

**Town of Norwood
School Committee Meeting
Hybrid Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2023**

A hybrid meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 8, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. (The public can access the meeting in person at the Savage Educational Center or live via NCM on cable, as it is live-streamed. For the cable channel guide and on-line link, please visit: <https://norwoodcommunitymedia.org>).

Committee Members Present: Ms. Anne Marie Mazzola, Chair; Ms. Teresa Stewart, Dr. Joan Giblin, Mr. David Hiltz and Ms. Kate Sibbing-Dunn

Administrators Present: Dr. Dave Thomson, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Alec Wyeth, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Curriculum and Assessment; Ms. Karin Sheridan, Director of Finance and Operations and Dr. Charisse Taylor, Director of Strategic Initiatives

Minutes: Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the following minutes:

- February 15, 2023 (Business Meeting);
- February 15, 2023 (Executive Session); and
- February 27, 2023 (Budget Workshop)

This motion was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn . The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1 (Dr. Giblin abstained).

Correspondence: None.

Warrants: Chair Mazzola informed that she has signed warrants on behalf of the School Committee. Chair Mazzola then shared the warrant report.

Payroll Warrants:	\$1,881,582.18
Accounts Payable:	\$ 40,874.90
	\$ 12,182.35
	\$ 21,711.17
	\$ 71,232.74
	\$ 21,622.96
	\$1,023,518.87
	\$ 40,823.70
	\$ 102,678.51
	\$ 41,327.44
	\$ 26,747.93
	\$ 11,144.93
	<u>\$ 868.52</u>
Approved for:	\$3,296,316.20

Public Comment: Chair Mazzola informed that this was the time in the meeting for members of the public to address the School Committee with items that they would

like to see on a future agenda. The School Committee has switched to a hybrid meeting and the public can access the meeting in person at the Savage Educational Center or live via NCM on cable, as it is live-streamed. For the cable channel guide and on-line link, please visit: <https://norwoodcommunitymedia.org>.

The Chair reminded that there are now two ways the public can participate in the public forum portion of the meeting. (1) In person at the meeting (sign up in advance at the Superintendent's Office by noon the day of the meeting to pre-register, or sign in at the meeting; and (2) Call the Superintendent's Office at 781-762-6804 by noon on the day of the meeting to register and receive a meeting link that will be accessible for public forum only.

Mr. Tylor Tourville (candidate for School Committee) was here this evening to share that, over the past couple of weeks, he has been out talking to the public and came up with some topics that he said seems to be frequently shared with him. He asked for some leniency and asked to go 1-2 minutes over the 3 minute limit. Chair Mazzola said she would be willing to go 1-2 minutes over the time limit of 3 minutes. He said that many families

- (1) Don't agree with the direction the schools are heading;
- (2) Many feel that bullying and disruptive classroom behaviour is becoming rampant, and teachers are lacking in the resources and support they need to maintain a safe and orderly environment.

He said these issues are taking a toll on the students and staff he has spoken with. He shared his thoughts on why he believes some of these problems are directly and indirectly tied to the implementation of CRSP (Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy). He said that he has researched the curriculum and training modules and then shared the reasons why he believes that these modules are racist and trains our children to be social activists. He believes "if you dig down just an inch below the vague platitudes and read into their actual training materials, it's nothing more than a trojan horse bringing critical race theory inspired ideology into our school system and poisoning it from the inside."

Chair Mazzola asked Mr. Tourville to stop at the 6 minute mark.

At 7:14, the Chair declared Public Forum closed.

Appearances: Fine Arts Recognition: Mr. Jeff Kerr, Director of Fine Arts, was here this evening to update the Committee on the accomplishment of the Fine Arts Department.

TV: 8 NHS Students will travel to the Student Television Network Convention in Long Beach, CA next week: Connor Curran, Moussa Traore, Zeina Najjar, Danielle Gillette, Sarai Rosa.

Drama: METG Festival Play -(Massachusetts Educational Theatre Guild) One-Act Play Festival:

Our extraordinary high school and a few middle school students have co-authored and devised an original plan *Ash to a Flame*. Norwood hosted this event for 8 schools on March 4th and the following students were recognized and won awards: Emma Naughton, Olivia LeSavage, Sarah McCarey, Billy McCann, Maura Beaded, Thaly Cadet, Had Hachman, Jack Igoe and Khang Nguyen. The next level of competition will be held on March 18th, again at Norwood High School. Norwood will be performing at 1:30 p.m. and admission is \$10 at the door.

Visual Art: MAEA Emerging Artist Juried Show - for students in grades 9-12. The 2023 MAEA (Massachusetts Art Education Association) Amazing Artists Exhibition will be a virtual exhibition that will be published on the MAE Website: [Massachusetts Art Education Association](http://MassachusettsArtEducationAssociation.com).

2023 Festival Art Stars Program: sponsored by the South Shore Art Center (SSAC) located in Cohasset. The Art Stars Project is an integral part of the SSAC Annual Arts Festival on the Cohasset Common in June that involves students from all over the South Shore working in teams and local artists to create a collaborative piece that will be displayed at the Arts Festival. Our student artists Zander Allen, Diego Yankees and Stephanie Chaker are making an ongoing and intensive commitment as participation involves our artists being at the SSAC for 9 Saturdays.

FoVA's Youth Art Benefit: The Friends of Visual Arts Norwood will be presenting its Annual Youth Art Month benefit on Wednesday, March 15th at Norwood High School's Library from 5:30-7:00 p.m. There is a suggested donation of \$5 at the door.

Music: Jr. Districts are being held this weekend at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional HS. Participating NHS members will be Arnold Obour-Mensah and Sawyer Messier.

Honors Ensembles This Concert will be on April 12th at 7:00 p.m., the same time as a scheduled School Committee Meeting. Ms. Cook is looking to see if Mr. Tolman will be able to film and broadcast this concert at a later date.

ACDA: Took place over February break in Cincinnati, OH. Colin Sangiocommo, Kiera O'Donnell, Charlotte Mathews and Niko Faller participated.

All-East: April break - This will take place in Rochester, New York. Colin Sangiocommo, Niko Faller, Lang Nguyen and Zachary Smith will participate.

NSDC Award Winner: Dr. Thomson welcomed Keira O'Donnell to the meeting this evening. Keira is a representative from the Student Advisory Council. Dr. Thomson read a short bio of Keira's accomplishments, including: Member of National Honor Society, Member of Madrigal Ensemble, Mustang Marching Band, Vice-President of Student Council and participates in a myriad of programs both inside and outside of school. Her AP Research Article was on the social science aspect of organ donation published in the Journal of Student Research. Dr. Thomson said it was his pleasure to present the New England School Development Award to Keira this evening.

Introduction and Welcome - Dr. Quigley: Dr. Quigley (former Norwood Public Schools Superintendent) was here this evening to introduce himself and to share that he has been asked to be the interim Principal of the Little Mustangs Preschool until the end of the year. He said he and Dr. Baulier have been working together to be sure that, through this transition period, the kindergarten and the pre-school both continue to receive the very highest level of support that they both deserve and

need. Dr. Quigley shared his professional background (Principal, Superintendent, Consultant, and lots of interim work in various districts). Dr. Quigley said he is very happy to be back in Norwood.

Superintendent's Report and/or Late Agenda: Dr. Thomson wished the boys's hockey team luck as they are playing this evening, adding that they are our last team in the post-season tournament. He congratulated all of our winter tournament teams on their successful season.

Updates:

- March 20-24th - Inclusion and Acceptance Week
- Extended Day - No April Vacation
- Will meet with Rec Department so see if they are offering programs for April Vacation week
- Norris, Murray & Peloquin Memo on MGL c71 sec37H 3/4 (Amended Law around Discipline and Expulsion - not on the table anymore for schools). This was a surprise bill thrown into a mental health bill. There were no educators involved in the bill and no guidance. There was much discussion around this amendment.

Myths and Misunderstandings: Dr. Thomson asked the public to not post their questions on social media, but to reach out to the schools with questions and concerns to get accurate information.

NSDC Award Winner: Moved up in the agenda.

Budget: Budget Sub Committee Meeting Update: Ms. Stewart updated on the recent Budget Sub Committee Meeting of February 28th and said that the Committee is working very hard to figure out next steps for the budget. She said that the Budget Sub Committee will go before the Budget Balancing Committee tomorrow night. The priority for tonight will be to share the information we are bringing to BBC for the FY24 Budget.

Ms. Sheridan updated with regards to the adjustments that have been made since the last meeting, saying that we were at 10.42% increase at the start. As of now, there have been some adjustments that brings it down to 9.06%.

Ms. Sheridan then reviewed the portion that was unable to be included in the 3.5% increase, which totals 5.56%. There was some discussion about the process of picking the appropriate schools for out-of-district students.

Reductions in the Preliminary Budget:

Professional Development:

Move Stipends for Summer work; Wilson Reading; SPED PD
and Character Strong SPED PD - moved to ESSER II and III Grants
for one year only \$ (87,780)

Other Teaching Services:

Reduction after review of Staff; PreK Para moved to Revolving Fund	\$ (104,738)
<u>Instructional Services:</u>	
Reduce Curriculum Refresh - improved pricing	\$ (40,000)
<u>Other Student Activities:</u>	
Increased Drama / Music Budget Offsets to \$17,000 each	\$ (4,000)
<u>Student Transportation:</u>	
Moved two Outside Contract Service Buses to ESSER III - Summer stipends being moved to EXT; Learning grant And nurse in GF	\$ (144,000)
<u>Network & Telecommunications:</u>	
Review of Technology Budget and Move Tech Summer Interns To ESSER II for one year only	\$ (10,000)
<u>Benefits and Fixed Charges:</u>	
Lower EE Separation Costs with updated Retirement List:	\$ (28,600)
<u>Increase Circuit Breaker:</u>	
Programs with Other School Districts	\$ (300,000)

Dr. Giblin reminded that Circuit Breaker is not 75% of our costs. She then read some information from the Department of Education on Circuit Breaker and how it is calculated. *(The threshold for eligibility is tied to 4 times the state average foundation budget per pupil as calculated under the Chapter 70 Program with the State paying 75% the cost above that threshold).*

Override Stabilization Fund:

Ms. Sheridan explained that Norwood has an Override Stabilization Fund: (A mechanism for setting aside money for unforeseen needs). Ms. Sheridan said that due to the drastic changes in in the population as well as unforeseen increases in SPED out-of-district Tuitions and transportation, that we feel are out of the control the School District, we are requesting that the Town consider using the following funding resources to assist the Schools with the FY24 Budget:

- Medicaid Reimbursement (which has increased over the past few years) which is approximately \$350,000);
- Homeless Transportation Reimbursement (approximately \$20,000);
- Override Stabilization Fund (which currently has \$4,712,716 - and started in FY20).

The use of these funding sources will keep the general fund base lower. If this option is not considered, then the School District will have to make very difficult cuts.

Ms. Sheridan said there is one more thing they are recommending. Regarding the Special Education Out-of-District contracted services for transportation, she is

really hopeful that in the near future we will be able to bring those runs back in when our new vans arrive (hopefully in the near future). Ms. Sheridan said we are asking for a warrant article in the amount of \$500,000 to cover the unanticipated special education out of district contracted service costs due to the supply chain issues causing us a pause in the delivery of the special education vans that are on order. This would be a one time warrant article and would bring the budget down to 7.41%.

Ms. Sheridan went on to explain that the Override Stabilization Fund request is \$1,487,643, which is how we get down to a 4.59% base.

Ms. Sheridan explained that we are asking for the \$1,487,643 from the Override Stabilization Fund, however the total of the Special Education transportation increases and the out-of-district tuition increases (take away the Circuit Breaker offset that we increased) are \$1,618,594. She said we are not asking for the total from the Override Stabilization Fund. This option is to use 80% of the Chapter Aid. She said that 20% would go to the Town.

Ms. Sheridan reviewed the Chapter 70 Aid Increase and informed that our District has increased over the past three years from "Low Income" Level 6 to Level 7 and then to Level 8, which is a pretty substantial jump.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to approve the strategy going forward to Budget Balancing Committee, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Budget Transfer for School Committee approval: Lori Cimeno is requesting funds for Psych. Evaluations for a total of \$36,000 from: Psych MS/Willett to the Contracted Services line.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to approve this transfer, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Capital Outlay: Chair Mazzola gave a quick review of the last Capital Outlay Meeting, which was last night. Joe Kidd and Al Bishop came and spoke to Capital Outlay about their requests. She informed that they voted to approve Al Bishop's request for one wheel chair and one regular mini bus. This will go to Selectmen for approval for Town Meeting.

Joe Kidd asked for new network switches and a computer refresh for the engineering rooms. Both were approved and recommended for free cash. This request will also be forwarded on to the Selectmen for approval for Town Meeting.

Chair Mazzola said the only other item discussed was the Financial Policy - adding that there were some wording changes in the policy to make it clearer.

She said they welcomed a new appointed Member.

The next meeting will be in April. They will be taking a field trip to the library to look at the facade project. There are a couple more meetings scheduled going forward.

Old Business: Long Term Agenda Review: (move to the end of agenda).

Math Update: Dr. Wyeth updated the new Math Coordinator, Laura Donnelly, has been working to open up the communication channels between the elementary math program and the middle school math program to try to get them aligned.

Some other Math updates include:

- Math and EL coordinators met with elementary EL teachers to discuss available math supports and strategies;
- Running MCAS support groups, (a 5-week program), at each school to get students ready for MCAS testing;
- Run Acceleration academy in February to target some students that need support with funding from a grant;
- Middle School - doing a Mustang Math Challenge with help from HS students. The kids submit their answers and qualify for prizes.

Mid Cycle: Superintendent Goals Discussion: Dr. Thomson updated the Committee on the Superintendent's goals.

- Dr. Thomson said he has been putting a lot of focus on the instructional rounds and is a little behind with the principal-led staff meetings. He said he will eventually catch up. Dr. Thomson said the level of instruction in the classroom from where we were 6 years ago to where we are now is amazing. It is great to see the joy in the classrooms.
- Dr. Thomson still has to do a reflection document on where we are.
- Communications:** The Communication Policy is streamlining communications and is making a big difference. Parent Square is a great tool and it is available in different languages. We are about half way through the process of transitioning our translation service to Lexikeet.
- District Improvement Goals:** Regarding the Middle School Building Committee, we are at a point where we are moving along full speed. We are on track to break ground in early June. The Equity Audit, the Special Education Review and the English Language Learner Plan Review all has been put into the Strategic Plan.
- Ethics and Policies:** Dr. Thomson said he has one more section in the Policy Manual to review and answer questions with he Admin. Team. The next piece of that will be making sure the handbooks are reflective of that. Dr. Taylor is very close to finishing the draft of the staff handbook. Once we get an approved budget we will update the web page.

-Community Engagement: Dr. Thomson has had one Facebook live (supposed to have three). He has had two out of three coffee hours. He has met with the PTO's two times (need to have three).

Ms. Stewart said there were some things that needed to go on the Long Term Agenda. Ms. Stewart suggested that Dr. Thomson work on defining the smart goals for year two and bring them back on the 22nd.

Mr. Hiltz and Dr. Giblin will work with Dr. Thomson on the smart goals. After some discussion they agreed to bring them back to the Committee on the 29th, not the 22nd.

The Chair reminded the Members to work on their Executive Summaries for Dr. Thomson (not to be shared with the Committee, but just to provide some guidance for Dr. Thomson.) The Executive Summaries should be sent to Dr. Thomson by the end of March.

Joint Facilities MOU: Chair Mazzola said that she sent out our Attorney's marked-up version and a clean version last week to Town and she has not heard back from them yet. She is confident that she will hear back from her and we will move this item to the next meeting.

Review School Committee Goals: Chair Mazzola reviewed the School Committee goals and asked the members for feedback.

-Budget: The Budget is ongoing but is on track.

-Mid-Cycle Evaluation: This was already discussed and is on track.

-Middle School Quarterly Updates: This is on track.

-Budget Sub Committee: Meets twice a month and reports to the Committee. This is on track.

Ms. Stewart informed that when the FY24 Budget is done, the Budget Balancing Committee will continue to meet as the Override Pledge will be ending in 2024 and there is a lot of work to do to figure out how to move forward collaboratively with the other boards.

-Policy Sub Committee : Many of these items are on track.

Ms. Stewart reminded that we only took one vote (in August) on the Communication Policy and said it needs to come back for a second vote. Then it will be ready to be added to the Policy Manual.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said that the Policy Sub Committee should be reworded to "meet as needed" as there are some months one meeting may be enough. The Committee discussed this and will revisit that in April and May when setting the new goals.

-District Support Goals: Elementary Sub Committee is on track and will be meeting again on March 14th. The Chair said we will participate in the Equity Audit Implementation Process.

-Professional Development Goals: We did not complete #9 due to the challenging budget process. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn and Dr. Taylor attended the MASC Conference and brought back lots of good information. The School Committee and Dr. Thomson were able to attend three MASC trainings.

-School Committee Meeting Goals: We had Traveling School Committee Meetings at the High School, Coakley Middle School and Balch this year. The next Traveling SC Meeting is scheduled for the Callahan in April. There was some discussion around changing the location since the library has moved to the lower level which may pose logistical problems. The Committee did monthly office hours with 2 Members at each time. There were staggered times to give the public a chance to attend.

The Chair said we have accomplished about 95% of the goals. This does not closely capture the amount of work that is being done,

Policy:Policy Sub Committee Update: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn informed that the Policy Sub Committee meets again tomorrow at 1:00 p.m. Tomorrow's meeting will be to review the survey to do some information gathering through the PTO's to see what's happening financially so they can support the schools with fundraising events. They will request that surveys be done by March 17th. The Policy Sub Committee will then bring some recommendations for procedures back to the full committee.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn has created a Long Term Agenda for the Policy Sub Committee that she can share out with the Committee.

Policy DEC: Federal Funds Supplement Not Supplant (second vote): Dr.Thomson said we did not receive any public feed back regarding this policy.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to approve which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Members voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair informed that this policy will be added to the policy manual.

MASC and Legislative Advocacy: Ms. Stewart updated on the advocacy work she is working on. She informed that on Friday, she attended a virtual MASC webinar on Legislative Advocacy.

-Changes in Behavioral Laws: MASC does support the bill, however they are advocating for funding so that it is not an unfunded mandate.

-Free Breakfast and Lunch: MASC is advocating that the state provide free

breakfast and lunch next year. They are trying to get the federal government to fund it.

- Student Opportunity Act: MASC is advocating for full funding for the Student Opportunity Act, as well as Special Education Transportation and advocating for flexibility in spending balances of expiring federal stimulus funds.
- MASC is trying to increase the Circuit Breaker to 90% reimbursement and also to lower the threshold from three times the per pupil cost instead of four times the cost.

- MASC is advocating that the Special Education Reserve Fund (which Norwood does have) can have 5% of net school spending instead of 2%.

- MASC is advocating that every penny of Medicaid reimbursement be solely for the school districts.

- MASC is trying to work on the shortage of special education van drivers and the supply issue.

- MASC is urging DESE to rethink the MCAS and what the MCAS is used for.

Ms. Stewart updated regarding Open Meeting Law. In March of 2020 we were given the ability to have remote meetings and that is set to end on March 31st. The House budget has this extending to 2025. We will have to see what the Senate Budget decides. She reminded that hybrid is acceptable in Norwood because we adopted it as a School Committee. As long as we have a quorum, we can have two Members meet remotely.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to support Ms. Stewart and Mrs. Jody Smith to work together on advocacy requests to the State, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

Ms. Stewart informed that there is another MASC Webinar this Friday at noon on Medicaid and Health Insurance. They are trying to help School Committee Members understand these topics better.

Old Business: Long Term Agenda Review: There was some discussion as to whether having Student Government Day at the next meeting might be a challenge with the full agenda that is planned. The Committee decided to not have the School Committee mock meeting during the March 22nd SC Meeting. The Committee will talk off line to find a time for a mock School Committee Meeting during the day.

New Business: None.

Consent Agenda: Acceptance of one (1) Donation:

-Bay State Textiles - January Rebate - \$669.75

Ms. Stewart made a motion to accept this donation/rebate, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

School Committee Addenda: Ms. Stewart informed that the Masons - Orient Lodge are accepting nominations for Teacher of the Year until March 17th.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said she was looking forward to the World Language Night at the High School tomorrow. She thanked the community for their support of the Norwood Schools and said that during challenging times, student achievement is happening every day and there is so much to celebrate with our students and staff.

Dr. Giblin said the problems that are being faced in this district are problems that are being faced across the nation. She said she is tired as a parent and tired as someone who works. As a District, we have been trying to hire school psychologists and BCBA's. She said we can not find them. Pediatric mental health is a complete mess and is underserved and under-resourced in this country. She said we are seeing the results of that. Dr. Giblin added that our paraprofessionals are the ones who are the aides for special education students and they are not paid enough. These problems are systemic across the country. We are carefully trying to put together our budget and that is being blown up by factors beyond our control. The Middle School Building Project is at a critical juncture and it is being driven by inflation. Material costs and construction costs are out of our control now. As we stop to think about all of this, and realize that everyone is tired, Dr. Giblin hopes that we can continue to be a community that engages in civil dialogue with each other, that thinks long-term (not just in the moment) and give each other a little bit of grace as everyone around us is trying to do the best we can.

Mr. Hiltz had none.

Chair had none.

Executive Session: Chair Mazzola informed that there would be an Executive Session for Independent Contract Negotiations.

Ms. Stewart made a motion for Executive Session at 10:25 p.m. which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

Adjournment: Dr. Giblin made a motion for adjournment at 11:15 p.m., which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted:
Donna G. Doliner, Clerk
Norwood School Committee

