

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, May 19, 2014**

**Newburyport High School  
Meeting Convened at 7:11 PM**

**Room 118  
Mayor Donna Holaday, Presided**

**Present:** Mayor Holaday, Bruce Menin, Steve Cole, Cheryl Sweeney, Nick deKanter,  
Michael Luekens

**Absent:** Audrey McCarthy

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor & Chair Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 7:11 PM. Mayor Donna Holaday called for a roll call, which found one member absent, Audrey McCarthy. All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motions:**

**Warrants:**

On a motion by Bruce Menin and seconded by Mike Luekens it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive, and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant:  
**\$317,918.78**

**6- Yes**

**Motion Passed**

**Audrey McCarthy absent for vote**

On a motion by Bruce Menin and seconded by Cheryl Sweeney it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive, and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.  
**\$38,176.88**

**5 – Yes**

**1- Present – Mayor Holaday**

**Motion Passed**

**Audrey McCarthy absent for vote**

**NHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

NHS Student Representative Julia Bradley reported on the following:

- Seniors last day today,
- Senior week, May 26 – June 1
- Memorial day assembly – May 23,
- Graduation June 1

Mayor Donna Holaday took a moment to commend the cast, crew and directors of the NHS production *Chicago*. It was a wonderful show.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No Public Comment at this time.

## **PARCC & MCAS Update:**

**Supt. Viccaro:** I want to update the committee on the PARCC testing and I have handed you information from the Department of Education on why we are considering the PARCC testing for spring 2015. Please note that our school Accountability Level cannot drop, it will either be maintained at the current status or rise if we choose to administer the PARCC test to students in spring 2015. There will be no double testing of students generally speaking.

I would like you to view page 2 that outlines the training and deadlines for superintendents and administrators. The DESE needs a decision so they can order proper amount of materials. On page 3 notice the differences in administering PARCC 2014-to-2015. The final page speaks to test schedule. The state recommends that High Schools maintain MCAS as it is a graduation requirement.

There is a large amount of material out there that will need to be weeded through and we will share it with you in future meetings.

**Bruce Menin-** Are these surveys taken with our students?

**Supt. Viccaro** –The survey was done at the state level, some of our students were part of that survey.

**Asst. Supt. Bik-** Our survey feedback from here was taken from the tech coordinators and administrators of the PARCC test. Sample Questions were: Were we prepared? How engaged were the students? How was the timing?, etc. We looked at the quality of the test questions, but did not survey students about the test itself.

**Bruce Menin** – That is great logistical information, but I would like more qualitative information from administrators. As much as we can inform our decision, it will help us to have that qualitative info. My own kids thought it was different from MCAS. The State survey is great, but I would like more local information.

**Mike Luekens-** What is the time commitment MCAS vs PARCC?

**Asst. Supt. Bik** -MCAS sessions-11 sessions; PARCC-12 sessions; for PARCC students tested mid-year and end of year. (March/May) March: 3 literature and 3 math sessions; 2 sessions of each in May.

**Mike Luekens** - Are they equivalent?

**Asst. Supt. Bik** - We thought PARCC would take much more time. The students really did not need to take all of the allotted time; and until the scoring counts we are not sure.

**Mike Luekens** - After 2015, we will know if Massachusetts will be going in the PARCC direction? It may be less important if Newburyport will use MCAS or PARCC, or what the state will administer after 2015.

**Supt. Viccaro** – PARCC is more aligned to Common Core. I wanted you to know the deadlines we are under.

**Mayor Holaday-** is there a provision for technology glitches?

**Supt. Viccaro & Asst. Supt. Bik** - Don Skane cached all of the tests ahead of time so they were not live streaming, however, if there was a power failure that would be a different scenario. Caching was recommended by Don Skane to be more secure.

**Mayor Holaday-**What about SPED accommodations for children? I heard that they would charge more for those needing accommodations.

**Asst. Supt. Bik** – We are allowed to make accommodations for those needing them. No PARCC test for the Alternate testing students, so they will remain with MCAS Alt test.

**Bruce Menin** - Will this be a topic at the Curriculum Sub-committee meeting?

**Supt. Viccaro-** yes

**Mayor Holaday** – Is choosing one test over the other a School Committee or Superintendent's decision?

**Supt. Viccaro** – The Superintendent's.

## **School Lunch Program:**

The Committee takes a moment to review handouts from Chartwell's.

**Bruce Menin** - How was this survey done? Do the meals meet the guidelines?

**Food Service Director (FSD) Sheryn Seale-** All of our meals meet the guidelines. The kids enjoyed taking the survey on 6 iPods. It was done privately; nobody knew what anyone else answered.

One observation was the things they said they liked were the things we were selling less of. We discussed

the survey results among staff and we will continue to ask what they like/dislike. We have started adding calzones to the line, different crusts, also panini's with deli meat, we listened to the customer. A question was, "what are things they like when they go out to eat?" We do not serve much steak or lobster, which a lot of kids included.

**Bruce Menin** - How many kids took the survey?

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** -162 at the High School. We had 6 iPods at a table and we served cookies. Most students thought there was good variety of foods; more vegetarian options were wanted. The students felt that they had enough time allotted at the High School for lunch. We got a good rating on appeal, and presentation. Healthy choices were good as well. Speed of service, and customer service, good staff. We are looking at how we might improve atmosphere, perhaps with lighting or music. Overall satisfaction is 88%.

We asked how often do you eat in the cafeteria and how often do you purchase. We found that freshmen were a little overwhelmed, and we have decided to hold an orientation for grade 8 students to show our products and offerings. We asked a student with a bag lunch if he had ever eaten the cafeteria food and I brought the food to the table for the students to try it out. They enjoyed it. We want to do more tastings and samplings.

Currently we change breakfast menus monthly, smoothies, waffle tacos, breakfast pizza.

We lost a lot last year with new regulations and we are trying to get them back.

**Bruce Menin** – I am not a marketing expert, take this with a grain of salt. Your target is the 35% who buy now and then, and they could move from occasional to more often 3-5 days a week, it would help more. The Fritos folks will stay with Fritos.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** - We have a frequent buyers club with prize drawings, and you are right we do a lot of marketing, ethnic foods around the country, fresh fruits and vegetarian days, also nutrition info sessions.

**Bruce Menin** - I know we have tried to get info to parents, how do we get info back from parents?

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** - On our website there is a comment box for parents to respond anonymously. PTO meetings are also good, especially at the younger grades.

**Supt. Viccaro** – There is online information on gluten free options and we list foods that have the nutrition info.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** -Parents are thankful for the gluten free option so kids can get the lunch. Due to the allergies in the past this info was not available. We have training for staff on how to prepare meals and also a la carte items that are available. We served gluten free pizza on a Friday at Brown and one child was thrilled to get it.

**Mayor Holaday**- Am I reading that the food costs are 28% of budget? Where are we compared to other schools?

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale**- We are at 35% this month, at the beginning of the year it is always high, and the % of budget decreases as year goes on.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa**- Sheryn does a great job, and she is a few percent below last year, less waste in fruit and vegetable. 35% is in line with school food elsewhere.

**Mayor Holaday**- Have you worked out vending options for athletes, lunches for half days, etc.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** – We discussed options like breakfast for middle school, maybe a cart in the hallway, what do you think will work in the school?

**Supt. Viccaro**.- We are going to bring in the principals and ask them for ideas.

**Steve Cole**- I appreciate the survey, HS kids are quite happy and have enough time to eat. We have heard at Nock/Molin parents want kids to have more time to eat. Teachers bring kids in on time, but some kids late, so it cuts into eating time. No lunch line problems, but it is getting kids into the cafeteria on time. Looking at your projections and they are dependent on a 25% increase \$29,000 and increase of 8% or \$53,000.

**Exec. Asst. Finance Nancy Lysik**- The revenue change is \$20,000-\$30,000; 3-5%

**Steve Cole** – The School Committee did not want to increase lunch prices for this year, (2014-14).

Please have staff take a look at increased time for lunch. Rainy day time is better than on a sunny day.

**Nick deKanter**- Is there a difference in profitability between venues? Are some having more success than

others; Bresnahan vs. High School?

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** – There is more variety at Middle and High Schools vs. Bresnahan.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** – The biggest area for sales increase is in the a la carte areas with more to offer. At elementary no a la carte items are offered. Some other school districts do offer a la carte at lower levels. A lot went away with the new regulations. Some companies are starting to manufacture healthy snacks i.e., healthy ice creams, chips etc. this could increase revenue.

**Nick deKanter-** I agree High School has the most increase, Molin/Nock should increase.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** - We added a deli, and kids love it. With the new school we are excited in our offerings and new atmosphere. We are hoping to be higher than the 3-5%.

**Supt. Viccaro-** There is value in surveying middle school students.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** – Absolutely, we can. We have increased staff participation with the deli and soup options. New Bresnahan will have a staff lounge right off new cafeteria, so we can offer them more. We are looking to offer bag non-perishables for athletes, etc, for after school.

**Mayor Holaday-** Did you cost out the savings in paper costs with using regular plates, silverware etc.? We will use the alt kids to do some of the labor.

**Supt. Viccaro** - We are looking into whether or not that is feasible.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** – School enrollment is relatively the same. Went from 37% to 38.5%

**Mike Luekens-** is it going from 37% to 40%? If we increase fees by .25¢ per lunch and increase usage how do we arrive at 3%?

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** - We used to experience slippage when increasing lunch prices, but not anymore, and we do not know why. Most folks just pay it and continue, especially when there has not been an increase in some years. We will continue to sample, iPod touch surveys, visit PTOs, etc.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale-** The lunch meal value is quite good and parents see that it would cost them that or more to buy and prep. HS staff says why can't we give more food to the kids? Because we only charge \$2.75, food costs money so we have to look at portion size.

**Mike Luekens** - Elasticity of school lunch, you will not lose a lot of folks but you will lose some.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** – We are hopeful, the budget is forecast by reviewing data and we have noticed an increase in the last few months.

**Mike Luekens** - I know you have responded to your survey results and it would be interesting to see the results after the changes you have made.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** – We need parents to know what we are serving.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** - Our bottom line is \$12,000 better than last; higher frequency of free/reduced students in other districts fare better. I think a price increase would help and with new school we may streamline staff.

**Cheryl Sweeney-** What was the account deficit in 2012?

**Exec. Asst. Finance Nancy Lysik** -\$60,000; \$98,000 in 2013; \$73,000 in 2014; we have put in \$30,000 and another \$30,000; what is the deficit? We will have a loss this year to be at least \$60,000.

They project \$73,000 - \$15,000; we will have to cover approximately \$50,000. We will start next year at 0.

**Cheryl Sweeney-**Looking at bottom line, \$50,000 reduction next year, assuming .25¢ increase and +3% increase in participation where we only had 1.5% this year. Salaries are going up 2%; sick day costs = paid leave and substitute costs for labor. 1% vs. 2%; will alter numbers a bit more into the red.

**Bruce Menin-** But we should also factor the costs of paper supplies for next year. There are adjustments that need to be made.

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** - When we put in costs it is placed on a spread sheet that will adjust the costs all over. We will adjust our spread sheet and return it to the Supt. and Mrs.Lysik.

**Nick deKanter-** I am optimistic and I would like a bit more detail that the sales growth is achievable, put some ball park figures around them, I may be able to believe the 3% growth. You have done well to date moving us forward, how better can you go?

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** - We will do this.

**Cheryl Sweeney-** What is the turnaround on this, and when will the numbers be available so we can vote on an increase before the end of school in June?

**Steve Cole-** The survey for Nock/Molin, please can you do as soon as possible? In Amesbury, there was a promotion that information was sent with little backpacks to market the upcoming school year. With the new school opening it may be a good idea to do a lunch promotion before school begins.

**Bruce Menin-** We will have tremendous facilities at the new school and it is a great time to promote. We need to move forward as we have no information on other methods of serving lunch such as in house or another vendor. This will help me to make a decision; we have no plan B. We need to make this work.

**(FSD) Sheryn Seale** – We do have a marketing plan with bringing in characters, bring a guest to school day where parents, and grandparents, etc. can come into the cafeteria.

**Bruce Menin** -If you could do something before the school opens that would be great.

**Nick deKanter-** You will probably improve in the new school, how can we promote food service at open houses and tours, as well as, Nock/Molin, to roll out new programs?

**Mayor Holaday-**Do we have a breakdown by school?

**Chartwell's Manager Teresa** - We do not look at profit & loss by school. We can do participation and labor by school.

**Cheryl Sweeney-**What would the committee like to do? We will have information by the end of next week.

On a motion by Bruce Menin and seconded by Steve Cole it was

**VOTED:** To receive new information by the end of this week, and plan a Finance sub-committee meeting, for discussion and to make a recommendation on a lunch price increase at the June 2, School Committee meeting.

#### **Discussion:**

Finance Sub-committee meeting on Tuesday, May 27, at 5:00 PM

Followed by a Policy sub-committee meeting on Tuesday, May 27, at 5:45,

All in favor-

**6- Yes**

**Motion Passed**

**Audrey McCarthy absent for vote**

#### **Community Public Conversation:**

**Vice Chair Cheryl Sweeney-** What is the usefulness of the Pubic Conversation session prior to each School Committee meeting? How to increase use of it; how do we see it; I am opening up for discussion.

**Nick deKanter-** I have been beating my head against the wall on this subject for 5+ years; there is not a singular approach but a variety. At the last Communications sub-committee, we discussed separate event discussions on different topics with broader discussion time, but that it should not reduce the ability for people to come and discuss any topics with us. We discussed 2-3 members holding office hours. The 3<sup>rd</sup> element we need to look at is how we handle communication with members in school committee meetings. We can set rules so we can reply. Currently, it does not encourage communication, but also cannot be a free for all. We can suspend the rules and ask one of us, or the superintendent, to respond, at the discretion of the chair. Not just a recording of people's comments. We should look at a multi-faceted way to handle some of these things. I am excited about technology and how we will be able to publicize, use blogs, etc. I look at this to say it is not working the way we want it to. We need better communication and how can we improve on folks being heard and how we are acting on it.

**Mike Luekens-** My comments are around best practices about budget development and we are forced with limited time. If advertised, people will come for the discussion, and the discussions should be around a long-term strategic plan, and what it should look like. I think we should help the Superintendent, the Mayor and other stakeholders with soliciting opinions on what to include.

**Mayor Holaday-** I like the idea of putting topics forth and plan conversations with 10-12 important topics and have a part 2 if needed at next meeting.

**Steve Cole-** Bringing up public hearings, I would be in favor of periodic public hearings as forums are not held to public record, they can be reflective of short and long term goals and will get the committee on the

record. This will engage the public.

**Bruce Menin-** Mike, I agree a focus on strategic planning is engaging the public, and other topics come up during the year. We need to create a Strategic Plan too, and I agree with Steve and Nick. There is a range of ways to engage the public; public hearings are not necessary. We can have notes taken and published at conversations. Nothing to say we can't go to school council and PTO meetings and listen and engage folks at different levels. I support public conversation, but not a particular way to do it. We can get outside of the way we have done things.

**Cheryl Sweeney-**How do we proceed? An ad hoc committee, with members of the public, if we have an ad hoc we have input on what a good way to communicate would be.

**Steve Cole & Nick deKanter**– That is a great idea.

On a motion by Nick deKanter and seconded by Bruce Menin with wording to say convene instead of appoint it was

**VOTED:** That we ~~appoint~~ convene an ad hoc committee to discuss the communication

**Discussion:**

**Mike Luekens-** Is the purpose of this ad hoc committee a plan to engage the community, or shouldn't we just do it instead of creating another committee? We are re-creating work already done in the Communications sub-committee.

**Bruce Menin-**We will have folks other than School Committee members' ideas; it will be a way to hear from others with a bigger table to be heard.

**Supt. Viccaro-** If I may comment, you have School Councils and you can start with them, and ask for their ideas.

**Bruce Menin-** Good idea, but they are almost done and then do not meet again until September.

**Steve Cole-**The councils can give us some ideas to grind out.

**Nick deKanter-**Besides the ad hoc; put deadlines around it to produce the results we want. School Councils would be great sooner than later, we will reach beyond School Committee and beyond those folks already engaged in the schools to have a broader scope than we took as Communications committee.

**Mike Luekens-**We should continue to hold conversations rather than delaying to committee; do we generate topics and frame sooner?

**Cheryl Sweeney-** The ad hoc committee should be short, quick, focused, but the original nucleus says we need to go to School Councils, not opposed to current set up but it does not work. Nick is correct and we have talked about lots but we just keep spinning our wheels. I am looking to move forward.

**Bruce Menin-** Quick, focused set of observations, and provisional, as the new school year starts, get it going early in September with synergy of people.

**Mike Luekens** – Please clarify the purpose, this is straight forward and we need to talk to the public but we should actually hold the meetings and open up to everyone. Let's just start the conversation and go.

**Bruce Menin-** The ad hoc adds a layer of opinions with a road map on paper, and we do not need to wait to begin.

**Cheryl Sweeney-** I am looking for volunteers. Okay, Bruce & Nick. Thank you.

**All in favor-**

**6- Yes**

**Motion Passed**

**Audrey McCarthy absent for vote**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

- NHS Poetry Slam team was 4<sup>th</sup> out of 32 teams, they were phenomenal and performed at Rotary, everyone was in awe.
- NHS Environmental Club one of 27 in the state and the only one not part of formal classroom
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade poetry study; authors of doggone school
- June 12, Molin music concert at Maudslay State Park

- May 27, Brown Memorial Day singing songs and care packages sent to troops. The students will load wagons and walk to the Post Office.
- Rob Ouellette, Zero the Hero, will be the Ed Award recipient at the NEF annual meeting on June 11 at the Brown School, everyone is invited.  
Bruce Menin-commented on Rob's offered his auctioneering abilities to the Senior Class and was terrific.
- Bresnahan- Memorial Day festivities on Friday, May 23, at 9 am
- School Safety Week, parents and students were biking and walking to school, Also, there was a canine demonstration by of Officer Whitney and Salisbury Officer, Rich Delauria.
- Middle School- Gr. 6 *Long Walk to Water* project, gathered 6000+ pairs of shoes, and culminated with a walkathon for water in Africa
- Gr.8's ocean drifters are used by Woods Hole and can be tracked online
- Gr.7 students are in process with a project for the City's 250<sup>th</sup> celebration
- WEBSITE: 20 folks in house today to review 3 vendors; Catapult K-12, SchoolinSites; Educational Networks. We looked at features, design, ease of use, tech supt, training. In a formal presentation , followed by q & a period for each. We are in consensus on one of the vendors.

**Nick deKanter**- We were attracted to the marketing tool and ease of use; support to give; all 3 good choices one was particularly good.

**Superintendent**- allows for some creativity, and will allow tools to be consistent school to school.

**Mayor Holaday**- will they move what we currently have?

**Superintendent** -absolutely and have asked reps from each school to review what to move forward; Rich Fielding will have a student/staff survey asking what would they like and we should be able to get one up and running by next year.

**Bruce Menin**- is there a way to ask folks, school councils?

**Nick deKanter**-principals were there and very intuitive

**Superintendent** – I spoke to PTO about this and they hit on all of the things we looked at today.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Vice-chair Cheryl Sweeney**- None of the Committees have met, we will have reports on June 2.

**Joint Ed:**

**Finance:**

**Policy:**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

#### **Motion**

On a motion by Mike Luekens and seconded by Steve Cole it was

**VOTED:** To adjourn the meeting at 9:11 PM.

#### **Motion Passed**

**Audrey McCarthy absent for vote**