



# Northbridge Public Schools

## Northbridge School Committee

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### Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Minutes Tuesday, March 21st, 2023 7:00PM Northbridge High School Media Center

- I. Call to Order
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Attendance

Heather Alden	Absent
Jill Leonard	Present
Erin Donahue	Present
Allan Richards	Present
Becky Jackson	Absent

Also present were Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance Melissa Walker.

- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- V. Statement of Mission
- VI. Student Representative Report -- Read by Erin Donahue

Students in Mr. Nowak's biology class have been learning about the structure of cell membranes and different types of cell transport. To apply these concepts, his students made tie dyed tee shirts using sharpies and rubbing alcohol. The alcohol in the t shirts acted as a solvent that transformed the color of the sharpies into the tie-dyed pattern. We hope to see these stylish science projects being worn around the school.

On February 16, the freshman class of 2026 went to the Boda Borg escape room facility where students had to work together to figure out a series of challenging puzzles. Practicing skills in communication and reflection, the freshmen were able to grow closer and build strong bonds with their classmates.

Congratulations to Caroline O'Brien on receiving the Worcester County Superintendent's Association scholarship, awarded to NHS. Caroline received her award from Mrs. Stockwell and Mrs. McKinstry during a luncheon for other county winners at Holy Cross. Once again, congratulations to Caroline on this achievement.

Last Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup>, the class of 2024 hosted the students vs. staff basketball game where members of the boys and girls basketball teams faced off against members of the NHS faculty. There, students were able to bus concessions and be a part of the fan section to support the students and staff. After a great game, our student team won even though the staff played well as a team and made a great effort.

For our athletics update, great job to the boys and girls wrestling team for their successful season this past winter. Anthony Vickers earned the titles of MIAA division 2 sectional state champion, Division 2 West sectional's most outstanding wrestler, MIAA division 2 tournament state champion and MIAA all state tournament runner-up. Congratulations also to Allison Reese who came in 6<sup>th</sup> place for the MIAA girls all state tournament. Congratulations to both teams for such amazing accomplishments.

Great work to both our boys and girls basketball teams and our boys hockey team for competing in the end of season tournaments this winter. The boys basketball and hockey teams played hard in their playoffs but our hockey team fell to Nipmuc and our boys basketball team fell to Clinton. Our girls basketball team advanced to round 16 of their MIAA tournament and after a tough game fell to Tyngsboro. Great job to all of these teams for their amazing efforts and their end of season tournaments.

For our clubs update, congratulations to DECA seniors Jarrett Daoust, Connor DeCiero and Xavier Murphy as well as DECA sophomores Johann Baniqued and Larissa Briggs on their success on their success at the 64<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts DECA state champion state competition on March 10 at the Hynes Convention Center. There, they attended workshops and visited exhibits where local colleges and businesses informed them of their ideas and events. This was a great learning opportunity for our DECA students.

DECA, sports and entertainment students attended a field trip on 2/10 where they visited the Worcester Sports Management summit held at Worcester State University. There, they listened to a variety of professionals in the sports management field talk about their careers and their success. Some takaways of the students themselves were starting small and growing big where big connections are important and there is no such thing as too much experience. This field trip was a big success and gave our students insight into how to improve their business management skills.

Student Council E Board members just recently attended the annual Massachusetts Association of Student Council's conference in Hyannis Cape Cod from March 8-10. There, our students were given the opportunity to take part in the polar plunge for the Special Olympics, attend workshops, socialize with students from different schools and listen to key note speakers. E Board learned about and developed skills in communication and leadership and received ideas from other students on what to bring back to NHS. The conference was a huge success as it helped to improve our student council and better our school environment.

## VII. Superintendent's Report

### NES

The NES PTA is going to be sponsoring the Me and My special person's dance again this year for all students from PreK to 5 on April 14 at 6:30 PM at the NES gym. Tickets will be going on sale soon so save the date. Information will be posted soon on the NES Facebook page.

### NMS

Several of our Middle School students went to Palmer on Friday 3/17 for a Unified basketball game and they were escorted by Officer DeJordy and they had a wonderful day. There is another game tomorrow afternoon at 3:30 against Auburn at the MS gym, so everyone is invited to cheer on our team. Also, the Middle School did their first ALICE evacuation today with house one and the kids did a great job. They have MCAS infrastructure training tomorrow so on Thursday and Friday they'll do the ALICE training for houses two and three.

The superintendent said that she has received as much data as I am going to get from the NPS family survey and she'll be sharing that with the committee at our first April meeting in a formal format but she wanted to share a few of the highlights from that report that will be talked about at the LT meeting. Interesting to note that of all the respondents (just over 200), 63% were NES parents, 19% were MS parents and 18% were HS parents. She would love to see more participation from HS and MS parents. She may put the survey out one more time. Superintendent McKinstry noted that 90% of the respondents feel welcomed in their child's school and 95% said that the teachers in their child's school are accessible, visible, receptive and responsive. 90% said the same about administration, that they're accessible, visible, receptive, and responsive. The respondents felt that our communication is best around health and safety concerns and school and district events and that we need improvement around communication on staff or schedule changes at the schools. The respondent's first choice of communication method was overwhelmingly email. When asked "how satisfied are you with the quality of education that your child is currently receiving in the NPS," 87% of the respondents were satisfied or very satisfied. Some trends in the comments section that were repeated were that people would like to see more family events, more opportunities for working parents to volunteer and engage in school activities. There were several comments around the amount of communication, the timeliness of it. The parents felt that the responses to questions or concerns were inconsistent, especially across schools. When asked what topics parents would like more information about, the top 4 topics were: the effects on students from social media and digital device use, depression, anxiety, and self-harm, bullying and cyber bullying and ADD and ADHD. She said that there was more information and that these were the highlights and the trends that she wanted to share at this time.

The leadership team met with the department chairs at the HS to discuss addressing student failures and how that can be better addressed so that there are less students needing to go to summer school or students that need to be or should be retained. We're finding that the HS students are coming in with skill deficits (example study and testing skills) the students are lacking and so she wants to start addressing failures earlier in the year rather than waiting until the end of the year. She would like to implement some practices early in the year every quarter. She said accountability is needed and the families and parents need to work with the district to ensure that students participate. The district is looking at a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after schoolwork related retention for students in danger of failing. There are additional programs being looked at as well.

A few reminders were that March 29 is now a full day of school and March 31<sup>st</sup> is an early release day. Also, the community closet is open at the Middle School on 3/22 starting at 2:15. The superintendent clarified that the entrance to the community closet is located in the driveway in the back – the door is located on the left as you come up the driveway. The BVCC Home and Community Expo will be taking place at the NHS on Saturday 3/25 from 9:30 AM -2:00 PM and it is open to the public.

Jill Leonard commented that students may not be as invested to stay after or before school for help but suggested it become an elective for the 23-24 school year and discussed criteria that could be used to determine the length of the class. The superintendent noted that there had been discussion about implementing the help for skills deficits within the advisory curriculum or the WIN block which would translate into the classroom.

Erin Donahue talked about the possibility of using Infinite Campus to send an alert to the parents of missing assignments etc. Superintendent McKinstry will investigate this. Erin also wanted to know if there was a sign on the door of the community closet.

## VIII. Presentations:

### A. Worcester County Superintendents Association Scholar Award

The recipient of the award was unable to attend the meeting. The presentation will be postponed until the next meeting on 3/28.

### B. FY24 Superintendent's Recommended Budget

Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance, Melissa Walker Superintendent presented the Superintendent's Recommended budget for FY24. Superintendent McKinstry began the budget presentation with an overview of the 2022-2023 school year. She noted that the year began with a hiring crunch and the continued difficulties in filling positions but noted that the shortages are country-wide post-COVID. She said that the good news is that there are no longer COVID

restrictions so all school activities are back to normal. The state of Massachusetts has announced the continuation of universal breakfast and lunch programming for the remainder of the school year and the hope is that it will continue into the future. She said that the continuation of the ESSER grant funding has allowed academic and non-academic support opportunities to continue to the students at all schools.

The superintendent noted that the focus and the initiatives of the recommended budget would include: meeting the ongoing academic and mental health needs of the students, ensuring that the district is able to hire highly qualified staff members in each of the schools to fill open position and to maintain the current staff by improving the culture and providing more support to staff, supporting the strategies and initiatives in the third year of the strategic plan and provide necessary resources and training for the staff and support parent opportunities and engagement. They advised that there was an increase in special populations including a 2.7% increase in EL students, a 19.7% increase in students with disabilities and a 39.9% increase in low-income students. She noted that 36% of the total expenditures in the district for the FY 24 budget is spent on special education which is 19.7% of the student population. The superintendent explained that there is still ESSER funding for the next school year and noted the positions that will continue to be funded. The Superintendent's recommended budget for FY24 is \$32,086,702. This represents an increase of \$1,452,350 or 4.74% over the original approved FY23 budget. The budget includes an increase for salaries of \$556,936, an increase in out of district tuition and transportation of \$685,049, an increase in transportation of \$184,858. There will be a reorganization of positions such as moving a grade 5 teacher to grade 4 and an additional 7 instructional assistants will be added in the district. The current Team Chair position at NES will be converted to an Elementary Special Education Coordinator and the 1:1 Nurse Assistant LPN position will be converted to a 1:1 Instructional Assistant. You can find the detailed presentation [here](#).

## IX. Consent Agenda

### A. School Committee Meeting Minutes: March 2, 2023

A motion was made by Jill Leonard to accept the School Committee Meeting Minutes of 3/2/2023. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded.

Jill Leonard	Yes
Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes

3 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

0 member having abstained

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 3-0-0

B. Warrant 43-36s 03/02/2023 \$323,980.05

A motion was made by Allan Richards to approve Warrant 43-36s on 3/2/2023 in the amount of \$323,980.05. The motion was seconded by Jill Leonard. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded.

Jill Leonard Yes

Erin Donahue Yes

Allan Richards Yes

3 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

0 members having abstained

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 3-0-0

X. Discussion

A. FY 23 Indirect Costs

Melissa Walker spoke about the FY 23 indirect costs that are agreed on by the town and the school department. These costs are paid through the town's general budget on behalf of the school staff, for example: retirement, health insurance and workman's compensation. The indirect costs require an agreement to be signed by both the town and the school department. She included a sheet with the FY 23 agreement that outlines the projected amounts and explained that the end of year figures will be submitted to the state with the actual figures for their review.

B. FY23 Budget - Line item transfers

Melissa Walker discussed a line item increase for OOD tuition due to the net increase of 2 students requiring out of district placements and higher than anticipated tuition costs than originally budgeted resulting in an increase of \$151,796. The additional cost of \$151,796 will be added to the FY23 budget, however, grant funding that is currently in place will cover the increase. It is recommended that the school committee approves the increase with the additional costs either being covered by grant funding or potential additional state SPED reimbursement (extraordinary relief) funding for this purpose. The second line-item transfer requests additional funding in FY 23 that is needed to cover anticipated transportation expenses for the year. An additional \$35,000 is needed in the OOD transportation line item to cover the increased daily rate of transportation and \$9,500 to cover the projected cost of fuel escalation for the year for in-district transportation due to the increased price of diesel fuel. It is recommended that the school committee approves transferring \$44,500 from salary line items within the FY 23 budget to transportation line items within the FY 23 budget.

### C. FY24 Superintendent's Recommended Budget

Melissa Walker noted the school committee has all of the detailed line-item breakdowns so they could see all of the numbers that add up to the FY24 budget.

### XI. Public Comment: Brandon King of 75 Sheryl Drive

Mr. King spoke about the school dance and how he worked with the PTA to ensure that it was inclusive. He addressed the high school students failing and that he feels that a lot of the students who are failing know if their parents are involved in Infinite Campus and feels that something should be sent home in the mail to the parents a letter so that they can have a hard copy of the information and that it will have an impact. He commented on student retention and that there is "just enough" being done to get them through. He feels that cost is a reason and that the students will be separated from their friends. He also discussed the percentage of the budget that is allocated for OOD students and talked about the availability of buildings in Northbridge and having a school in town for OOD students and possibly bringing in students from other districts as well. He commented on 1:1 Instructional Assistants moving with students and that there should be no time frame for how long a 1:1 should stay with a student. He feels that it should be brought up that the teachers forgo raises.

### XII. Action

### XIII. Information

#### A. SWCEC FY23 2nd Quarter Report

Superintendent McKinstry said that there was not much information from the collaborative this year other than similar problems with staffing. The increase from SWCEC is 5%. She said that SWCEC has more involved students attending school and that their needs are more diverse and vast.

#### B. YTD Budget Report 2-3-23

Melissa Walker noted that the committee has an informational summary sheet and presuming that the line-item transfer requests are approved, they are reflected in the amounts for transportation and OOD. Due to the mild winter, the heating account should be fine and that there will be a decrease in water and sewer.

#### C. Staffing update

Superintendent McKinstry noted that the staffing issues have stayed the same although there are always changes in the need for IAs but she is hopeful that the position in her office will be filled soon. The district continues to post positions and has already begun

to post positions for next year and that there is a job fair for all school positions on April 12 at Milford HS. The 1:1 nurse at NES is being contracted through a service.

#### XIV. Adjournment

A motion was made by Jill Leonard to Adjourn the 3-21-23 School Committee Meeting. The motion was seconded by Allan Richards. The vote was taken by roll call and the following votes were recorded:

Jill Leonard	Yes
Erin Donahue	Yes
Allan Richards	Yes

3 members having voted in the affirmative

0 members having voted in the negative

0 member having abstained

The motion was accepted with a roll call vote of 3-0-0