

NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, September 16, 2013

**Newburyport High School
Meeting Convened at 7:06 PM**

**Room 118
Mayor Donna Holaday/Cheryl Sweeney Presided**

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

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chairman Mayor Donna Holaday called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM. Mayor Holaday called for a roll call, which found all members present. All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

READING OF MISSION STATEMENT:

Mayor Holaday read the Newburyport School District Mission Statement.

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

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motions

Warrants:

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Nick deKanter it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant
\$13,994.87

Motion Passed Unanimously

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Bruce Menin it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant:
\$7,246.11

Motion Passed Unanimously

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Bruce Menin it was

VOTED: To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant:
\$335,824.92

Motion Passed

Mayor Holaday voted Present

Minutes

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

VOTED: To approve, receive and file the School Committee Meeting of Tuesday, September 3, 2013.

Motion Passed Unanimously

Mayor Holaday voted Present

NHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT:

NHS Student Representative Julia Bradley reported on the following:

- Student Advisory Council – will have approximately 3 – 15 members, starting this year with a budget of \$1,200.
- Club Fair – will meet on September 30 – 8 clubs that students may sign up for will set up tables and recruit members from 10 AM to 2 PM
- First dance will be a step dance
- The new freshmen are settling in nicely

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Roseanne Nercessian, 466 Merrimac Street **CONCERN:** She stated she had a positive comment to make – this year has gone much smoother with Special Education.

Mary Foley, 15 Lunt Street **CONCERN:** She was concerned that the Newburyport School District has dropped from #16 to #67 in a two year span. We need to pay more attention and bring the school district back to where it was.

Dr. Ralph Orlando, Wm. Hall Terr. **CONCERN:** He stated he was discontented in the last two minute period. He made 3 points:

- Two building projects – at each meeting presentation should be made re: building projects – the cost of the floor at the new Bresnahan is excessive
- School Council – positions should be elected by peers – should have parody amongst teachers/parents
- Should have early discussion of budget – he commented on this year’s budget

ACCEPTANCE OF CHECK TO SCHOOLS FROM PARAMETRIC TECHNOLOGY CO (PTC):

Superintendent Susan Viccaro, in the absence of Myron Moss, educational liaison with Parametric Technology Corp., Inc, a company that has provided our Nock & High School CAD software and have continued to support us on an annual basis, announced they have presented the School District with a check donation in the amount of \$2,500. Superintendent Viccaro, on behalf of the Newburyport School District, thanked Parametric Technology Corp. for their continued support.

Discussion:

Bruce Menin stated Parametric Technology Corp., Inc. has been a strong supporter of our school system for a while.

Steve Cole stated that Myron Moss was a retired NHS English teacher.

USE OF FACILITIES REQUEST – SUNDAY MORNING, NOV.3, 2013:

Vice-Chairman Sweeney introduced Michael St. Laurent from Loco Sports, Inc. who is requesting the use of the Newburyport High School gymnasium on Sunday, November 3, 2013, for the purpose of the All Women’s Half Marathon. Loco Sports would like to use the building for preparation beginning at 6:00 AM. All festivities should be ended at approximately 2:00 PM. Vice-Chairman Sweeney stated that this has been approved by the City.

Motion:

On a motion by Dan Koen and seconded by Steve Cole it was

VOTED: To approve the use of the NHS gymnasium on Sunday, November 3, 2013 by Loco Sports, Inc., for the purpose of the All Women’s Half Marathon from 6:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Discussion:

Dan Koen inquired if this would be the same as last year. The answer was yes.

Motion Passed Unanimously

CHARTWELL’S – SCHOOL LUNCH PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION:

Vice-Chairman Sweeney introduced Sheryn Seale, Food Services Director for Newburyport Schools, Teresa Minnucci, District Manager, and Eric Pimental, Regional Vice President, all from Chartwell’s. Together they explained the report which came from two web-based surveys of students & parents in the Newburyport Public Schools. The purpose of the surveys was to generate useful information relevant to the existing school lunch program and to use the survey results to identify specific actions necessary in improving the school lunch program. They wanted to capture data concerning:

- Frequency of students buying school lunch
- Student dining preferences to that the menu & program meet those expectations
- Reason why students do not buy school lunches

Summary & Conclusions

The results of this study provide guidelines for building upon the existing school lunch program. The data collected from the survey responses provide a strong foundation on which to propose program changes. The major objective of the surveys was to understand student dining practices and preferences. Accordingly, we can draw the following specific conclusions:

- Student participation has suffered due to last year’s Federal Meal Regulations.
- An immediate need to increase participation with more appealing lunches, a la carte options (as permitted) and ongoing student feedback to assure success is critical.
- Create an exciting atmosphere in the cafeteria this year focusing on all they can have instead on what is not allowed.
- Communication throughout the district involving:
 - ✓ Administrative support by enforcing existing “Wellness Regulations”, discouraging outside food vendors, and encouraging teachers to take an active role in student nutrition
 - ✓ Teacher involvement and support with nutrition bulletin boards posted in the classrooms and mini nutrition lessons, when applicable
 - ✓ School nurses to support our program with online parent communications, wellness promotions and health fairs. Work with food service department to meet any special dietary student needs.
 - ✓ Support parents with special dietary needs requests and promote parent involvement with lunch promotions and café lunch visits in the lower grades. Attend PTO, Open House and principal/parent discussion groups.
 - ✓ Student focus groups, grades 4-12 with suggestion boxes in the dining rooms. Taste testing surveys at the lower grade levels.
 - ✓ Food Service staff training focused on customer service and culinary/presentation skills.

Chartwells’ Growing Revenues:

Feeding lunch to the Pre-K children attending the full-day program

New Dietetic items: working with teacher to incorporate nutrition lessons in the classroom

: Conducting plate waste study associated with Cornell University

: Conducting a study on the value of introducing breakfast in the classroom for K-3

: Posting Nutrition information at all food stations

DDS working with nurses to promote USDA changes and incorporating nutrition in the classroom

DDS attended BBQ at Park Circle to meet parents and to speak about school lunch

Promotions: Mass Farm to School—utilizing locally grown produce: Simply Good food of the month (apples and tomatoes)
Sampling of new items at the High School and Middle School
DDS is attending Open House at the Brown and Bresnahan Schools in September
New Breakfast menu at the High School rolling out in October – will include Smoothies
Article in local paper – positive PR – due to come out late September
Focus on Free and Reduced applications – promotion to increase # of participants (Kindle Fire raffle)
Focus on the % of free and reduced that are participating in school lunch – work with Administration to increase
Remodel at the Middle School – adding deli bar, paninis and new menu
Display (action style) cooking station at the High School to create excitement
Focus on Adult sales at Elementary Schools with a new menu rolling out in October
Reduced the Administrative Asst. position in the office – thus saving on payroll costs

Additional Opportunities

Breakfast program at the Middle School
Attend Administrative Council Meeting to speak to the principals about School lunch and the USDA changes
Breakfast in the classroom for K-3

Labor Reductions

Middle school – change in lunch schedule would allow for reduction of staff at end of day (5 staff members)
High School – trim ½ hour off 5 employees at end of day
Put a hold on all OT

Discussion:

Dan Koen stated there was no participation rate on the survey. He was told there was a 40% rate across the district.

Steve Cole commented on the drop off in participation in the past. He said he was glad to see new initiatives. He had lunch at the schools – there was good banter at the tables. It is important for us to watch the new initiatives – watch the waste. There is not much of a cushion in the budget to go in the red. He is happy to see new things happening. The Committee needs to be aware – we are moving in the right direction. He commented on the parent comments.

Bruce Menin commented on the survey – carb counter – will it be available to parents. Answer – Yes – on website. He has had phone calls from parents – vegetarian meals - are they more available – is information available to parents? Answer – Yes. It was also explained about gluten free foods, allergies, etc.

Bruce Menin inquired if the survey would be sent out again before the year ends – answer - Yes. They need more time to eat – they need to talk about this.

Nick deKanter inquired if they are reporting participation on a monthly basis. Answer – they will be updating regularly.

Nick deKanter stated the district needs to take a close look at revenue. Chartwells will create a monthly financial report.

Dan Koen asked how soon can we experience the next projection – are there any thoughts of mandates coming down. Answer – not much change – going up a little bit – as we go into October we will have a good idea.

Dan Koen stated overcoming deficit is unrealistic. Answer – yes, but they are focusing more on meals, trying to get back students who used to buy lunches.

Audrey McCarthy asked if schools communicate with each other on ideas. She knew of one school that involved students in picking meals – maybe we should bring kids to the table for discussion. Ms. Minnucci and Ms. Seal explained how they collaborate with other schools.

Mayor Holaday stated she appreciated all the efforts put forth. She commented on advocacy – who do you advocate with. Answer – it was explained how “voice of many” has changed things.

Mayor Holaday commented on the budget – it must be addressed much sooner – are there strategies in effect or/on hold? Answer – trim labor and still put out good meals – the strategies are on hold for the present.

Bruce Menin asked for the Committee to be kept in the loop.

Steve Cole said students want more time to eat – time is important – find more ways to increase participation – quarterly look is helpful – need to discuss more time for lunch.

Vice-chairman Sweeney thanked the Chartwells staff for their input.

SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE:

Director of Pupil Services, Dr. Barbara Dee updated the Committee on the Special Education Program. She stated it has been an interesting five months for her. There are 345 students on IEPs – 14%. There are 27 out of district placements – 7% of Special Education.

- She met with a group of teachers over the summer – they discussed what is going on in the system. They looked at IEPs – is it working – how can we do it better.
- Guidelines for Adult Support – make the process more data based – teachers are piloting this process.
- She is developing Processing/Procedures Manual – she will put in new regulations, new forms, how we do things. It will be done by the end of the month or in early October. This will be a useful tool.
- She has made a handbook for assistants – it is 50 pages long and will be sent out to IA’s – she will meet with IA’s once a month. There is a new process to determine whether a child needs extended year services – very clear criteria – start collecting data right now.
- Team Coordinators – plan is to look at positions – sitting in on evaluations.
- Job Descriptions – didn’t have any – she put together explanations.
- Job Development – invited speaker to first early release day – service grids coming back in October.
- Workshop day in November.
- Ongoing consultation with Landmark.
- Professional development coming out of a grant.
- Looking at Language Based learning development at Nock.
- Provide smaller group opportunities.
- ABA program is now called BEST Program – well renowned in area – Pre K – 9th grade.
- Classroom at Brown – for children with severe needs
- Developing a Special Education eligibility form – helps us get a better knowledge of child
- Section 504 – 100 students in District – looking at – she feels this is high
- IEP meets – had 2 already – worked well

This has been a very busy, active five months – very interactive, positive.

Discussion:

Mayor Holaday stated she is thrilled to see what Dr. Dee has accomplished in five months.

What about situations with team teaching. Dr. Dee said this is a complicated thing – High School does very well – look into this – Landmark has good ideas – this is on her radar.

Bruce Menin said he is impressed with systematic, thoughtful way things are happening. Are parents going to be involved in IEP/SEPAC? Dr. Dee said parents will be factored into this – meet with SEPAC once a month – she has done a brochure – will put it on the web. She will meet with any parent – she is very accessible.

Audrey McCarthy questioned Landmark – what % of our teachers has had training. Dr. Dee explained – she has done a survey to see has been trained in what area.

Audrey McCarthy said this is a great turnaround for us – she hopes Dr. Dee will come back to speak to the Committee again.

Steve Cole said Dr. Dee's reporting sounds great. He asked how soon before live IEP. Dr. Dee said she just needs two lap tops – not difficult.

Steve Cole commented on the end of year program – has Dr. Dee considered using this to bring students back to the district? He asked if there has been any feedback with reduction of Aides. Dr. Dee said this is working well – not really a topic of discussion.

Cheryl Sweeney inquired if there were any students back from out of district yet. Dr. Dee said not yet. She is trying to keep students from going out in the first place. Two parents are looking at programs.

Cheryl Sweeney commented on team coordinators – doing evaluations eventually? Superintendent Vicarro said we are heading in the right direction – this will take time.

Cheryl Sweeney asked about RTI – are you taking this on? Dr. Dee said there are teams set up in every building – not active yet.

Cheryl Sweeney asked about the Special Education budget. Dr. Dee said two students went out this summer – these were not in the budget – two hearings are coming up.

Cheryl Sweeney thanked Dr. Dee and stated she hoped she will come back.

Dan Koen inquired about building projects – has she been involved. Dr. Dee said not yet, she has had casual conversations.

Cheryl Sweeney inquired if we were all set with space at Nock/Molin. Dr. Dee said we are fine.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Superintendent Viccaro updated the Committee on the following:

Transportation – There are two remaining issues – one long run – students will be getting home a little earlier. Brown – getting to school on time – parents asked to get students to the bus stops a little earlier.

School Councils – One of her goals – she has learned about requirements for School Councils – she wanted to make sure we were meeting the letter of the law – voted in – 1/2/3 years – faculty involved – public – agendas posted. She suggests monthly meetings – help develop school improvement. She went over all requirements for School Council. Prior to October meeting she would like to invite all members of School Councils to come together.

Discussion:

Steve Cole questioned elections. Dr. Viccaro said she is getting information. This is a high priority. She commented on the Safety Committee – she met with Marshall Howard regarding safety procedures – revising/updating plans – will keep the Committee informed.

Dan Koen said he liked the idea of updating the safety plan. At the Nock – every time something changes a fire drill happens.

Vice Chairman Sweeney inquired if there was anything else that needed to be discussed.

Nick deKanter said hazing should be included in the bullying policy – no training for team captains – would like discussion in this area – we need to be proactive. Dr. Viccaro said she will look into this.

Bruce Menin inquired if there should be one period or two periods of Public Comment on future agendas. He encouraged having two periods.

Dan Koen said he is fine with one.

Nick deKanter said public comment is a privilege/moral requirement. We should let the Vice-Chairman know – it is up to the Superintendent who sets the agenda.

Mayor Holaday said we should have two at times – suspend the rules as needed.

Steve Cole said there is nothing wrong with having two periods – in favor of.

Cheryl Sweeney said she will have a conversation with the Superintendent – will get back to the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion:

On a motion by Steve Cole and seconded by Dan Koen it was

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 9:03 PM.

Motion Passed Unanimously