

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
Monday, September 8, 2020  
Senior/Community Center**

**Meeting Convened at 6:30 PM**

**Mayor Donna Holaday / Bruce Menin Presided**

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

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

**Mayor Donna Holaday** called the Business Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:30 PM. Roll Call found all members present. All those present stood for the pledge of allegiance to the Flag.

**Steve Cole** asked for a moment of silence for William Gurzak, NHS '61, who passed away recently. **Mr. Cole** read a list of the numerous achievements that Bill had accomplished over his lifetime. All those present paused for a moment of silence.

At this point Vice-Chairman **Bruce Menin** assumed chairmanship of the Business Meeting.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Minutes:**

On a motion by **Sheila Spalding** and seconded by **Brian Callahan** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and file the School Committee Business Meeting minutes of Monday, August 17, 2020 as amended.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Due to technical difficulties, Public Comment was moved to a later portion of the agenda.

**SCHOOL CALENDAR:**

**Superintendent of Schools Sean Gallagher** listed the following changes to the School Calendar:

- Professional Development early release days for the first half of the year are dropped. This is to utilize more time on learning. We will hold on to those for the second half of the year. The School Committee will re-evaluate this in January.

**Bruce Menin** asked how the calendar looks for October, November and December. Are those half days there or not? Answer - No. Removal of November early release, December early release and then two full-day professional development days in the beginning of the year - we're holding off on those because those were replaced by the Commissioners 10-day Professional Development before the start.

**Motion:**

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

**VOTED:** To amend the School Calendar to remove the early release days in November and December.

**Brian Callahan** - unintelligible

**Superintendent Gallagher** said they're on this one because I don't think we got to that - so after the vote we will try next School Committee on the 21st - will have a new calendar.

**Sean Reardon** said the October one was taken off - are you taking off election day and then the 12th of December. Answer - correct

**Brian Callahan** said we talked a little bit about trying to put the Thursday, Friday cohorts in on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and Christmas - cleaning of the building. You have to find out how Steve's doing - cleaning the building. **Superintendent Gallagher** said he thinks that's part of the changes and speaking with principals. They're looking to balance out days so that would be something down the road that we would take a look at.

**Brian Callahan** which is that one half misses a week of school. Answer - correct

**Brian Callahan** yes twice so.

**David Hochheiser** said the only other thing that was brought to us with regards to the calendar was people were commenting last week about the reopening plan. A couple of people said that the metrics were there that would push us from hybrid to remote. I wonder if we could have some sort of a presentation at the next meeting about what that would look like.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said he thought for us it was the focus on reopening, getting the metrics squared away, which we've done and now it's the other side of how we're going to bring more students back. We need time to do a feasibility study on what that would look like. The first piece is that Wednesday - right now that is remote - for the cleaning - but that would be an opportunity to bring more students back.

**Bruce Menin** said in terms of getting a presentation Dave's idea was to have a presentation for the School Committee - do you think we could have that conversation in one of our next meetings. Answer - absolutely

**David Hochheiser** said it doesn't have to be the worlds, just discussion about ideas - here's what we're thinking about - here's what needs to be in place - here's what we're doing now and by the following date we might be able to reassess. Answer - correct

**Sean Gallagher** Those conversations right now are in process working with the building principals, Steve Bergholm, some of the medical professionals on what that would look like. We could definitely give an overview.

**Bruce Menin** asked about return metrics. **Superintendent Gallagher** said he expects to hear from the district on that.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Mayor Holaday** said she wanted to clarify - this is in December. Answer - yes

**Superintendent Gallagher** said he thought for all of us this calendar is going to be quite an ongoing conversation and adapting to what is in front of us with the virus.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Bruce Menin** gave the instructions for Public Comment.

**Elizabeth Gouleau:** She commented on the Resolution. One thing that is missing that was in the example resolution is the words black lives matter. She didn't like not including that; hoping for a change in curriculum.

## **RESOLUTION:**

**Bruce Menin** said they have three versions of resolutions before us. He turned the conversation over to the Committee to decide which, if any of the versions, they would like to adopt.

**Brian Callahan** said he liked the caller's comment adding the black lives matter that's in the MASC version. He said he would sign anything that's an anti-racism document. He wondered what would happen if we put anything about hiring more diverse staff and then if that didn't happen. We have no control over that aspect. He said we want it in there, but we don't want to say we are going to say we are going to do X if we are forbidden by State law to deal with hiring and firing staff.

**Bruce Menin** said that both drafts that we put together talked about making every effort to strategically recruit or to hire people, ultimately we can't guarantee that we're going to be able to hire a diverse staff, but we can guarantee we're going to try and do that strategically.

**Sheila Spalding** spoke re: MASC version. She said she presented that one hoping that we could pass a resolution. It seemed we were at an impasse with the one that was proposed, but she is hoping they could vote on one of the versions that you drafted, and she would be behind adding black lives matter into that.

**David Hochheiser** had no issue with the sentiment, but as soon as you say we're supporting the organization it takes it to another level. He doesn't know enough about the scope of the organization to say that he thinks the Newburyport Schools are behind it.

**Sean Reardon** said looking at the MASC version they're not capitalizing black lives matter they're using it as a phrase instead of an organization.

**Bruce Menin** said in the MASC version a formulation that I've seen in other resolutions is, all lives matter and we can't make all lives matter unless black lives matter. That doesn't refer to the organization; it refers to the idea but MASC has it - we can plug it into ours.

**Mayor Holaday** said so it cannot matter until black lives matter. She liked the way they wrote that.

**David Hochheiser** said it's not capitalized so it's not even standing in allegiance with right or alliance with - it's just a statement. He said he liked the simplicity of the MASC version, but he still struggled with not having the district leadership sign on to it because the places where it has the most teeth and hiring and curriculum choices, even in some ways in pedagogy in communication choices in approaches to discipline and suspension. All of these things are kind of in our purview.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said there has been a lot of work the last couple of years, especially regarding race, bias, racism. A lot of questions that we've been receiving we've been addressing even before the tragedy and of George Floyd. This resolution ties into our core values and a lot of work that we've already begun in the Newburyport Public Schools.

**Mayor Holaday** said a resolution is not an action plan per se - it's not a goal directed, it's a statement of what we believe as a School Committee for our school district. She liked the

statements that we have put in bullets and didn't see a huge difference between David's and Bruce's versions.

**David Hochheiser** said it's just a lot of language and he has come to like the MASC version. He doesn't know why they can't use the word expect or insist.

**Mayor Holaday** said because we don't have that level of control.

**David Hochheiser** said that is why he wanted the Leadership Team to be part of this. I've been on the Committee only 5 years but we've always encouraged inclusive curriculum, but to expect it to take a next step because of where we are now as a country, I think it's a bigger statement, but we don't have the purview to say that.

**Mayor Holaday** said we do have authority over the Superintendent and as we said in re: working on his contract renewal we could put pieces on there that we expect you to work on components of the resolution. We could identify what those are for this year. There's a lot of things that the Superintendent is already doing with this Leadership Team. We just have to continue the dialogue and work in the next steps. Teachers have a lot on their plate right now in terms of moving forward, so come January let's talk about what's happened; what did we introduce into the schools; what type of trainings have happened; what type of training we're going to get. We just begin incrementally and if we get the teachers to sign on, then we modify the resolution and add the Leadership Team in terms of the teachers have agreed or the Leadership Team have agreed to, but there is a lot of good work and good language in this specific resolution and I don't want to go back to the simple one because I think this one is much more descriptive and prescriptive of where we are with our school district.

**Mayor Holaday** said she didn't think we can quite do that yet, but we might be able to, down the road once we get buy in from the Leadership Team, so let's start with Bruce's - that's what would be my recommendation. Let's get it passed and signed and that sentence that's so well-crafted in the MASC resolution in terms of black lives matter.

**Sean Reardon** said that could be made part of the Superintendent's' evaluation.

**Mayor Holaday** said yes, that's what you're saying. I agree, I think we could absolutely do that in terms of setting up an objective for you this year.

#### **Motion:**

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

**VOTED:** To pass **Bruce Menin's** Resolution "A Resolution Supporting Racial Equality and Equity Policies and Practices in the Newburyport School District" with the amendment that is the last line of the MASC Resolution "We must ensure our own school culture and that of every district in the Commonwealth is anti-racist, that acknowledges that all lives cannot matter until black lives matter."

#### **Motion Passed Unanimously**

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

**Superintendent Gallagher** said he sent a communication out to our district which contained the following information: Over the weekend we were made aware of a High School staff member that developed COVID, which was traced back to a social gathering. In accordance with our EDC our DPH guidelines and then also all the work we've done this summer with the district

health and safety protocols, the employee is going to remain quarantined for the full 14 days. Also as a result of our contact tracing there was another school employee that has been identified as the only close contact at the High School. At this time, we have testing set up for staff ahead of time, and that's the antigen test and that staff member has tested negative. For us it is encouraging that the safety protocols that we have in place with Mass., the distancing, and washing hands was very beneficial. The other piece is with the new guidelines: if a staff member is negative or positive they still have to quarantine for the 14 days, so that was the new revision. On August 20th that came out.

**Bruce Menin** asked if that would be the same for students. Answer - right

**Superintendent Gallagher** said if you had a cohort of students they would be quarantined for the 14 days. He thanked Cathy Riccio, Andy Wulf and Steve Bergholm - it was the holiday weekend - we were working around these circumstances. The custodial staff went in on a holiday weekend, and did a thorough cleaning of the building, the High School and all areas. They used the electromagnet sprayers and with that new cleaning product - the hypochlorous acid and sprayed all the High School and overabundance of caution. They also went into the Nock Auditorium and sprayed all the Molin/Nock entryways. The other precaution that we did this weekend is for both schools; Steve Bergholm put the ventilation system in full capacity for over 48 hours once we were alerted to the positive case. Staff returned today in a safe building and we had work going on as usual. He thanked everyone in this response. This is something that is really important and is something we will probably be dealing with throughout the school year. I'm hoping this is the only scenario but if we have to deal with a positive case, we have the protocols in place to deal with it.

**Reopening of Schools** - Our teachers have been working within the grade level teams as we spoke at our last meeting, and all the principals are working on what the plans are going to look like. There's obviously a lot of specifics now, including details with specific time that the teachers will be communicating to their families, along with the building principals tc. There'll be a lot of information going out in the next 2 days to give parents and families and students a true overview of what their daily schedule is going to look like; a lot of communication on meet and greets, technology pickups at each building and what the first week is going to look like for all the schools. Wednesday for students will look like - the morning is going to be a lot of the live synchronous learning for the classes and then for the second half there's going to be the asynchronous and the follow up. Students will have a full day of work throughout the day which will be a follow-up from the live lessons in the morning.

The other piece that I'm really proud of is Lisa Alexander, Liz Kinsley and Assistant Superintendent Bik is the remote academy. This was based on numbers and interests and we really didn't have a lot of information until families made that decision. For our families they're having the same type of meet and greet. The first week there's an information newsletter that's going to be going out and it's very detailed. He thanked Ms. Alexander for putting this together. He said he will send it out to the School Committee. It is detailed on what grade level, what supplies, what the curriculum is going to look like. They've done a great job with that and are still in process of ironing out the details especially the Special Education side of it. Nancy Koch has been working really hard with her team making sure we're providing the services for all the different learning modules that are out there.

The other piece of our administration is the ongoing hiring and filling in. Sean complimented Nancy Lysik because for every person we hire, every person that leaves for FMLA or the daycare, she does all that paperwork and all that processing. He said he would provide the Committee by the end of the week with the accurate numbers of the staffing for every building. Right now we're in a good position for all the principals with all the replacements and all the staffing needs throughout the district. At each building level they've done a great job. We have a lot of new staff here, but he felt by the end of the week he would put this as part of the Friday Memo to give the Committee a staffing update. Right now we are in good shape to reopen schools.

**Bruce Menin** asked if in the Friday Memo could he also give the Committee the numbers of staff who have taken FMLA? Answer - yes

**Superintendent Gallagher** said he couldn't thank our Councils enough - Cathy Riccio and our Councils throughout the district put together the staff support for emotional health - he will put that in the Friday Memo. This is an opportunity for our professional staff that may be dealing with the stress of coming back to work, or stress of families. It gives teachers and support staff extra support to reach out. Maggie Flaherty created a flyer that has been distributed to staff for people during the school year that might need to talk to people during the school year about a lot of the changes that are happening.

**School Choice** - The full 10 slots we offered are full. We have 2 families on our waiting list and one of the families was in our system but moved over the summer. In talking to Principal Furlong, we have 162 sixth graders currently enrolled, and we only have 2 on the waiting list. He said his recommendation would be that we have enough room in grade 6 to allow those 2 on the waiting list to enter and then we'll just freeze the school choice for grade 6. He wanted to bring it to the Committee before he made a decision with that.

**Bruce Menin** asked if they needed a motion.

**Motion:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **Brian Callahan** it was

**VOTED:** To approve two additional seats in grade six.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Superintendent Gallagher** said you just made two families very happy.

**Bruce Menin** said it's very powerful that even in the middle of the pandemic, knowing that we are going to be toggling back and forth, that families still want to make the choice - it's great.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said we've all been challenged here. As everyone says, it's uncharted waters. I think for the most part people have strong opinions, but I think eventually we're all coming back together, and once our staff and students are in school we'll unite, and then we'll continue to work on the metrics of bringing more students back if the data shows that we can.

**Mayor Holaday** thanked **Superintendent Gallagher** and Ms. Lysik - you were grilled for four hours on Thursday night on the school budget and I can't thank you enough. You did an excellent job in terms of both of you working through a multitude of questions and scenarios and concerns and in terms of representing the school district through a difficult budget workshop.

**SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**David Hochheiser** said we will get back to that this month.

**Mayor Holaday** said Joint Ed is scheduled for the next School Committee meeting before September 21st.

**David Hochheiser** asked about scheduling for that.

**Sean Reardon** said he would check.

**Mayor Holaday** questioned the Superintendent's Evaluation. She asked if other Superintendents were using the State form that has been used before - is that what people have been doing still in this environment. Answer - yes. She said it seems that given everything that has happened that an abbreviated evaluation form might be in the best interest of all of us, as we go forward as opposed to the 18-page evaluation that we had previously used.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said what he will do for the Committee, because you have the Friday Memos - that's a lot of information, but what he would do is develop a Google classroom where he can archive different types of evidence that ties directly to the Superintendent Evaluation so you're not having to look through a lot of information; you'll have it systematically right there for you.

**Mayor Holaday** said that would be very helpful.

**David Hochheiser** said because something we had set up as a goal wasn't so much about getting this: years done which obviously is important, but coming with the system to start tracking that information as the year goes on so nobody is stuck looking for it in June.

**Mayor Holaday** said she thought that could be very helpful because as we start going forward with this year, and we identify some of the goals and objectives things come out in your Friday Memo, then if you have a place where you can put that piece of data, then it becomes easier for us as we get to June to get this evaluation completed before the end of the school year which would be really nice this year.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

**VOTED:** To adjourn the School Committee Business Meeting at 7:28 PM.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**