

**Town of Norwood
School Committee Meeting
School Committee Room @ Savage Educational Center
Hybrid
Wednesday, March 22, 2023**

A hybrid meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:26 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>).

There was an Executive Session for Contract Negotiations at 7:00 p.m. prior to this meeting.

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

Committee Member Excused: 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:
March 8, 2023 (Business Meeting); and
March 8, 2023 (Executive Session).

This motion was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Correspondence: None.

Warrants: Chair Mazzola informed that she has signed warrants on behalf of the School Committee. Chair Mazzola then shared the warrant report which totalled: \$4,117,405.77.

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 comment 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.

No one registered in advance or at the meeting for Public Comment and the Chair declared Public Forum closed at 7:29 p.m.

Appearances: None.

Superintendent's Report and/or Late Agenda: Dr. Thomson updated on the following:

-Dr. Thomson shared that he got notice this week that we have received the Early Literacy Universal Screening Grant in the amount of \$36,010 which is a grant to check for dyslexia. This will fully cover the cost for the tools for testing.

-Dr. Thomson said it is Inclusion and Acceptance Week. He said it is going well, adding that today was crazy hat day.

- Dr. Thomson will be going (on Friday and Saturday) with Dr. Galligan and John Longley to a workshop addressing *Hate in School Sports*. This workshop was coordinated by the Governor, MIAA, the Superintendents' Association and the Principals' Association.

-Student Government Day - Dr. Thomson thanked informed that today was Student Government Day and he thanked Ms. Stewart for attending this with him. They had a wonderful time with the students, got to tour the Administration Office and the School Committee Room and the students were able to have a mock School Committee Meeting and had a few topics they debated and vote on (including who calls snow days). Dr. Thomson thanked Ms. Orlinski for setting it all up and Mr. Mazzucco for his participation in the day.

-Ash to Flame Competitive Play - Dr. Thomson said our students are heading to the State Finals with this play that they have written, did the choreography for, did the lighting and created the music for. He said it was professional level.

-Extended Day - Offering Summer Program

-No April Vacation Extended Day

-Have met with the Rec Department about expanding opportunities

-Dr. Wyeth and Dr. Thomson were able to attend the National Honor Society Induction at 4:00 p.m. today. There were 80 students inducted.

-Myths and Misunderstandings:

Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Pedagogy (Dr. Thomson said our

work with CRSP not CRT (Critical Race Theory) but Culturally Responsive Teaching. He added that Critical Race Theory is a 40 year old academic theoretical concept that is used in higher education to study how racism might be structural and woven into our country's systems, laws and institutions. Critical Race Theory is not a curriculum and is no taught in K-12 Schools. It is a research piece that is done in masters and doctoral levels. Culturally Responsive Sustaining Pedagogy is a K-12 approach used by the Highlander Institute that has combined the phrases Culturally Responsive Pedagogy with Culturally Responsive Teaching. CRSP is about improving the learning capacity of all students. Especially those who come from cultures that have been traditionally marginalised by building strong, trustful relationships that create a sense of connection and belonging. When teachers are able to tap into background knowledge, interests and identities of their learners, students increase their ownership of learning and improve their academic outcomes.

-Behavioral Issues - Dr. Thomson shared an update regarding the new law that was passed in August and implemented in November around discipline and expulsion in the schools. (MGL c71 sec37H 3/4). He explained that this was a surprise bill thrown into a mental health bill and he added that there were no educators involved in putting the bill together nor was there any guidance given. Dr. Thomson said behaviour issues are being addressed at every school in every instance. They are being addressed and brought to parents. Dr. Thomson referred another Law that is also on the books, Federal Education Right to Privacy Act. This is a federal law that insists a right to privacy. Principals are not allowed to share information with parents on other people's kids.

Dr. Thomson said our schools are safe and orderly, although we do have some disregulated students more often but it's not at every school. There is still good learning going on in our schools but there are definitely some challenges. Usually when new laws begin there is a period of time to adapt, train and put in place programs and that did not happen with this law.

Dr. Thomson said we are piloting some restorative practices at the Oldham; we are piloting some support team referral processes for behaviors at the Callahan; the principals have gone to training on alternative measures at the elementary level; we are revising the positive behavior intervention system at the Willett and we have brought on an interim principal/director at the preschool level. Dr. Thomson added that we will be hiring an Elementary Support Specialist that will help with the behavioral issues in FY24.

Ms. Stewart said she hopes people are following all the budget discussions currently going on because we keep saying why we need certain funding and positions. She said we are doing the best we can with the resources we have. Ms. Stewart is involved in legislative advocacy at the state level. She said we are trying and working collaboratively with our colleagues in the town. She also said that the students at Student Government Day have identified mental health as an area they are concerned with as well. She asked for people who are concerned to please keep the conversation constructive and help us to advocate and help our kids.

Budget: Budget Sub Committee Meeting and Budget Balancing Update / FY24 Budget Discussion / Warrant Discussion for Town Meeting: Ms. Stewart said all of the minutes from the past Budget Sub Committee Meetings were in the packets. Ms. Stewart said that tomorrow, she will be going with Dr. Thomson, Ms. Sheridan, Dr. Taylor and Chair Mazzola will present the FY24 Budget to the Finance Commission. That final presentation will be shared at next week's School Committee Meeting for the FY24 Budget Hearing.

At the last meeting, Ms. Sheridan explained that we needed to make some cuts so the first round was to move a lot of money out of the general fund into different grants and other areas. Ms. Stewart said that the BBC asked that we deplete our Special Education Reserve Fund. Ms. Stewart reminded that we started this reserve fund two years ago and the School Committee has the authority to put money in and the School Committee and the Board of Selectmen need to agree to take money out. In FY23 there is an offset of \$300,000 that we will determine if we need to take that money out. If we do, that leaves \$550,000 in the Special Education Reserve Fund. In the budget that Ms. Sheridan presented at the last meeting, there was already an additional \$300,000 offset. What BBC is suggesting and what we have to decide on this evening is to add an additional \$250,000 which will deplete the Special Education Reserve Fund. We were asked at the last BBC meeting to reduce our costs by another \$150,000. Ms. Sheridan worked with the TEC Collaboratives to get that part down by an additional \$42,489.00. There were some salary adjustments that needed to be made upon further analysis and it is begin recommended that we increase our Circuit Breaker by \$64,047. Ms. Sheridan and Dr. Thomson are comfortable with this recommendation due to the Governor's Budget and discussions at the State Level that indicate that we should fit the criteria for extraordinary relief money that we are currently applying for.

Ms. Stewart said we need to vote this evening on the following:

- Ask Town Meeting ask for \$350,000 medicaid Reimbursement in Free Cash;
- Ask Town Meeting for Homeless Transportation -Free Cash - to come back to schools -\$22,000;
- Ask Town Meeting for \$500,000 out of Free Cash for Out of District Transportation (If we get the vans, we won't need the money but we won't know in time);

-Ask Town Meeting for use of Override Stabilization Funds - to offset large increase in OOD SPED tuition/transportation - \$1,487,643 (these were unforeseen circumstances).

Teresa reminded that we need to bring in a consultant for the Elementary Study that we are planning on doing. She shared 3 options for the \$60,000 for the Elementary Study.

- Option 1: Remove this from the Budget and wait and see if we have money in the fall;
- Option 2: Remove this from the Budget and to to Spring Town Meeting with it as a Warrant Article; or
- Option 3: Remove this from the Budget and go to fall Town Meeting with it as a Warrant Article.

There was a lot of discussion around the options.

Ms. Stewart informed that, with all the moving of funds out of the General Budget, the FY24 General Fund Budget would be \$54,824,866 which is a 3.83% increase. Ms. Stewart said if we agree to all of the other funding sources, this would bring our FY24 Budget to \$57,244,529.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to put on the Spring Town Meeting warrant \$350,000 from Free Cash (medicaid reimbursement money), which was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to put on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant from Free Cash (reimburse for Homeless Transportation) in the amount of \$22,000, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to put on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant the amount of \$500,000 (to cover unanticipated Special Ed out of district contracted services). Dr. Thomson will work with the Legal Department to have very clear language written that if we do not need this money it will be returned to the Town. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Mr. Hiltz made a motion to be put on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant a request for the amount of \$1,487,64 comes from Override Stabilisation Fund for School Budget, which was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Committee vote unanimously 4-0.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to add \$60,000 for the Elementary School Study to Spring Town Meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to increase the offset in the SPED Reserve Fund in the FY24 Budget by another \$250,000, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Ms. Stewart shared some of the budget amounts for another areas in Town and said that, in the end, this leaves the whole town budget in the black by \$17,000.

Dr. Giblin thanked the architects of the override for creating the stabilization fund and for the cooperation between the town and the schools for the Special Ed Reserve Fund.

Old Business: Updates on the Middle School Building Committee: Mr. Hiltz updated on the progress of the Middle School Building Project. Mr. Hiltz said we are in the bidding process where 100% of the documents have been submitted and approved. We are slated to break ground in early June.

Ms. Stewart shared that Justin Thibeault informed that currently in the design, there is 603 seats in the auditorium with an additional 8 wheelchair seats. They are asking for some of them to be moved. If they end up being moved, then we will lose some seats and only be at 594 seats with 8 wheelchair seats. We are hoping to not have to do some redesigns, but we should know more next month.

Mr. Hiltz reviewed the project alternates.

Project Alternates:

Alternate #1: Add Concessions Building	\$554,226
Alternate #2 Add full height tile back into multi-fixtures restrooms - currently own partial heigh on some walls	\$86,544
Alternate #3: Add tile back into corridors - up to 4' high currently own tile up to 4' at classroom entries	\$460,227
Alternate #4: Add tile back into student commons - up to 4' high - currently own tile up to 4' at piers and behind trash areas	\$40,254

Mr. Hiltz shared that Mr. Riccardi has explained that the reason the High School has stayed in such good shape is that tile has been installed throughout much of the school (i.e., bathrooms, corridors, etc.). Mr. Riccardi said that if possible, we should add back the tile to help with the life of the building.

Mr. Hiltz said the Middle School Committee has approved the following:
-Alternate #2, #3 & #4 have become Alternate #1, #2 & #3;
-Alternate #1 (concession building) has become Alternate #4.

Notice of Awards:

Concrete:	Marguerite Concrete - \$4,115,000.00
Structural Steel:	Norgate Metal - \$7,024,000.00
Sitework:	Ernest Guile & Sons — \$11,895,000.00
Ground Improvements:	Helical Drilling Inc. - \$202,500.00

Ms. Stewart shared some good news that currently, the project is \$1.1 million under budget.

Ms. Stewart said at their last meeting, the Board of Selectmen discussed sending a letter to the Governor, which has been drafted by Bob Donnelly and is in the Members' packets this evening, showing our support to Governor Healey for Senate Bill #S298. (This is an Act involving increased material costs in school construction projects.) This request is due to the fact that there is \$150,000,000 in unused funds that came out because of the pandemic that the state still has. This Bill asks that the funds be redirected to MSBA so they can give it out to more projects. Ms. Stewart asked that this letter be sent jointly between the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee. The Board of Selectmen agreed to that request.

Ms. Stewart said that the Board of Selectmen will also be sending a letter out to Senator Rush.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to approve a joint letter from the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee supporting Senate Bill #S298 be sent to the Governor, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Next Meeting will be April 24th at 5:00 p.m., location TBD.

Elementary Sub Committee Update: Mr. Hiltz said that the Elementary Sub Committee met virtually on Tuesday, March 14th and the draft meeting minutes are in Members packets. The past two meeting minutes were approved. There was discussion that we needed to see how the budget plays out to see where the \$60,000 for the consultation was coming from.

The next meeting will be some time in early to mid May.

Mr. Hiltz informed that he received feedback from the Principals that it would be good to come up with a pillars document, as a first step, that Mr. Hiltz will be working on. He will share with Dr. Thomson and the Principals for their feedback when it's done.

Joint Facilities MOU: Chair will move this to the next agenda as she has not received the feedback from the Town yet.

NCSO Youth Substance Use and Mental Health Task Force: Ms. Stewart updated that it was a networking meeting, and everyone met in small working groups. The participants shared the different speakers that their towns have had come into their schools.

Some ideas that came out of the meeting:

- Wellness Summits (Full day to support students and staff)
- Additional Music and Art as a way to support staff and students

- Work with communities for more wrap around services
- Resources from Healthy KP (King Phillip District)

Ms. Stewart said that we are really not alone in the challenges we have. There was a lot of dialogue around behaviors; challenges with staffing and resources; vaping in schools on the rise; violence and fights in schools, etc.

The next meeting will be on April 3rd.

Policy: Policy Sub Committee Update and School Improvement Template: The Chair updated that they met as a policy sub committee on March 9th and discussed the Policy Survey around Policy KCD and then the discussion moved to the School Improvement template. The Sub Committee has approve the School Improvement template that is in the packets this evening.

Dr. Taylor reminded that we shared a draft template a couple of months ago and added that this was a template that we modified based on the Committee's request from the last meeting. Dr. Taylor said that we added the professional development plan and we carved out a box for schools to share highlights. We have asked the principals to align this with the strategic plan. We have also given them an opportunity to share some action steps.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart for discussion.

Ms. Stewart thanked Dr. Taylor for adding in the Professional Development piece. Ms. Stewart reminded Dr. Thomson and the Policy Sub Committee that it is in Dr. Thomson's goals that they are supposed to create a template for the one-year check-in, and this should come back to the School Committee at the April 12th meeting so that principals can utilise it for their May updates.

Dr. Taylor explained that the Policy states "keep the following in mind", adding that it doesn't actually call for it to be documented. She said that is where she thinks some of the discrepancy may have been.

Ms. Stewart asked for some clarification around the budget implication question.

Dr. Taylor said she thinks the principals know it is all-encompassing.

Regarding the motion on the table, the Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Chair informed that the next meeting will be on Thursday, April 13th @ 12:00 noon. This will be a remote meeting.

There was some discussion about items on the Long Term Agenda. The Chair said her preference would be to put the naming of the Naming Policy on the April 12th agenda instead of the March 29th agenda. The Committee agreed to that suggestion.

Regarding Long Term Agenda items, Dr. Thomson said the Elementary Handbooks will need to be reviewed by the Policy Sub Committee due to the changes around the new behavioral laws. There were also other items for the Long Term Agenda that were outlined on the To-Do List from this evening's School Committee Meeting.

Legislative Advocacy: Ms. Stewart said at the last meeting, she asked the Committee to approve that she work with Jody Smith on writing a letter, but she needed to reschedule yesterday's meeting. Ms. Stewart then updated that she was able to attend another of MASC's webinars and it was focused on health insurance. She said the two things she wanted to share from the webinar were:

(1) Health Insurance inflation is expected to grow 6-10% year after year going forward.

(2) And the questions: How do you keep your employees healthy? Are the plans were are offering the employees helping?

New Business: Assistant Superintendent Appointment: Dr. Thomson said it was his pleasure to bring forward to the Committee for their approval a recommendation for appointment for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Academics Jose (J.J.) Munoz. He is currently a doctoral student at Harvard and will be finishing up this spring. He holds a Masters from Harvard in School Leadership and he is currently a Superintendent in Residence in Boston which means he is in their development program. Dr. Thomson shared some of his accomplishments, experiences with the Committee. Dr. Thomson said he is putting his name forth for approval and appointment.

Mr. Hiltz made a motion to approve the Superintendent's recommendation for Assistant Superintendent of Academics, which was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Consent Agenda: Acceptance of 2 (two) Donation/Rebates:

- Bay State Textiles - \$662.75 February Rebate
- Story Theme Chair with 12 Copies of the Book "New Kid"

Ms. Stewart made a motion to accept these donations/rebates, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

School Committee Addenda: Ms. Stewart said that being on the School Committee in March is a lot of work with the Budget. Student Government Day is a great reminder of why we do what we do.

Dr. Giblin had none.

Mr. Hiltz thanked all the groups involved in the Budget process this year. This was a true collaboration amongst the town Boards.

The Chair was thankful that the budget work is almost over, although it is really a year-long process. She said we will see everyone back here next week for our Business Meeting and the Budget hearing.

Executive Session: Chair Mazzola informed that there was an Executive Session prior to this meeting and there is no need to go back into Executive Session at this point.

Adjournment: Mr. Hiltz made a motion for adjournment at 9:30 p.m., which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Members voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted:

Donna G. Doliner, Clerk
Norwood School Committee