



RUTHANNE FULLER– EX OFFICIO

Newton School Committee Members

WARD

I	Rajeev Parlikar
II	Christopher Brezski- Chair
III	Anping Shen
IV	Tamika Olszewski
V	Emily Prenner -Vice Chair
VI	Paul Levy
VII	Amy Davenport
VIII	Barry Greenstein

NEWTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING DRAFT Minutes

Date: January 8, 2024

Location: School Committee Meeting

Time: **6:30 pm** The School Committee convened in rm. 210 at the Education Center 100 Walnut St and [via ZOOM](#)

Members: (I/R): Dr. Nolin (I), Parlikar (I), Brezski (I), Shen (I), Olszewski (I), Prenner (I), Levy (ab), Davenport (I), Greenstein (ab), Mayor (I)

Students Remote (I/ R): **NSHS: (), NNHS: ()**

Staff (I/R): **Toby Romer (I)** Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education; **Ayesha Farag (I)**, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, **Renee McCall (I)**, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning, **Liam Hurley (I)**, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial, and Administrative Officer, **Casey Ngo Miller (ab)**, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education/Student Services, **Joany Santa (ab)** Director Human Resources; **Jill Grady (I)** General Counsel; **Steven Rattendi (I)**, Director of IT and Library Services; **Dr. Katy Hogue (ab)** Chief of Data and Research, **Stephanie Gilman (ab)**, Director of Planning, Project Management and Sustainability; **Sean Mannion (ab)**, Director of Finance; **Alyssa Baringer (ab)**, Senior Budget Analyst; **Awino Odhiambo (ab)**, Budget Analyst **Amy Mistrot (R)**, Director of Business Operations, **Julie McDonough (ab)**, Communications Director, **Kathy Lopes (ab)**, DEI Director

Others (I/R): Cheryl Loiselle, Senior Fiscal Analyst and Robert O'Donnell, Director of School Finance from DESE(R)

Chair Brezski convened a regular School Committee meeting at 6:33 pm, welcomed everyone and called for Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- 1) Robin Boger – Newton Corner Neighborhood Group – She gave feedback from her group regarding students’ loss of learning, mental health needs – NPS does not have enough school resources, lack of aides in classroom, favorite teachers leaving, teachers being mistreated. She stated that the crisis not in the future, crisis is now.
- 2) Dan Evans – 24 Maynard St. – Spoke about the amount the district has spent on legal services - \$126k – majority spent on negotiations. Schools should be fully funded. Fair contract.
- 3) Donna Thayer – 138 Warwick NPS staff – She stated that negotiation means discussion to reach an agreement – Mayor is at war. Parents are the driving force. Mayor sends out inflammatory emails. Educators don’t feel respected or valued. Newton is losing excellent teachers. Settle the contact.
- 4) Brittany Brierly – Teacher @ Day – This is the 4th district she has worked in, and it feels like home. Her commute is over an hour. She stated that her job does not cause her stress – her financial situation does. Even though Newton pays some of the higher salaries in MA, it doesn’t mean they shouldn’t get a fair COLA. Even Social Security is giving a 3.2 COLA.
- 5) Rachel Bennett – 99 Staniford St– Parent – She stated that students are worthy of teachers having a fair contract. She spoke about her personal experiences with a special needs child and the wonderful staff. She is worried about the chronic underfunding of the schools. She spoke about the value of face to face negotiations in settling a fair contract. She asked the Committee and the Mayor, “What do you stand for if not for our students and teachers?” She asked them to keep Newton as the Gold Standard.
- 6) Matthew Mazar – Twins at NECP – He recounted his experience when he enrolled his children 3 years ago no - contract then, here we are again 3 years later in the same place. He said he has lost confidence, Mayor you lost my vote.
- 7) Kim Bordeaux – parent – PTO, SEPAC etc. She said Newton is an excellent system, but the schools have not operated with a fully funded budget for a single day. She has learned how these cuts affected NPS students. She stands with educators for a fair contract. Homeowners directly benefit from the excellent schools. NTA – the heart of our schools. She told the Mayorand SC that NPS is at risk.
- 8) Ari Zeren 301 Woodcliff – ’23 Alumni – He thanked all of his teachers for getting him where he is today and he is privileged to have had amazing educators. He said he was representing young people of Newton and speaking out about the declining qualities of the schools. He stated that he had campaigned for Mayor – bur doesn’t believe in her anymore. He said at this point he doesn’t know what will sway her to support the NTA.
- 9) Ryan Normandin – He stated that for months the Committee has heard the stories from staff about how hard it is to make ends meet. He feels educators are seen as a problem to be solved rather than as collaborators. He believes, from speaking privately with some members, that the SC sees those who come and speak as disgruntled employees and that most NPS employees, the

“Silent majority” are happy. He stated that NPS has lots of problems. He called out Committee members on various issues, he outlined some of the contract issues – sick leave, increased health care costs, replacing prep time with duties and discriminating against non-resident staff children enrolling in NPS. He stated that everyone knows that the Mayor’s 3.5% allocation is insufficient and it needs to be increased to 5%. He asked, “Where is the leadership?” Lastly, he asked that they stop this artificial budget crisis every year.

The Chair thanked everyone for their input.

CONSENT AGENDA:

The Chair asked if anyone wanted to remove an item from the Consent Agenda which includes: 12-18-23 Regular Minutes, Out-of-State/International Field Trip(s), Policy JL (Student Welfare) which were received and placed on file.

The Chair then called for a vote on the consent agenda items:

1. 12-8-23 Meeting Minutes
2. Out-of-State/International Field Trip (s)
3. Policy JL

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Motion: Parlikar 2nd: Olzsewski

Roll Call Vote

Ward 1	Y	Ward 4	Y	Ward 7	Y
Ward 2	Y	Ward 5	Y	Ward 8	Y
Ward 3	Y	Ward 6	ab	Mayor	Y

Motion passed 8 (yes) 0 (no) 0 (abstain) 1 (absent)

6:55 Dr. Nolin stepped out to attend a City Council FinCom meeting

BUSINESS AGENDA

1. Negotiations Update –

The Chair gave a brief update on the status of negotiations. He said they attended a scheduled session this afternoon. No formal prepared remarks. At the request of NTA leadership, they sat down face to face, although this is generally not how mediation is done. Proposals were made and more sessions are scheduled on the 19th and the 25th January.

2. Inter-District School Choice Program presentation – which was received and placed on file.

- Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial, and Administrative Officer Liam Hurley presented information on Massachusetts “School Choice” program. He discussed State Law, program administration, rights and responsibilities of accepted students, and potential financial impact, including a sample of 200 hypothetical students. He was joined remotely by Cheryl Loiselle, Senior Fiscal Analyst and Robert O’Donnell, Director of School Finance from DESE.

Assistant Superintendent Hurley answered questions that were submitted ahead of time by members:

Question, answers and comments followed.

The Committee asked for a hypothetical representative student on an IEP to get a sense of what the reimbursement would be.

Dr. Nolin returned at 7:41 pm

SUPERINTENDENT’S UPDATE –

Dr. Nolin reported on various things taking place across the district, these items included:

- Feedback from the Class of 2024
- Weather and School Cancellations Reminder
- Budget Season and Timeline
- Student Services PD – The Neurodiversity Movement
- Assessing Progress information
- Arts in Action – Holiday Concerts

Questions, answers and comments followed.

3. Teaching and Learning Update– which was received and placed on file

Renee McCall, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning presented an update regarding the family facing K-8 Curriculum site, proposed curriculum review timeline which will include assessing, researching, and developing a plan; piloting and providing professional development; implementing curriculum; and evaluation its rollout for all subject areas. In addition, the district will strategically address Multi-Tiered Structures of Support (MTSS).

Finalized two deliverables:

- 1) Family Curriculum Site (K-8 complete – working on High School Page)
- 2) Curriculum Review & Pilot Plans
 - a. 7 year review for each content area
- 3) Will align K-12 curriculum and then expand the process
- 4) Highlights and bright spots of literacy program, PD and Content Area Updates.

Dr. Nolin said this was other number one request from parents – what is my child learning. She thanked Dr. McCall for putting this together. This is meant as a guide. Thank you for the Pilot Plan because DESE may change requirements and grants may become available.

- 9-12 will start with Math and go on from there.
- Significant budgetary implications – Yes, need to ask these questions
 - Comparison – T & L was \$1m - Here in Newton with triple the population and the T & L budget is the same
 -

Question, answers and comments followed.

- Roll out SS vs. Literacy – youngest to oldest
- Acquisition Driven Instruction
- Social Justice curriculum resources
- Website and timeline plus the demo of scrolling through the page
- Explain Unbound E's role
- Expectation is that this will naturally evolve over time.
- Expecting an onslaught of questions from families.
 - Hoping to be transparent and welcome questions from families.

Rajeev Parlikar left @8:26 pm

4. Calendar Working Group Update – which was received and placed on file

Dr. Nolin presented her recommendation) for the FY25 School Year Calendar, based on the work started by Interim Superintendent Kathy Smith and the Calendar Working Group (CWG) which includes no school for students on election day, November 5, and providing a full day of professional development on that date, as well as recognizing Lunar New Year as a no school holiday on January 29.

Superintendent requests that the School Committee vote on the following items:

- Yes/No Declare Lunar New Year a no school holiday
- Yes/No Approve Calendar #1 (Superintendent recommends Calendar#1)
- Yes/No Approve Calendar #2
- Yes/No Approve Policy IKB (Homework)
- Yes/No Approve Policy JHA (Observance of Religious Holidays)

Questions, answers and discussion followed.

The Chair announced that the Committee to a roll call vote to enter Executive Session, the Committee will not reconvene in Open Session. The next meeting is January 22, 2024 at 6:30.

Adjourned at 8:49 pm

The Chair asked for a motion to enter Executive Session according to Purpose #3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Newton Teachers Association units A, B, C, D and E, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining power of the public body and the chair so declares

Motion: Olszewski 2nd: Shen

Roll Call Vote

Ward 1	ab	Ward 4	Y	Ward 7	Y
Ward 2	Y	Ward 5	Y	Ward 8	Y
Ward 3	Y	Ward 6	ab	Mayor	Y

Motion passed: 7 (yes) 0 (no) 0 (abstain) 2 (absent)

Lisa Mazzola

Date: 1/8/24

School Committee Secretary