



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, April 13, 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. Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose returning to Open Session: Purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel, specifically NTA

A motion was made by Michael LeBrasseur to move into Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose returning to Open Session: Purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel, specifically NTA. 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. Statement of Audio and Video Recording

VI. Statement of Mission

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.

VIII. Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Amy McKinstry provided an update, starting with all students being fully in person at this time. The students in grades K-4 went back to school last week and grades 5-12 started yesterday. The staff will be utilizing April break to assess any concerns and revise as needed. Currently, 90% of the district students are back in person full time and 10% have chosen to remain remote. Amy addressed the technology issues that were faced today at the high school and Balmer school and advised the technology department was still actively working on it around 6:00 PM and it should be fixed by tomorrow. The district is currently in the process of trying to collect the devices back from students. The technology department held 2 full collection days and will be in the lobbies in the morning. Devices have been shut off to encourage those individuals with outstanding devices to return them at this time. Amy discussed the internship program being run by DESE. The district has 4 seniors currently participating and is working 2 full days during the week at the elementary schools. They will be presenting next week. Amy discussed the current athletics records for Football and advised that parking at the cemetery to watch games is off limits, however, they have increased the field capacity as well as livestream the games. Amy announced important dates for senior events and provided an update that the high school principal search is currently underway. Amy wished luck to Bob O'Brien, the assistant principal at the middle school, with his new job working for Douglas Public Schools. Amy advised of the current MCAS testing knowledge which included that students in grades 3-8 would be taking MCAS between May and June and there will be remote testing offered as well as training on April 29th. They are still waiting on guidance for the high school students. There will still be lunch pick-up offered to remote students during April break.

IX. Consent Agenda

A. School Committee Meeting Minutes from March 9, 2021

B. Warrant 41-40s \$231,118.36 April 1, 2021

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. School Building Committee Update – Joe Strazzulla

Joe Strazzulla of the School Building Committee presented an update on the new elementary school, and advised that

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going forward he plans to provide more frequent updates. The project is currently in schedule and the opening date remains the same. He presented a slideshow that was previously shared at the last School Building Committee meeting. This presentation covered the discussions surrounding the snack shed and where to put it, the cost of constructing one versus having one delivered, and the role it will play as the center of the athletic fields. Next, it covered the Vail field memorial rededication. The old monument had Jeffrey Vail's name spelled incorrectly. They have been working to have a rededication. He also went into detail regarding the technology purchase orders and how there is still a little left of the budget to utilize. All of the purchase orders for technology equipment were approved at the last School Building Committee meeting. He provided a furniture and equipment status update before going into the construction update. The construction update revealed photos of different parts of the new building shown from different angles. It revealed the wings of the building, the completed stone work and brick work, the panels and roofing, the windows and future sunshades, and the color coded stairwells. He advised the building is nearly air tight at this point.

XI. Action Items

A. High School Principal Search Committee Appointment

A motion was made by Steven Falconer to appoint Allan Richards to the high school principal search committee. 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. NTA In-Person MOA

A motion was made by Brian Paulhus to approve the memorandum of agreement with the Northbridge Teacher's Association with return to in-person learning. 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.

XII. Discussion

A. Line item transfer – library books

Melissa Walker advised that they would like to reallocate money to purchase new books for the new elementary school library, as they currently have a small budgeted amount for books to replace and add titles. She would like to transfer funds from the current out of district transportation line, as the hybrid and remote schooling models frees up money in that line item. Purchasing these books will happen over the next fiscal year and Melissa explained how they plan to do and track this purchase. She will have the language and further details prepared at the next meeting.

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Amy provided information that the current library offers 7 books per student that are still usable and in good library standards it should be 15 books per student, a 10 minimum. Alicia Boudreau advised that they need to double the amount of titles and that the ones we have are very old. Her goal is to give 5th graders a foundation of strong research skills and needs more books to support that. She would also like to see a mini library for each extended learning area.

B. In-Person Transition Update

Amy provided a brief update on how the return to in person learning has been going. She advised that she was able to be in the middle school today and see what was going on. Students are happy to be back and are talkative. Michael LeBrasseur asked why there are more students in the high school staying remote than other schools and if there is a correlation between academic progress and those numbers. Amy suggested putting out a survey to find out why the high school students are choosing to stay home rather than come back to school fully in person.

C. Academic Progress Update

Bill Bishop, the interim high school principal, provided an update that it would be challenging to provide seniors with more than four in person tickets for graduation due to the capacity. Bill then went on to discuss his priority to make sure seniors can graduate with their requirements fulfilled. He started by looking at deficiencies in their grades and send out letters to students who need to take steps to ensure they can raise their grades. He is opening an Apex credit recovery where students can come in during April break to make up credits. The school is currently offering tutoring in English and math on Thursdays however students have not been coming in to take advantage of that opportunity. He charted failures for the first 3 quarters and saw that they were trending poorly, raising the question as to why these students want to stay home. He doesn't believe they are getting the same level of instruction from home. He addressed the number of non-graduates and he wants to try to get the most he can over the finish line. Jenna Stanley spoke and addressed students not coming into school and the measures the teachers are taking to try to get students to come in and fully participate. This sparked discussion on the efforts to reverse this trend. Bill Bishop discussed the time between Freshman and Sophomore year being an important time to engage students. Amber Lundsten, the English department head spoke about the efforts to increase socialization as well as the issue with socialization right now using the Freshman orientation and the lack of attendance as an example. Eric Tracey participated in the discussion on how this can be resolved as well and the steps being taken as well.

John Diorio updated the committee on the middle school academic progress. They have held steady and 5th and 6th graders have seen a decrease in the amount of double failures. The 7th grade students have been creeping up a small amount, and the 8th graders have stayed consistent. They have held a February break academy and will be hosting an April break academy. They have built up their summer school funding and planning, and teachers have been building success plans for the students and parent meetings have increased. There are families in which the school is having a tough time engaging with, and he has sent out 28 letters and received 1 response.

D. School Choice

Amy McKinstry advised she would like to open school choice again for next year and have the ability to close grades as they see fit. There is a large 7th grade class right now of approximately 186 students that will be moving on to 8th grade. They closed grade 1 this year due to the increasing class size. This will be an action item at the next meeting.

E. High School Search Committee Update/Timeline

Jill Healy provided an update on the high school principal search committee. There was an input survey sent out to families and staff and responses have been coming in. Jill went over the members making up the search committee. These members included John Diorio as the building administrator representative, Cindy Bartulson as the parent representative, Nathan LaMay and Alan Finkel as the teachers, Heidi Godowski as the special education representative, Lauren Hubbell as the guidance counselor, Paul Collins as the support staff, and Caroline O'Brien as the student representative. Applications for the position will be collected until April 23rd and so far there have been 21 applicants with 14 of those applicants holding related administrative experience. The committee members will screen applicant packets April 26th and 27th.

F. Surplus books, equipment

Melissa Walker spoke about the Surplus books from the Balmer school. These books are not library books and no longer serve a purpose or are in bad condition. The company is not interested in purchasing certain books back. There is technology equipment at the middle and high school that no longer hold value to us and have been sitting in storage for a long time. These are older items and Melissa is looking to have these items voted as a surplus.

G. Job descriptions – New NES (Principals/dean)

Amy provided Michael LeBrasseur with job descriptions for the Principal of Student Support, the Principal of Academics and the dean. The old descriptions were outdated and lacked relevancy, and Amy advised it was a good activity. Michael LeBrasseur noted that there was some overlap in responsibilities and Amy clarified some of the main responsibilities.

XIII. Information

XIV. School Committee Individual Comments

XV. Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose not returning to Open Session: Purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel, specifically AFSCME Local 1709, Unit B - Secretarial and Unit C - Custodial.

A motion was made by Michael LeBrasseur to move into Executive Session Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A Section 21 for the following purpose not returning to Open Session: Purpose (3) to Discuss Strategy with Respect to Collective Bargaining with Union Personnel, specifically AFSCME Local 1709, Unit B - Secretarial and 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	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.

I. Adjournment (9:52)

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.