Shining Rock Dr. in Northbridge, a student at Northbridge High School spoke first against hybrid learning stating that there are more negative than positive impacts regarding the attention being split by teachers, access to resources, the amount of out of class work especially for AP students, and the challenge of managing schedules. Carl Cowen, a parent of a freshman at Northbridge High School spoke next adding on to the points that Patrick made, stating remote learning has been a success and that the potential of exposure will expand beyond small family circles and there should be more time allotted to give infection rates a chance to die down. In addition to that, he touched upon the effectiveness of hybrid learning compared to being fully remote. Next, Christine Dupuis of Rumanowski Dr. in Northbridge spoke up regarding moving to hybrid learning and building off of previous points made. She praised the remote learning impacts and stated certain classes such as band and choir would be missed in hybrid learning and that the delivery of the material would not be ideal in a hybrid model. After Christine spoke, Principle of Northbridge High School, Timothy McCormick spoke up regarding his thoughts on moving into a hybrid model. He brought up the benefits of remote learning, including the schedule, collaboration, online instruction resources, and teacher oversight. Following that, John Swayze, president of the National Teacher's Association and teacher spoke and informed of a question proposed regarding a phased in approach to the hybrid model and several different hybrid situations. The last public comment was made by student at Northbridge High School, Daniel Fung-A-Fat who voiced concern over the safety and fear students may feel when transitioning to the hybrid learning model.

#### IX. Student Representative Report

Student Representative, Ruby, was unable to give report due to technology issues.

#### X. Presentation

##### A. Northbridge Special Education Parent Advisory Council update

Chair Sarah Guerra advised that the Northbridge Special Education Parent Advisory Council held their first official meeting recently where they held elections. Sarah will be returning as the chair, Brian King will be serving as the secretary, Tammy Bodwell will serve as the treasurer, and Jenny Rivera will serve as the vice chair. The council has been working with Greg Rosenthal in a virtual format weekly and they have been included in weekly talks where they have been able to get feedback from parents. Sarah informed that they have rejoined MassPAC, Massachusetts Association of Special Education Parent Advisory Councils, which will allow them benefits such as, access to resources and groups where they have the opportunity to coordinate seminars, talks, and guest speakers. In addition to that, another step they have taken is to split up their meetings based on building, utilizing the principles in order to create more directed meetings. While there is not an official calendar created yet, the next official meeting is 10/21/20 at 6:30pm for the business meeting, which will be followed by a basic rights presentation by Greg Rosenthal at 7:00pm. One of the concerns from the Northbridge Special Education Parent Advisory Council is that they were able to reach and promote to parents of the middle and high school but are lacking in outreach to Northbridge Elementary School and Balmer. They are looking for assistance with reaching out and promoting the group. Brian Paulhus asked if the link to the meeting was shared, and it was determined that the meeting link has already been posted. Michael LeBrasseur questioned if the group planned on recording the basic rights presentation. Sarah advised the board voted to record both virtual and in person meetings going forward and also spoke with parents for consent. Sarah will be looking to develop a statement of recording and plans to record the basic rights presentation.

## XI. Consent Agenda

A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from September 22, 2020

B. Warrant 41-12s                      9/17/20                      \$450,177.01

C. Balmer Food Pantry Donation

A motion was made by Kathryn Atchue to accept items from the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Brian Paulhus. 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.

## XII. Action Items

A. Appoint George Simmons to School Building Committee

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to appoint George Simmons to serve on School Building Committee. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards. 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.

B. Approve the NTA Ed. Eval. Side Letter

A motion was made by Allan Richards to approve the NTA Ed. Eval. Side Letter. 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.

## XIII. Discussion

A. Hybrid Model update

Amy McKinstry provided the committee with an update on the hybrid model. She advised that she has been meeting with the Health and Wellness group in order to confirm that we meet all of the health criteria to allow students to come back to school in person. She advised the group felt unanimously that Northbridge is in a good place to transition to the hybrid model. Amy outlined the precautionary steps that will be taken upon the transition. There will be isolation rooms in every building in the case that a student becomes symptomatic and needs to be sent home, as well as isolation bathrooms overseen by the nursing staff. Amy emphasized that all possible Covid-19 scenarios and plans are outlined in the original remote learning plan and will continue into the new hybrid model. She advised that students should be screened by their parents each day before getting on the bus or going to school, and should arrive with a mask and an extra mask. There will be PPE available in each building. Desks will be six feet apart from other students and teacher desks will not be facing students, and will have plexi glass between them and the students. Each room will be given a Covid-19 cleaning kit with instructions of use. In addition to that, staff will receive training during the two days prior to the return of students. Students will receive microfiber clothes to wipe down desks as they transition throughout the day, and will not have the ability to use lockers as they are high touch surfaces. Deep cleaning and sanitization will occur on Wednesdays and Fridays and any HVAC issues will be resolved before the students return. Amy encouraged families to drop off and pick up their students at school to limit crowding on the busses, however busses will be available. The students will transition to a hybrid model in three cohorts, each cohort going to school on different days of the week, however the school system will be sticking with half days on Wednesdays for all students. Amy addressed that younger students may have difficulty with excessive screen time and advised that they will change the amount of time those students need to be logged in to their classes, as well as how they will do this for the middle and high school students as well. Amy provided the number of families from each school that opted to keep their children remote and how many families had not yet responded. Amy then provided the percentages of parents that would keep their children remote versus in hybrid learning, subtracting the families who have not yet responded in each school. After discussion with the School Committee on their thoughts about how transitioning to hybrid learning would impact students, it was determined that voting on the Superintendent's official plan would be an action item for the next School Committee meeting.

#### B. Building HVAC/Air quality assessment update

George Simmons advised the School Committee that prior to the audit, the rooftop units and exhaust fans were checked, therefore, when the audit occurred they could focus more on the classrooms. The audit was completed however; they have not received the report yet. Once the report is received they will start a filter change which was last completed between March and April. They will then work on the discrepancies from the audit report starting with Northbridge Elementary school, then moving to Balmer, then Northbridge Middle School, and ending at Northbridge High School, as it is the most updated.

#### C. Proposed Policy – EBCFA Face Coverings

Amy McKinstry advised that the policy subcommittee met and because they do not know the future of the pandemic, the MASC policy would be adapted but it will align with what was already put out as a district policy. There were some ambiguities that were adjusted such as when masks are not required due to appropriate social distancing being enforced. In this situation, usage should be monitored by staff. At all other times on school grounds, where there is no staff monitoring mask usage, students should be wearing masks. In addition to that, the subcommittee added violations of the policy, of which will be handled in a manner outlined in the handbook addendum. This will be added as an action item during the next School Committee meeting.

#### D. Proposed Policy – JLCB – Immunization of Students

Kathryn Atchue advised that the immunization policy language would remain the same however they added in the requirement that all students must be inoculated by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the year, a date issued by the governor. They added that it will remain in effect until the governor rescinds it. This was added because if there is a shortage of the vaccine or the date is changed, they would not need to change the policy. Amy McKinstry advised that separate paperwork would be required for proof of immunization. This will be added as an action item during the next School Committee meeting.

#### E. Close Grade 7 to School Choice

Amy McKinstry intends to close grade 7 school choices. She does believe that the grade should accept any more school choice students, as class sizes are already at 25 students per class and should not exceed that.

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## F. FY20 Budget Recap

Melissa Walker advised the School committee of the FY20 revenue and expenses. In total there was 1.855 million in revenue and 1.49 million in expenses. There was a decrease in tuition revenue due to the school closure; however there was an increase in school choice revenue, which allowed for additional funding to be received. There was a decrease in transportation revenue due to the uncertainty for the FY21 and parents not paying for the upcoming year in the spring. Athletics produced decreased revenue due to the lack of athletics in the spring, as well as the use of school revenue due to not renting out the school facilities. In regards to expenses, salaries came in at \$653,000 under the budgeted amount. This was due to there being some one year leave of absence requests, meaning that those positions utilized substitutes, which caused salary savings. In addition to that, there was less funding needed for substitutes because there was not in-person learning from March to June. There were also some salary changes that were made due to negotiations after the budget was created. There were expense savings in other areas such as transportation, utilities, and athletics due to the closure. We were not paying for transportation out of the district during the last quarter of the year due to the closure. We had a mild winter for utilities and buildings were unoccupied March through June. Overall, there was a 1.4 million decrease in expenses due to the aforementioned items. Since there was a decrease in spending in FY20, the funds will carry over to FY21 as needed.

## G. Addition of Instructional Assistant – Line Item Transfer

Melissa Walker requested to add one additional Instructional Assistant to the FY21 budget. They had originally reduced an Instructional Assistant because the student was going to be attending an out of district placement, however the student will actually be remaining at Northbridge High School. Therefore, she is looking to have funds transferred from the out of district tuition line to the salary line. This will not exceed \$17,200.00, however it may be less depending on the degree the individual has when hired. She is not looking to increase the bottom line but just to move funds. Michael Lebrasseur advised the budget subcommittee did vote to approve the transfer due to the timeliness of the situation and because it does not impact budget. He advised it would be an action item for this meeting.

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to approve a line item transfer from out of district tuition line to salary line. 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.

Melissa Walker informed the School Committee that at the next meeting she would like to bring up a line item transfer request to at .2 FTE to the currently .8 FTE Instructional Technologist position. The cost to make this position full time would be \$9,927 and she would like to transfer the funds from the salary line for the budgeted amount for the high school Spanish teacher role that could not be filled for the start of the school year. The budgeted amount from the start of the school year to October 27, 2020 was \$13,487. They are looking to transfer the \$9,927 from that unused budgeted amount to make the position full time. The funds would not be spent as that time has already passed and this transfer will not impact the bottom line of the budget. This will be an agenda item for the next meeting.

## H. FY21 User Fees: Athletics, Clubs, Parking, Tuition, Transportation

Michael LeBrasseur presented the fee recommendations that were discussed in the most recent budget subcommittee meeting. Since there will be potentially four athletic seasons for this school year, if a student is participating in all four, there is a recommendation to waive the fee for the additional sport. In regards to preschool tuition, the committee will be recommending that there be no changes made. They will recommend that the high school parking fee be waived for this school year, and that there will be no change in club fees. For the transportation fees, they do

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not have a specific discount number yet however, the committee is looking into a discounted fee of potentially \$100.00. Melissa Walker recommended that a new registration form be sent out to a parent that advises them that the School Committee is looking into a discounted rate.

#### I. Middle School parking lot project update

Michael LeBrasseur advised that he and Amy McKinstry had attended the Board of Selectman meeting where they discussed that work was being done to the Northbridge Middle School parking lot. The project originally started two years ago and Amy advised they had met at the central office to discuss the issues surrounding the parking lot including traffic issues on Linwood Ave., the flow of traffic, students being dropped off, and the safety of students both crossing the street and having access to sidewalks. Whitinsville Christian School was also involved in the beginning conversations, as well as John Zwiyen before he left. There is talk about adding in sidewalks, decreasing the number of exits from the parking lots, and working with the flow of busses and cars. The overarching goal would be to limit the amount of cars on the road while also limiting left and right turning vehicles. The School Committee is not involved directly, but it is a good project to share.

#### J. October 27<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda/format

The next School Committee meeting is scheduled to be held on October 27<sup>th</sup>, the night of the town meeting. Michael LeBrasseur posed the question to the committee to see if they would like to have the meeting in person as a committee but remain remote to the public, while also potentially changing the time so they can attend the town meeting after. Steven Falconer brought up a concern about there not being enough time for public comment and discussion. Michael LeBrasseur encouraged the committee to bring their own devices so they will be able to stream the meeting online to the public as well and be present on camera.

### XIV. Information

#### A. FY19 End of Year Report Audit

#### B. School Year 20-21 Enrollment by grade

### XV. School Committee Individual Comments

Kathryn Atchue commended the students who spoke up during public comment. Allan Richards advised he is happy to hear that remote learning is going well. Brian Paulhus wished luck to students competing in athletics this week. Steven Falconer wished everyone a successful sports season while informing that rain is not a safety issue on the new Lasell field anymore, and encouraged people to reach out and be involved in the School Committee conversations. Michael LeBrasseur reminded everyone that the School Building Committee meets October 20<sup>th</sup>, and advised that the next School Committee meeting is tentatively 6:00pm on October 27<sup>th</sup> prior to the town meeting.

### XVI. Adjournment (9:27)

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to adjourn the meeting at 9:27. 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.