



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

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

Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Tuesday, December 22, 2020 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. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- IV. Statement of Mission
- V. Attendance

Michael LeBrasseur	Present
Steven Falconer	Present
Brian Paulhus	Present
Allan Richards	Present
Kathryn Atchue	Absent
- VI. 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: AFSCME Unit C – Custodial

A motion was made by Michael LeBrasseur to move into executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21(a) for the following purpose and returning to Open Session, purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel: AFSCME Unit C – Custodial. 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	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Absent

4 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 4-0.

VII. Return to Open Session (7:20)

VIII. 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.

John Swayze, President of the Northbridge Teachers Association advised the School Committee that delegates of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees annual meeting voted in support of a resolution rejecting MCAS testing this year or ever for students of the class of 2022 who missed their 10th grade MCAS in the spring due to the pandemic. There were 112 votes in favor, 9 votes against, and 2 abstaining. They will be urging the state to set up a moratorium on high stakes testing for 3 years. The Northbridge Teacher's Association Executive Board voted to support these measures and hopes to gain the School Committee's support in canceling the MCAS testing as well. John Swayze advised that he would email a link containing further information to Michael LeBrasseur.

IX. Student Representative Report

Student Representative Ruby Holtz updated the School Committee on events happening within the district schools. On December 12th, Northbridge High School Student Council held a toy drive from 10-2pm where they received over 200 toys to donate to families. DECA was able to meet with Nichols College over Zoom and complete a virtual practice run for their districts competition. In addition to that, there has been more virtual college tours scheduled. The Northbridge Middle School music program put on a virtual concert on December 16th which included both band and chorus. The performance can be viewed online as well. Firefighter Josh and mascot Sparky visited the students at Northbridge Elementary School to discuss fire safety and those students also got a Polar Express and pajama day right before the holidays. Lastly, The National Honors Society hosted their 53rd induction ceremony where they inducted double the amount of students from the previous year.

X. Consent Agenda

- A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from December 8, 2020
- B. Warrant 41-24s 12/10/2020 \$147,860.43
- C. Balmer Food Pantry Donation
- D. NHS Food Pantry Donation

A motion was made by Allan Richards to approve the consent agenda. 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	Yes
Kathryn Atchue	Absent

4 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 4-0.

XI. Presentation

A. NES Update – Mr. Hoffman

Northbridge Elementary School Principal Nicholas Hoffman presented an update on how things have been going at NES. His update included that he has observed a positive atmosphere within the school and has taken the time to meet with every staff member and has taken the time to listen and improve the environment. He informed that they

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will be rolling out a new math program in January which will be their third one, and that while there has been some anxiety surrounding it, it has been accepted and welcomed. Hybrid is going well, and like other schools, the dynamic between teaching online and in person poses its challenges. He has taken the time to stop in to classes and advised that the staff is doing a great job. In addition to this, he has reached out to parents and has been able to work with them on accommodations that will best support their student's success. He advised that NES is currently fully staffed and that creating a positive atmosphere within the school will help to boost morale and support student success. Dismissal time could use some more work, especially regarding consistency, and lunch periods were challenging at first, but other than that, everything has been smoothed out and has been going well.

XII. Action Items

A. Approval of July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2021 Contract with AFSCME – Unit C – Custodial

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to approve the July 1st, 2019 through June 30th, 2021 contract with AFSCME Unit C – Custodial. 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	Absent

4 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 4-0.

XIII. Discussion

A. MS/HS Action Plan to Address Failure Rates

Superintendent Amy McKinstry started the discussion regarding student failure rates and advised that she was not pleased with the results and that they are taking it very seriously. She advised that the Leadership Team has met and that she has met with the principals to see what steps can be taken for the whole district to assist. This may include meeting to discuss plans to bring these students who are failing back into the buildings. Northbridge Middle School Principal John Diorio spoke on what the middle school will be doing to help these rates. He advised that attendance is a huge issue and wants to find a way to connect the kids back with the school. He touched upon new tutoring options on Wednesdays after school for at risk students, changing around their ELB period to focus more on organization, prioritization, and homework, trying to get students failing 2 or more classes in the building 4 days per week, and continuing the virtual buddy tutoring. They will become students for a day to see if they can identify and discuss the disconnects that may be occurring for students while learning and he also informed of the great role parents have been playing as well as potential new transportation for tutoring. In response to questions from the committee, John and Timothy McCormick both addressed the timelines of which students might be brought in to the schools, the communication between staff and families regarding grades, and the impact and implementation of home visits for students with chronic absenteeism and identifying where the disconnect comes from. Amy advised that they immediately started bringing kids into the building when the data was received and Timothy advised that 17 have already come in at the high school and that they are still inviting and trying to get the remaining students in. They may have to move classes around in order to fit more students in and they are willing to do that if need be. Timothy also took time to address the topic of students participating in classes with their cameras and audio on and the status of winter sports as of current.

B. Reopening Plan – Phase 3 (Transition to Full In-Person) Update

Superintendent Amy McKinstry provided an update on phase 3 of the reopening plan, which would be bringing all students back in to learn. If the town's Covid-19 data was good and the CDC and BPH social distancing restrictions were lifted or decreased, she would then be able to see if it would be feasible to bring students back. However, because the social distancing guidelines are still in effect, Amy does not expect to fully bring students back by the previously discussed date of January 27th and she also does not expect these guidelines to change by then. They are trying to bring in as many students that will fit safely at this time. Amy will keep looking at the data and revisiting it

and advised that because the student schedules are already created, the only additional planning that would need to occur would be to set up bussing for students coming back full-time.

C. Staffing Update

Superintendent Amy McKinstry provided an update on the staffing status at each school. NES is fully staffed; however they are looking for a long term substitute. Balmer currently needs a behavior tech and a long term instructional assistant substitute. Balmer currently has two long term substitutes in order to cover for teachers out on leaves of absence. NMS is fully staffed at this time. NHS needs a behavior tech and a long term substitute for the rise classroom, which is currently being covered by staff already working in the room. Amy also provided an update on looking for a Spanish teacher as well as an updated amount of staff on leave of absence.

D. FY22 Budget Timeline

Michael LeBrasseur wanted to confirm that the budget workshop scheduled for January 25 worked for the committee and advised that it is open to the school committee and that he would like it if they all attended. He advised the time of the meeting would be around 6:00 pm but will confirm that.

E. Appointment of School Doctor

Melissa Walker advised that the district's school doctor is retiring and there will need to be a new doctor appointed. Melissa would like to confirm the appointment for the next School Committee meeting on January 12. The current school doctor is willing to stay in the position until the new doctor is appointed.

XIV. Information

XV. School Committee Individual Comments

XVI. Adjournment (8:50)

A motion was made by Allan Richards to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Steven Falconer.

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

4 members having voted in the affirmative
0 members having voted in the negative
The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 4-0.

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.