



# 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 Wednesday, October 28, 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 (7:00)
- 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](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.*

Stevie Bentley, the Social Studies Department Chair at Northbridge High School spoke first on behalf of 45 faculty members. She advised the committee that teachers are afraid of scrutiny for not wanting to go back and that while remote learning is hard, hybrid is not working well for any district. She informed that she emailed all teachers and 45 responded. Of these responses, she noted that many wanted their voice heard, wanted to remain remote, thought hybrid was going poorly in other districts, and were worried about the quality of education and safety. She emailed the committee the actual responses separately. Stevie voiced concern over the risk of getting COVID-19 and compared what the schedules will be like during hybrid and how they will differ from remote. She advised of a struggle to communicate with students during hybrid, the curriculum slowing down, discomfort with mask breaks in room, less class time, and mask violation risks. The next individual who spoke was Katie Dion, a history teacher at NHS. Katie provided the committee with concerns over whether hybrid would be better for the student's education and socialization and whether it would be safer. She advised concern over schedule consistency, increased risk, creating connections with students, transmission of infection, student workers, and that students may not believe COVID-19 is a risk. Next, Stacey Savage, a 20<sup>th</sup> year teacher in Northbridge spoke. She advised that students enjoy break out rooms, she does not want to lose one on one connections with students, and advised that remote can be successful. She also voiced concern regarding students getting together outside of school, consistency, mask use and

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social distancing, holiday travel, and keeping windows open during the winter. Next to speak was Linn Clark, an Instructional Technology Specialist. She voiced concerns about instruction delivery, Balmer School classrooms located by construction site, compromised air quality, and mixing cohorts with cohort C. Elena Batchelder, an 11<sup>th</sup> year teacher at NHS was next to speak. She advised the committee of her concerns regarding social and emotional well-being of students, wanting more time to prepare for a hybrid model, the lack of interaction with teachers, and the effectiveness of hybrid. Luke Esposito, a 3<sup>rd</sup> year teacher at NHS advised that the pandemic is real and compared the models being used at the university level. He also expressed concern about holiday travel and gatherings. Senior at NHS, Michael Wilkes addressed the committee with his thoughts that the best approach is hybrid and there is a lack of participation in remote. Expressed concerns of students falling behind, the lack of interactive education remotely, and whether education should be done in person or not. John Swayze, the NTA president expressed concerns for air quality, teachers needing childcare, substitutes being hard to come by, and the well-being of students and their education. Sara Guerra, advised that parents were concerned about students currently attending and the mask discipline policy. She voiced concern about the appropriateness of disciplining students with special education needs as well as concerns regarding isolation rooms and seclusion. Joseph Strazulla, a teacher at Milford Public Schools spoke and compared his experience in a hybrid model school. Advised that the remote students are not getting the same education level and that contact tracing has not found spread in the school. He advised students get more out of in person learning. Lastly, Patrick Rossi, the Science Department Chair at NHS advised that his daughter is doing well in remote compared to in person, and he is in favor of remote for the sake of socialization and learning. He advised the pandemic is real and being in the building could be catastrophic. He advised we are in a good position already.

## VII. Student Representative Report

Ruby Holtz informed the committee that NHS has set up virtual college visits for the students and updated the committee regarding fall sports starting. She covered the NMS teacher of the month and highlighted their current virtual spirit week. Ruby informed the committee of the NES virtual book fair to raise money. Lastly, Ruby informed that she put out a Google Form survey to students, and while she didn't receive enough responses to represent the majority, she advised the committee of some of the responses she received.

## VIII. Consent Agenda

- A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from October 13, 2020
- B. Warrant 41-14s
- C. Balmer Food Pantry Donation
- D. High School Food Pantry Donation

A motion was made by Michael LeBrasseur to approve the minutes of 10/13 as amended. 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.

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to accept items from the Consent Agenda as presented. 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 |

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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.

## IX. Action Items

### A. Transition to Hybrid Model

Superintendent Amy McKinstry outlined and presented the details of the hybrid model. Some of the key points she touched upon were ensuring that all staff have internet connectivity and technology, families have access to daily meals, all students can fit on busses, ordering needed equipment, and how to teach the material effectively. She outlined why DESE wants the students back in school based on our town data, and discussed the transition in its entirety. Amy explained the transition timeline noting that the hybrid model would begin 11/12. She outlined the statistics from the parent survey regarding staying remote, the 3 cohort assignments including when each would go to school and transitioning to remote or hybrid in the middle. Amy discussed masks and mask breaks, food services such as breakfast and lunch at no cost, the Balmer and NHS food pantry, COVID-19 symptom pre-screening requirements, the purpose of isolation rooms for health and wellness, and the general health and safety protocols the school will be taking. Amy outlined the details of hybrid and remote instruction, related arts education, monthly meetings with the public health nurse, board of health representative, and head nurse to continue reviewing data, and the previous metric that was voted on. There were concerns voiced by committee member Kathryn Atchue regarding an air quality update before voting. Committee member Steven Falconer addressed that DESE auditing is happening and that they provide us with funding. Amy advised she would want to speak with the union if committee were to decide on a phased in approach. Committee member Allan Richards asked if building principles were prepared and gave then the opportunity to speak. Committee member Brian Paulhus spoke on his hybrid model experience. The committee moved to an update on the air Quality from George Simmons before voting.

If you would like to watch the full transition to hybrid model discussion, the full video can be accessed following this link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/10HzOrFkJutAPQKRMVrC43U6cTd7qsS50/view>

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to approve the superintendent's recommendation to proceed to phase two of the reopening plan. The motion was seconded by Steven Falconer. 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 No

Kathryn Atchue No

3 members having voted in the affirmative

2 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 3-2.

### B. Policy for EBCFA Face Coverings

A motion was made by Kathryn Atchue to approve policy EBCA Face Coverings. 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

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

### C. Policy for JLCB – Immunization of Students

A motion was made by Kathryn Atchue to approve Policy JLCB Immunization of Students. 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.

### D. Full-Time Instructional Technologist Position – Line Item Transfer

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to approve the increase in FTE for the Instructional technologist at NES from 0.3 to 0.5 effective October 29,2020. 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.

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

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to approve no fee for a fourth sport. 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.

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to waive the high school parking fee for the 2020-2021 school year. 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.

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to approve reducing the transportation fee to \$100.00 with a \$300.00 family pack for 2020-2021 school year. 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. Discussion

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

George Simmons advised that an audit with the list of actions that need to be taken to bring buildings up to original design and standards was completed. They are focusing all of their attention on fixing and completing each item in the report with Balmer, NES, NMS, and NHS. They have taken suggestions and are making all necessary repairs in every classroom, every rooftop, and in every building. George advised that cleaning filters and making replacements would be easy fixes and they will also be ordering new motors and checking every damper in every classroom. George advised of the damper functions using thermostat and opening windows, and advised they would be making sure each room is operable windows. He advised that any dampers that were found to be closed were due to units being turned off. George advised that the goal is the safety and comfort of all students coming back and that all systems will be functional and have the capabilities of their original design. He is confident in the air quality and control. For the full HVAC/Air Quality report, please watch the recording at the following link:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10HzOrFkJutAPQKRMVrC43U6cTd7qsS50/view>

### B. FY22 Budget Parameters and Timeline

The committee typically votes on guidance for the administrators as they build the budget to provide parameters, as discussed at the last budget subcommittee meeting. Michael LeBrasseur discussed the proposed parameters that were discussed at the meeting as well as any changes being impacted by the revenue. Michael advised that this would be an action item at the next School Committee meeting.

### C. Resuming In Person Meetings

Michael LeBrasseur inquired about returning to in person school committee meetings. It was discussed that even if the committee goes back in person, the meeting would still need to be public virtually. There was discussion as to how to make the meeting accessible to over 100 people going forward and that each committee member would need to bring their own devices and remain on camera, even in person.

### D. Athletics – One Lanyard Rule

Timothy McCormick, the NHS principle, and Jeffrey Kozik, the Athletic Director spoke in regards to changing the one lanyard rule and increasing the number of spectators from 50 to 100 in accordance with the state requirements. The School Committee discussed whether the School Committee should let the individuals in their roles make decisions as things change without needing to continue asking permission from the committee, when it has been previously voted on.

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A motion was made by Allan Richards to authorize the Athletic Director to implement and modify a plan as needed. 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

## XI. Information

### A. Interim Principle at NES Mr. Nick Hoffman

Amy McKinstry announced that Nicholas Hoffman will be the new interim principle at Northbridge Elementary School as well as why he was a great fit for the position.

## XII. School Committee Individual Comments

The School Committee shared individual comments

## XIII. Adjournment (10:32)

A motion was made by Kathryn Atchue to adjourn. 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