

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC CONVERSATION  
Monday, April 7, 2014**

**Newburyport High School  
Meeting Convened at 6:09 PM**

**Auditorium  
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

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

Cheryl Sweeney welcomed the audience and stated that this was a time of Public Conversation and a time for the public to be heard regarding the budget.

Mayor Holaday said she had good news. She and her department heads have been doing some number crunching. 5.5% has been the allocation. The City's free cash will be used to cover the deficit for this year. School Choice and Circuit Breaker will be used to cover the deficit next year.

Superintendent Susan Viccaro stated that it will be nice to start the next school year without worries.

Mayor Holaday said the Superintendent will be able to devote 100% of her time towards the new schools.

Superintendent Viccaro said they will begin long-term planning; she is very optimistic. There is a lot to look forward to next year.

Mayor Holaday said she is very pleased with the new City Council, their willingness to work diligently. She is working with the Department of Revenue on how to disburse money garnered from the Kelley School. The building has not been re-pointed, there is no elevator and there is also a furnace problem. The City Council has approved \$40,000 for a feasibility study for the Brown School.

**PUBLIC CONVERSATION:**

**Graham Wright, Prospect St.** said cuts are school cuts – no city budget.

**Molly Brennan, Jackson St.** said how do we move forward.

**Mayor Holaday** explained. She stated we will look for as many revenue streams; sale of Kelley School; use of Brown School; tax title, meals tax, etc.

**Mark Belanger, Marquand Lane** stated he is a fan of Special Education and suggested we look at peers to see what they are spending. At some point we have to stop.

**Mayor Holaday** stated she thinks with the new buildings some students will want to come back to Newburyport.

**Dr. Dee** further explained.

**Mayor Holaday** explained the process of Special Education out-of-district placement. There are 31 out-of-district students right now; she would like to bring this down by 30%.

**Mr. Belanger** asked for a discussion regarding risk-pooling.

**Mayor Holaday** explained Circuit Breaker.

**Anthony Laurenzano, Hawthorne Rd.** asked if it was safe to say that we will not be paying teachers with grant money.

**Assistant Superintendent Angela Bik** stated it is not safe to say and explained.

**Mr. Laurenzano** said at some point there needs to be a change in how we do things.

**Ralph Orlando, Wm. Hall Dr.** asked the Committee if they were satisfied with the process.

**Nick deKanter** said he is not happy with the process; we need to do long range planning. He is very

grateful to the Mayor and City Council – this is still a treading water budget – needs to be a joint long range planning process.

**Bruce Menin** said he is not happy with the process.

**Anthony Laurenzano, Hawthorne Rd.** asked where do we go from here.

**Bruce Menin** said we need to come up with ideas and discuss them.

**Anthony Laurenzano** said maybe set up a committee. He suggested 25% of any new revenue streams should go to the schools.

**Kira McLeod** thanked the principals, leadership team for their work.

**Megan Kinsey, City Council** spoke of combining leadership teams.

**Mayor Holaday** spoke of Superintendent Viccaro's expertise.

**Mayor Holaday** recognized the City Councilors.

**Dr. Orlando** asked. “how does this make us any better as a School Committee?” You need to start talking about future budgets immediately after passing the budget. Change the ways that School Committee meetings are conducted.

**Lauren Rathborne, Toppans Lane** said it is great that we are at 10.1% - she still wants things added. She wants more.

**Allison Harper, School St.** said she agreed. She posed the question “Who would support an override” to the audience. Most of those in attendance stood.

**Dr. Orlando** spoke of overrides.

**Rebecca Brodish** said we need an inspirational budget. Let’s move away from what we have lost – move forward.

**Anthony Laurenzano** asked, “what is the cost of adding a program?”; need a ballpark figure.

**Superintendent Viccaro** explained decision planning, etc.

**Steve Cole** spoke about space issue when adding programs.

**Anthony Laurenzano** said we need clarity.

**Audrey McCarthy** said she would like to hear from the community as to their goals. She asked “do we have carts”.

**Middle School Principal Beth Raucci**, explained that foreign language at the Middle School uses carts and they need to do it right. The NEF gave \$40,000 for an iPad carts – they hope to grow the program.

**Molin School Principal, Tara Rossi**, said Art is on a cart at Molin because of construction – they are trying to build the program.

**Bresnahan School Principal, Kristina Davis**, said Art and Music are on a cart because of construction.

**Molly Brennan** asked what a “best in class” school system looks like.

**Michael Luekens** explained planning – Mayor, City Council, School Committee – everyone should be focused on education. We should turn to long range planning – now is a pivot point.

**Bruce Menin** said long range planning has already started – focus groups met.

**Megan Kinsey** invited all to attend the meeting at City Hall, Wednesday at 8:00 PM.

**Mary Foley, Lunt St.** asked what was cut on the City side to make 10.1%.

**Mayor Holaday** explained – all departments cut.

**Mark Belanger** said change happens when you have a firm deadline.

**Peter McClure, Federal St.** questioned budget – possible cuts.

**Mayor Holaday** said the City Council has been engaged in the budget process. Whittier Vo-Tech increase \$1,200

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, April 7, 2014**

**Newburyport High School  
Meeting Convened at 7:40 PM**

**Auditorium  
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

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

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

Chairman Mayor Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM. Mayor Holaday called for a roll call, which found all members present. All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this point Vice-Chairman Cheryl Sweeney assumed chairmanship of the meeting.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Motions:**

**Warrants:**

On a motion by Bruce Menin and seconded by Nick deKanter it was

**VOTED:** To approve receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant:  
**\$35,047.65**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

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

**VOTED:** To approve receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.  
**\$296,971.37**

**6 – Yes**

**1 – Present – Mayor Holaday**

**Motion Passed**

**Minutes:**

On a motion by Nick deKanter and seconded by Michael Luekens it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and file the School Committee Meeting minutes of Monday, March 17, 2014.

**Motion Passed**

**Mayor Holaday voted Present**

**NHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE:**

NHS Student Representative Julia Bradley reported on the following:

- ⤴ Credit for Life Fair is tomorrow at Triton High School, majority of Junior students will attend.
- ⤴ Junior Prom is this Saturday, Promenade is at 5:30 PM at Atkinson Common.
- ⤴ The Provident Bank Art Show is currently on display and will be throughout the month of April.
- ⤴ The NHS Celebration of Academic Excellence is on 4/16.,
- ⤴ The Student Council Fundraiser (Penny Wars) raised \$687.37 which went to the Senior class.
- ⤴ Spirit week also went well with high levels of participation.
- ⤴ The National Honor Society induction ceremony was on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Lisa Mead, Purchase St.**     **CONCERN:** She read the following letter to the Committee:

I am unable to attend tonight's hearing as I have a work commitment in another community. However, I wanted to continue to participate in this important discussion.

As I mentioned last week, the current lack of funding has not been caused by any of the current city leadership, nor was it caused by city leadership of the past several decades. To the contrary, the City's unfortunate situation regarding school funding is due to a series of events which began in 1984 with the passage of 2 ½ which "locked in" a comparatively low tax rate which in turn affected all future tax rates, followed by the adoption of education reform in the early 1990s which "locked in" Newburyport as a community which gets minimal funding, followed by the state and federal government's continued failure to fund special education despite their increased mandates, followed by the introduction of publicly-funded charter schools which are supported entirely at the community level through the local public school budget.

In turn, our schools have suffered cut after cut for more than two decades. Where once the system thrived as a model educational system for the Commonwealth, it now barely offers some of the most basic opportunities for our students.

Newburyport has always prided itself on its public schools. Indeed the major impetus for splitting off from Newbury more than 250 years ago was due to Newbury's reluctance to fund public education. Today is no different. The city is at a point where it can no longer wait for another entity to fund our public schools properly.

The federal government may not ever fund special education despite nationwide lobbying; it certainly won't fund special education *in time to save Newburyport's public schools*.

Similarly, communities across Massachusetts have lobbied for more equitable funding of Charter Schools since the first one opened and we've yet to see the state make changes. If they are on the horizon at all, these changes certainly won't be made *in time to save Newburyport's public schools*. Neither will the Commonwealth, despite lobbying from municipalities, add additional money for special education *to save Newburyport's public schools*.

We can no longer wait for others to adequately fund our public schools. We must act ourselves to provide our children with the learning opportunities which will allow them to compete and succeed in higher education or in workforce opportunities after high school.

I am in a unique position to understand the balancing act in which the Mayor and the School Committee and the City Council must engage. Our elected officials, especially the Mayor, is in the untenable position of trying to be sure general government services are maintained while providing enough money for the schools to stay afloat.

After twenty years of being at the short end of revenue formulas and realities, the scales are tipped unfairly against her, just as they are tipped against our children. But in the current scenario, we cannot rely on the Commonwealth to balance these scales and underwrite both the general government budget and an adequate school system budget. I personally believe that the Newburyport Public School budget does not meet its obligations to students, that it hasn't for several years and that the time has come to stop short-changing the children of our community.

We have waited long enough for formulas to change, long enough for fair treatment by the Commonwealth and long enough for Federal Government to reduce its mandates on all communities. Outside change is not coming in time, despite our best efforts and the best efforts of our representatives.

I believe – as many Newburyporters do – that adequately funding public education – is one of the critical cornerstones of a healthy community. I believe the School Committee must champion public education and help Newburyport recommit itself to providing a fair and proper education to all of its students. Many residents are looking for this leadership and, like myself, pledge their support and assistance.

**Ralph Orlando, Wm. Hall Dr.**

**CONCERN:** He asked the Committee not to approve the

budget until they have vetted the High School and there are adequate teachers.

**VOTE FOR DISPOSAL & TRANSFER OF EXCESS PROPERTY TO THE CITY  
(KELLEY SCHOOL):**

**Motion:**

On a motion by Mayor Holaday seconded by Nick deKanter it was

**VOTED:** That the School Committee of the City of Newburyport hereby designate the former Kelley School (*formally closed by the School Committee by vote of April 23, 2007, and now operating as the Newburyport Youth Services facility*) as surplus property, no longer required by the School Department, and transfer said building and the land upon which it stands (151 High Street, Assessors Map 35 Lot 161) from the School Department to the Mayor and City Council for care, custody and/or further disposition as they may deem appropriate.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**FY15 BUDGET:**

Vice-Chairman Cheryl Sweeney introduced Brown School Principal Amy Sullivan and Bresnahan School Principal Kristina Davis who spoke of the major accomplishments of the Brown and Bresnahan. They stated they sincerely appreciate all that the NEF has done for the schools. Ms. Sullivan spoke of what will be accomplished next year; continued alignment, standard based report card, phonics instruction, protocol for the new building. Ms. Davis spoke of professional development, technology plan, math interventionist, tiered instruction, science standard, and STEM coordinator. Ms. Sullivan updated the Committee of the new State mandate, new assessment – there is some funding available.

**Discussion:**

**Steve Cole** inquired regarding the following:

- ⤴ Pre-K Program – FY15 cost \$404,000 – explain how gap. Ms. Sullivan explained.
- ⤴ Explain number of grants – not at the present time. Dr. Dee explained a couple of grants.
- ⤴ Kindergarten – same rationale here as well. Ms. Sullivan explained.
- ⤴ What types of things can students look forward in Title I. Ms. Davis explained.
- ⤴ Explain increase in funding. Ms. Davis explained.

**Nick deKanter** asked

- ⤴ For a description of highlights of the Technology Plan. Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Davis jointly explained.
- ⤴ Are they site or seat based. Answer – some of both.

**Mike Luekens** asked

- ⤴ Pre-K tuition – are we on track. Ms. Sullivan said Pre-K is full with a wait list. K half day is down – 115 out of 126 full day K – just about at capacity. They are in a good place with projections.
- ⤴ Is it on par. Ms. Sullivan said yes. Ms. Davis spoke of Bresnahan new student registration.

**Bruce Menin** inquired if, at the Bresnahan, is there any impact on class size. Ms. Davis explained.

Vice-Chairman Cheryl Sweeney introduced Molin Principal Rossi spoke of the following:

- ⤴ STEM Class
- ⤴ Hour code
- ⤴ Implemented co-teaching SPED teaching method
- ⤴ Aligning curriculum to Common Core
- ⤴ Continue new teacher evaluation system

- ⤴ Spring after-school program
- ⤴ New standard based progress reports
- ⤴ Owe a lot to the NEF
- ⤴ Yoga in Mind program
- ⤴ Managed 3 phases of our building renovation project

She stated they are looking forward to

- ⤴ Increased Technology opportunity
- ⤴ Adding learning based learning center
- ⤴ Increased STEM
- ⤴ Co-teaching model
- ⤴ Art program
- ⤴ New Science standards

Ms. Sweeney introduced the Middle School Principal who spoke of:

- ⤴ Guidance staff trained in SOS
- ⤴ Budget frozen – recreated master schedule – increase Foreign Language and Tech Ed.
- ⤴ Three course offerings to Explore
- ⤴ Girls INC
- ⤴ Math interventionist
- ⤴ Student intervention for student pass/failing
- ⤴ School wide executive function training

### Goals

- ⤴ Technology integrator
- ⤴ 3 to 1 ratio computer lab

### Discussion

**Bruce Menin** inquired re:

- ⤴ Executive function issues – Principal explained.
- ⤴ How happens – Arts.
- ⤴ Productions – self funded. Student driven
- ⤴ State initiative – extended day – have conversations continued. No

**Audrey McCarthy** inquired regarding Molin music before school – will it be moved into school day.  
No

**Steve Cole** asked regarding the following:

- ⤴ Social emotional issues – how do you maintain consistency with students at risk, suicide prevention. Focus has been pro-active.
- ⤴ Liaison – a team
- ⤴ Foreign Language – questioned numbers
- ⤴ Load for Teachers – foreign language

Ms. Sweeney introduced High School Principal Mike Parent who spoke of the following: He stated he was pleased that there will be no cuts, but stated this is a survival budget. He stated he needed help. He needs additional staff. The Science Lab numbers are going over 24. He is in process of putting scheduling together – he will need to reallocate things.

### Discussion:

**Mayor Holaday** asked Principal Parent

- ⤴ to get the Committee information where he has the biggest problems. Principal Parent stated projections 180-185 – have 216 – impacting core sections.
- ⤴ What is capacity of the building – Discussion ensued.
- ⤴ How soon will you know numbers. Principal Parent said the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. This is after the

budget is passed.

- ⤴ She questioned the teacher contract

**Michael Luekens** stated these issues are of great concern – should this have been addressed in the budget request.

**Mayor Holaday** asked Principal Parent if he could come back in two weeks. Yes

**Audrey McCarthy** inquired:

- ⤴ What is the class size under his plan. We should be able to reduce numbers.
- ⤴ Guidance Counselor; how many. Four – divided by grade.
- ⤴ Are we doing all we can re: college. Doing a great job.
- ⤴ Transition – through Guidance. All departments.

**Bruce Menin** said if you don't ask you don't get. Two Social Studies – what does that do. Add another section – gr. 10 social studies.

**Bruce Menin** re: Virtual High School- 2 Soc. Stud. Virtual High School will be gone.

**Mayor Holaday** inquired re: Senior Project –

- ⤴ Does that have any effect on FTE's. It could have some impact – but it is additional work for staff.
- ⤴ What about future Senior Project. It is possible, but not enough manpower right now.

**Steve Cole** inquired regarding:

- ⤴ Who is responsible for Resource Officer. Youth Services
- ⤴ Virtual High School – very useful – try to keep.
- ⤴ Civics and government – dealing with outdated book. Money is in the budget.
- ⤴ Mandate to concussion. Mostly manpower
- ⤴ How many trainers do we have? We try to have a trainer at contact sports whenever possible.
- ⤴ Parents Night – what message do we give. A good High School.

Cheryl Sweeney thanked the Principals – dealing with teamwork – thanked them all for all their time/effort.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

Superintendent Susan Viccaro reported on the following:

- ⤴ Kim Patrick & Jana Shulson: Parents that applied for and were granted \$1000 for the BOKS (Build Our Kids Success) program. They attended a day of training at a Reebok facility and instituted a before school program for 40 kids to come in and exercise and learn nutrition facts from 7:15 -8:15 every Monday and Wednesday. They have done a tremendous job, as stated by Cathy Hill Bresnahan PE Educator.
- ⤴ National Honor Society inducted 42 students
- Cathy Hill's Teams of Tomorrow Program, a basketball skill drill program culminating with 60 grade 3 students performing at the TD Garden at the Harlem Globetrotters show. 450 tickets were sold by Bresnahan to attend.
- Cheryl Zaino, School to Career Counselor at NHS, had 10 banking internship students participating in the MA School Bank Assoc. Conference, with the Newburyport team finishing in the top 6 in the Marketing competition. Students Josh Barberi & Jacob Timony placed second in the Product Design category. All students: Josh Barberi, Jacob Timony, Alex Peterson, Bryan McCarthy, Jamie Thompson, Josh Darcy, Jesse Malis, Ben Theriault, Georgia Balentine, Peter Pantelis.
- NHS math educator, Mark Littlefield, has been published in an AP Stats book.
- Box Program – 40 students to get up and exercise
- Bresnahan School has received their tiger boxes
- Last Day of PARCC testing went well.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Joint Ed**

Cheryl Sweeney said they met and discussed the budget – they are committed to our schools.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by Mayor Holaday and seconded by Bruce Menin it was

**VOTED:** To adjourn the meeting at 9:34

**Motion passed Unanimously**