



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, March 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. Open Public Hearing for FY22 Budget

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to open the public hearing for the FY22 Budget. 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.

A. FY22 Budget Presentation

Amy McKinstry and Melissa Walker presented the proposed budget "A New Beginning" once more for the purpose of a public hearing. Amy recognized that it has been a challenging school year that has compromised the physical and mental well-being of many staff and students, and that equity achievement

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and personal success saw a decline. She also recognized that due to the unpredictable cause of this, plans have been more reactive than proactive, and next year is going to be a big transition year. The focus for the FY22 budget is a strong opening of the school district, supporting a successful transition of students to the new school, to meet academic and emotional needs of all NPS students where they are at the start of the school year, and to focus on building trusting and collaborative relationships with students and their families. For continued COVID-19 funding, there is an estimated \$931,432.00 allocation to help school systems safely transition to reopen schools. This amount is contingent on availability but she feels as though this is the likely amount the district will receive. This is available this coming year and the following year. This is not included in the FY22 operating budget and it will be used to address some focus areas such as staffing and resources. The FY22 budget process started in October, and they were tasked with a level services budget. This presentation expanded on what is included in the budget and went over the timeline as to how the budget has developed from October to February. Amy delved into the FY22 revenue current projections which included Chapter 70 state aid, town contribution, appropriation, grants, and revolver information. This presentation included where the money is going to including salaries, out of district tuition and transportation, in district transportation, utilities, custodial maintenance, Title 1, technology, athletics, and all others. It broke down the budget into categories and the increases and decreased, salaries being the main driving factor for any increases. They discussed the reorganization of positions and the impact of the budget for the new school. They also included a glimpse into FY23 and projections for that budget. Melissa provided upcoming dates for the budget:

Presentation to Finance Committee – March 10, 2021
School Committee Votes on the Budget – March 23, 2021
Annual Spring Town Meeting – May 4, 2021

B. Public Comment on Budget

Corey Kilgariff, a chorus and general music teacher, started public comment by speaking on the reduction of music staff to 1.5 at the middle school. Kilgariff informed the committee of all of the outside work done for students aside from the general music classes such as setting aside blocks for students with special learning needs, one on one music lessons, jazz band, social-emotional learning facilitations, and fundraisers. Kilgariff stated that with the reduction of staff it would be challenging to continue these responsibilities. He also advised that a .5 staff member would be a revolving door due to it having a non-livable wage and split attention. He provided an example from a student in one of his music classes as well.

Patrick Smith of 300 Shining Rock Drive, a junior at Northbridge High School has been involved and interested in the music program since 5th grade. He believes that 5th grade being moved from the middle school would not be an effective reason to reduce the music program. Patrick discussed the benefits of getting involved in a music program early on and advised of the valuable skills it provides. He would like to see Northbridge expand the programs not reduce them.

Joseph Goguen of 6967 Worcester Street, the Northbridge Middle School Band Director asked for a reconsideration of the reduction to 1.5 music teachers. He advocated for music education in the students and believes that if the schedule changes, the demand for the programs and services would still require 2 full-time music staff. He expressed deep concern for the inability to meet the needs and if 5th grade band and chorus would end up being moved after school instead of built into their day. He believes moving these programs out of the regular schedule would hinder the growth and achievement of the music program. He also inquired about adding a .5 music teacher to NES 5th grade.

Patrick Smith of 300 Shining Rock Drive was unable to present his comments during the meeting due to technical difficulties and provided a summary of his comments to the School Committee. He has four children within the school and his older kids have seen the benefits and social and educational value of the music programs. He expressed concern regarding losing funding for the music program. He provided information on how music is inherently inclusive and that it is not what he had experienced when he was younger, where his music program was great. He provided information regarding the elementary and middle school standards for music education, advising the High School standard is two full-time music teachers.

C. Close Public Hearing

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to close the public hearing. 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.

VII. 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.

Jill Redding, the Early Childhood Coordinator at the Northbridge Elementary School took the time to acknowledge and thank the Bergeron and Mayo families for their generous donation of \$1000.00 to the Preschool and Kindergarten students at NES. This donation was to be utilized to purchase books about kindness called “What Does it Mean to be Kind?” for all of those students, and included bookmarks. This donation was made in memory of their nephew Grady who passed away in an accident. Their family created a foundation called Grady’s Golden Goodness and each year the family donates in memory of him from this foundation. Please visit Gradysgoldengoodness.org for more information.

VIII. Superintendent’s Report

Amy McKinstry provided a report to the School Committee, beginning by providing information on the results of the In Person Learning Survey she had sent out to families. She received 1112 responses and out of those responses, 81% advised they would choose to come back to school fully in person and 19% advised they would choose to stay remote. Amy also provided individualized percentages of remote seeking students for each building. Principals will be following up with families and providing more specific information and official decision surveys. She urged everyone to fill these out. The district has received over 1,000 Binax rapid testing kits last week and the nurses have completed training to administer these tests. More protocols and information regarding testing will be shared later this month. Amy provided an update on MCAS testing, advising that MCAS for grades 3-5 has been postponed to the May or June timelines, and grades 6-8 have also been postponed with no information yet on when they will occur. High school MCAS and AP testing will still go on. The 8th graders had the opportunity to participate in a virtual 8th grade orientation this week and 12 high school students and 5 staff participated in facilitating this. The strategic plan process is underway and the Leadership Team had their full day retreat in February, and the planning team had a full evening retreat meeting last week to discuss the vision for students as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the district. There were some great conversations. Amy touched upon the push for a local vaccine clinic for teachers as well as the strain that of struggling to staff the buildings. Amy called for anyone to apply to be a substitute or a volunteer to help within the buildings.

IX. Student Representative’s Report

Student Representative Ruby Holtz advised the committee this week that she would be stepping down from this position in order to focus on school. The School Committee thanked her for her time. There was no student representative report presented during this meeting.

X. Consent Agenda

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.

- A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from February 23, 2021
- B. School Committee Meeting Minutes from March 1, 2021
- C. Warrant 41-36s \$318,858.19 March 4, 2021
- D. Balmer Food Pantry Donations

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.

XI. Presentation

A. SEL Update

Jill Healy provided an update on embedding social emotional learning in the curriculum. She started off her presentation by providing details on the 3+ year action plan developed in 2018, starting with the original introduction of SEL to staff and specialists. The district task force consists of Abbie Russo, Cassie Moriarty, Anthony Kissel, Andy Balboni, Doug Ashby, and Russel Cohn. Each of these members worked with school-based teams to develop this action plan. The first year of the plan was focused on data collection and providing information. Jill explained what the collected data was used to determine. The second year of the action plan, the team looked at the results of the initial survey and completed trainings that included sessions on conflict management, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal self-control, responsible decision making, and teacher self-care. There was a school based half-day professional development day, conducted on an early release day on September 25th, 2019, where each school focused on different areas of need. When Covid-19 started, the after school task force was developed which provided information for teachers that could be embedded in classroom instruction. Jill provided a visual of the data collected from sampling two schools regarding the top 3 areas they felt were most important for the district to focus on and what the implementation will look like in the classroom by the teachers. Jill then provided information on the third year and beyond of the 3+ year action plan. This phase is focused on building connections between students, while supporting and maintain relationships. This encourages brain breaks, structured breaks, and conducts lessons on friendship and PBIS. It also helps teachers recognize burn out, the need for self-care, and provide them with the knowledge to do check-ins.

XII. Action Items

A. NHS Program of Studies

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to approve the NHS Program of Studies. 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.

B. Disposal of Surplus Furniture – Balmer/NES

A motion was made by Allan Richards to declare the identified furniture at Balmer as a surplus to be disposed. 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.

XIII. Discussion

A. Phase 3 – Full In Person

Amy McKinstry provided a presentation on the plan for a return to full in person learning, advising they just received guidance from the commissioner that afternoon. April 5th will be the return date for students K-4, April 12th for student 5-12, and during April break they will make any needed adjustments and address any concerns. Amy detailed the two learning options for students including fully in person and remote. Both options are 5 days per week and students are not able to choose to be remote or in person on some days. This is only acceptable if there is a Covid-19 related concern that has been confirmed with a nurse. If students are looking to return to in person from remote after the start dates, the schools will need no less than 4 weeks of advance notice. Amy provided a detailed description as to what the school will look like as students return including that desk and table distance is reduced to 3 feet, mask break and lunch distance will remain at 6 feet, and hallway transitions will be 3 feet apart and following designated arrows. All bathroom stalls will be open for use, however any extra students waiting will need to wait in hall at least 3 feet apart. Lockers will not be utilized to avoid congregating and students will continue to wipe down their devices, desks, and chairs as needed. Students will also not be sitting in front of Chromebooks every day. Classrooms will be equipped with air purifiers with HEPA filters and Plexiglas barriers in the front of the rooms. Amy moved on to discuss the next steps and what the principals are working on currently to prepare. The full in person plan will be presented to the School Committee March 23rd.

B. FY22 Budget

Amy advised there are no intentions of removing chorus, band, and music out of the regular schedule for students, and even advised that John Diorio, principal of NMS, and herself have been discussing a new type of schedule for the middle school students called interest based teaming. This would allow for students who are more focused on the arts to have that opportunity. General music will still be offered to all students, and no programs will be cut. There will still be a grade 5 beginner band and chorus and they will try to include it in their daily schedule. There are two full-time music teachers at the new NES who will now be fully scheduled with music-related curriculum in the building. Steven Falconer brought up the point that in the future budgets, more difficult decisions may need to happen and decisions regarding new ways to bring in revenue or reductions may need to occur if expenses continue to rise. Michael Lebrasseur and Amy McKinstry engaged in further discussion regarding having two principals at the new Northbridge Elementary School, as well as the roles of the Guidance Counselors with the absence of a vocational coordinator. Amy advised of the challenges that having only one principal would bring and advised that DESE has guidance for co-principals, as some schools require this.

XIV. Information

A. School Attending Report

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XV. School Committee Individual Comments

XVI. Adjournment (8:40)

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to adjourn. 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.

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.