

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
Monday, December 20, 2021  
Senior/Community Center, 331 High Street, Newburyport, MA**

**Meeting Convened at 6:35 PM**

**Mayor Donna Holaday / Brian Callahan Presided**

**Present: Mayor Donna Holaday, Brian Callahan, Steve Cole, David Hochheiser, Bruce Menin, Sheila Spalding, and Sean Reardon**

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

**Mayor Donna Holaday** called the Business Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:35 PM. Roll Call found all members present. All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

At this point Vice-Chairman **Brian Callahan** assumed chairmanship of the Business Meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: none**

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Warrants:**

**Motions:**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Mayor Holaday** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant:  
**\$498,896.57**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Minutes:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and file the School Committee Business meeting minutes of Monday, December 6, 2021.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Student Award Presentation**

Freshman Cedar Schumacher was recognized for recently earning first chair in the Northeastern Senior District Jazz Band through the Massachusetts Music Educators Association.

## **NHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT**

- The high school was engaged in an Anti-Bullying and Positivity Week, thanks to the work of the Bring Change to Mind students. This was in response to students recently using a Yik Yak app. The school participated in activities aimed at promoting positivity and positive uses of social media. The Superintendent thanked the student leaders, Principal Wulf and administrators for being proactive regarding Yik Yak, and utilizing student advisories to address issues.
- The high school band displayed their talent during invitation nights downtown. In addition, the band, orchestra, choir and guitar students put on a fantastic show at the Winter Concert on December 13.
- The high school is developing a College and Career Center, which is a goal in the School Improvement Plan. In addition, the high school recently hosted a breakfast focused on building community partnerships.

## **MODEL UN**

Two high school students and a teacher provided an overview of the Model United Nations Conference that they attended overnight at Rutgers University from November 18 through November 21 as a part of a World Affairs and Diplomacy class. Participants earn course credit for their hard work and try to attend a conference each year in order to practice diplomatic skills. Students wore masks for the entire trip, and required a negative COVID test to attend. Over 1,000 students from all over the U.S. attended. Students play the role of an international delegate from an assigned country (i.e. Iran), using research of an assigned nation's culture, economy, national history, political history and foreign policy to accurately portray a political representative from an assigned nation. Students are assigned roles, and then need to become experts for their topics. Highlights included talking to students from across the country, and learning how their schools are similar, as well as understanding different points of views.

**Bruce Menin** asked if the conference will report on the various findings/recommendations from the committees. Answer – Ms. Crofts believes they planned to consolidate all the ideas. She plans to revisit the website.

**Sean Reardon** asked if any other trips were planned. Answer – Not at this time.

## **FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE**

- Approved the minutes from the November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Reviewed and approved small transfers at the Nock totaling \$323.31, going from various supply lines into instructional materials.
- Talked about changing policy to utilize MA General Law Part I - Section 56 - Warrant For Payment Of Bill to allow the school committee to designate any one of its members to approve bills/drafts/orders/payroll; provided however, the member makes available to the board at the first meeting following such action, a record of such actions.
- Chair of Finance Subcommittee will be the designated signer and the Finance Subcommittee will select another member as backup. All of this was unanimously approved.

**Brian Callahan** asked if Agenda Item 8c was tabled for tonight? (Budget Transfers Policy (DBJ) revision). Answer - Yes, the language approved was slightly different than that in the Policy book and needs to be ironed out.

**Public Participation at School Committee Mtgs. Policy (BEDH) – revision - 1<sup>st</sup> reading**

**Sheila Spalding** explained that this policy was revised in June 2021 to include a lengthy statement meant to be read by the Vice Chair. This revision condenses that statement. In addition, the sentence in the first bullet for item 1 needs to have three words inserted: *Speakers may offer objective criticism of and/or ideas for school operations and programs on the agenda as concerns them.*

On a motion by **Bruce Menin** and seconded by **Sean Reardon** it was

**VOTED:** To waive the rule to allow a vote to policy BEDH with the changes noted.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**David Hochheiser** stated it is important to let people understand how to bring something up to the committee that is not on the agenda.

**Brian Callahan** commented that we could put something the packet as a standard part of the cover sheet.

**Authorized Signatures Policy (DGA) – revision – 1<sup>st</sup> reading**

**Sheila Spalding** explained the policy is being revised based on recommendations from the Finance Subcommittee to require one signature as opposed to 4 signatures.

**Brian Callahan** explained that 4 signatures will continue to be obtained for in-person meetings; however, during summer months or weather-events when everyone is not available, the chair of the Finance Subcommittee will do it, or a designee if they can't make it.

**Steve Cole** commented that this allows the school department to pay its bills more effectively.

On a motion by **Bruce Menin** and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

**VOTED:** to waive the rules so the policy surrounding signatures can be approved in one reading.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Budget Transfers Policy (DBJ) - revision) – 1<sup>st</sup> reading**

Tabled until the next business meeting to correct some of the language.

**Superintendent Update**

Commissioner Riley's Update

Commissioner Riley held a meeting with all superintendents regarding a mask mandate decision. Due to the COVID Omicron variant, he's waiting on any masking announcement until the State has more complete information. New updates will be made in January when we come back from vacation.

Medical professionals are watching the COVID cases; the pattern may not be the same as we experienced last year. Currently there are no plans to close or go back to remote learning. Federal and State government wants to keep the schools open. We will continue to wait for guidance and recommendations from the medical professionals.

Emergency Licensure

Emergency licensure is being extended until 2023 as there is a staffing shortage across the state and in many areas of employment, especially in education. Waiting for more information on Special Education and ELL licensures

**Mayor Holaday** asked how many people are on provisional licensure. Answer – Less than 12.

**David Hochheiser** asked if this allows people to work under an emergency license longer or is it allowing people to apply for an emergency license longer than initially thought. Answer – Both.

### COVID UPDATE

Currently 39 known school member cases since December 1st (9 staff, 30 students); since December 1st 151 students quarantined, and 19 active cases currently (6 staff and 13 students). Current vaccination rates: High = 79% and 25 students boosted; Bresnahan = 46% vaccination; Molin = 47%; Nock = 65%. We continue to encourage boosters for staff and students that are 16+. We encourage vaccinations for students ages 5+. Use vaxfinder.com to get information. The district has applied for another booster clinic for people 16+ and are waiting for those dates.

Data suggests Omicron is extremely transmittable, particularly in households; that's where majority of spread is being seen; early reports say less severe, although 80% cases have been vaccinated. Common Omicron symptoms: cough, fatigue, congestion, and boosters can increase/restore protection.

### Strategic Planning Focus Groups

Work continues in the district. On December 15<sup>th</sup> community partners attended a workshop (i.e. Human Rights Commission, DEI, NEF and Rotary), They worked with the same focus groups, using the same planning protocols used through the fall. A video component has been added for those who can't attend to provide an opportunity to hear the presentation. Thanks to NCMHub for the great job taping this presentation.

Over 70 high school student council members worked on strategic planning and portrait of a graduate on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Today we worked with over 80 Nock middle school students utilizing the same protocols. Between August and December, 100s of ideas and input has been gathered from over 700 stakeholders within the school community.

Next steps are to complete the initial draft of the portrait of a graduate and provide a final round of feedback. An overall slogan has been identified, and we are working on creating a visual to share with the community. A final strategic planning report will be compiled; strategic priorities will be identified/shared; educators will be provided with another round of feedback; 5-year strategic priorities will be established; and the written report will be developed.

**Brian Callahan** asked if the video is on the district's home page under announcements? Answer – Yes.

**Bruce Menin** asked the Superintendent to share some of the results he saw from students. Answer – It was great to see a lot of common themes and shared visions between the Nock/NHS students and the adult community members.

**Brian Callahan** asked when the public document would be released. Answer – Would like to share the feedback and common goals in January; Goal is to have the written document completed in February.

### **New Business**

- On behalf of the School Committee, Sheila Reardon read a Proclamation in Praise of the Employees of Newburyport Public Schools. All members signed.
- Sheila Reardon read a draft of a secure firearms storage notification resolution for Newburyport Public Schools. The language was retrieved from Clark County. Brian Callahan will obtain a sample from Plymouth School Committee, and will send that out for review.

**Bruce Menin** asked if this would then go on the agenda. Answer – Yes.

**David Hochheiser** asked if we are talking about this due to an email we got, and can you let everybody know. Answer = Yes. **Brian Callahan and Sheila Spalding** explained the email and stated that a resolution is a good way to address the mental health of our students, and it says we support sensible gun storage.

**Brian Callahan** thanked several School Committee members for their many years of service:

Mr. Steve Cole = 17 years

David Hochheiser = 6 years

Mayor Holaday = 12 years

**Sean Reardon** read and presented citations from the MA House of Representatives to Steve Cole and David Hochheiser.

**Superintendent Sean Gallagher** thanked Mayor Holaday, David Hochheiser, and Steve Cole for their years of hard work and service to the School Committee and presented them with a card/gift.

**Brian Callahan** announced upcoming changes to the School Committee in January:

Sean Reardon = Mayor elect

Sarah Hall = new member

Juliet Walker = new member

**David Hochheiser** asked what should be done with all the documents they have. Answer - **Mayor Holaday** suggested sending the documents to Joanne Yelle.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **Sean Reardon** it was

**VOTED** To adjourn the business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 7:27PM.

Motion Passed Unanimously