

**Town of Norwood  
Norwood School Committee Meeting  
School Committee Room @ Savage Educational Center  
Hybrid  
Wednesday, September 13, 2023**

A hybrid meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, September 13, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. (The public can access the meetings in person at the Savage Educational Center or live via NCM on cable, as they are 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. Charisse Taylor, Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Strategy; Dr. J. J. Munoz, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum; Ms. Karin Sheridan, Director of Finance and Operations

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

- August 10, 2023 Business Meeting;
- August 10, 2023 Executive Session;
- August 11, 2023 Executive Session; and
- August 31 Executive Session

This motion was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1 (Mr. Hiltz 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:	\$1,320,994.98 (8/10/23)
	\$1,207,889.52 (8/24/23)
	\$1,883,042.25 (9/7/23)
-Accounts Payable Warrants:	\$ 325,409.09
	\$ 69,416.00
	\$ 427.96
	\$ 9,118.22
	\$ 8,410.00
	\$ 219,044.35
	\$ 4,152.05
	\$ 17,956.92
	\$ 17,779.24
	\$ 26,201.56
	\$ 112,756.08
	\$ 3,106.97
	\$ 402,736.60

\$ 13,067.61  
\$ 53,252.67  
\$ 27,434.81  
\$ 3,693.12  
\$ 93,242.59  
\$ 37,910.71

Total Expenditure: \$5,857,043.30

**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 meetings in person at the Savage Educational Center or live via NCM on cable, as they are 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 Forum and the Chair declared Public Forum closed at 7:07 p.m.

**Appearances:** LMPA Principal Introduction: Dr. Thomson welcomed Ms. Kristen Noonan, newly appointed Principal at LMPA, to the meeting this evening.

Ms. Noonan said it's been a wonderful transition at the LMPA and she informed that they had a very successful opening.

The Chair was happy to welcome Ms. Noonan and thanked her for coming in so the Committee could meet her in person.

STN Conference / Field Trip: Mr. Jeff Kerr was here this evening to present the insurance information for the STN Convention/Trip to Long Beach, California from March 13, 2024 - March 17, 2024. (Mr. Kerr had requested this trip previously and the Committee was just waiting for the insurance information).

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve this field trip, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

Capital Outlay Request for Town Meeting: Mr. Riccardi was here this evening to update on the school capital projects. He informed that the following work has been done:

- High School gym floor refinished;
- Reconfigured some electrical areas for Doc Crowley's room;
- Set up new medical area at High School;
- Updated 150 lights to LED lights (classrooms still need to be done);
- Oil burners converted at Balch;

Mr. Riccardi informed that starting Monday, the front stairs will be replaced at the Balch. He also said that hopefully, the parking lots at the Oldham and Willett will hopefully be finished next week (taking longer than planned partly due to the difficult weather challenges and partly due to

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve \$514,000 for the parking lot at Savage Center to go forward to Town Meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 5-0,

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

-Dr. Thomson informed that we had another very smooth school opening and he thanked the custodians for all their hard work as well as the teachers being in early and welcoming the students.

-Transportation: Dr. Thomson updated that we have some new bus drivers and we will be adjusting some of the routes, which is the norm. He said that there is a new Challenge starting on Monday. There will be lots of digging and road work around F.M. Global near the rotary so we will be figuring out how to work around that area. Dr. Thomson was excited to informed today that three of our new wheelchairs will be showing up tomorrow.

-Staffing: Dr. Thomson updated that there are still challenges with staffing, especially with paraprofessionals. He said we continue to work on the staffing issues.

-Dr. Thomson then announced that he had decided to not seek an extension of his contract, which ends June 30, 2024. He reflected on his past 6 (almost 7) years with the Norwood Public Schools and said he was incredibly proud of all the accomplishments and improvements, which include:

- Successfully advocated and gained support from the Community to pass the first operational override and gained financial stability and was able to move the district forward as well as the Town;
- Improving our financial practices and budget process and re-established a trust with the Town's leadership and citizens;
- We established a curriculum review cycle and fast-tracked improvements in our classrooms, curriculums and instructional practices;

- We have made great strides using data and data teams to target intervention and instruction for our needy students;
- Dr. Thomson said he takes personal pride in the Prescott Elementary School becoming a Blue Ribbon School and Dr. Galligan's recognition last year as the Massachusetts High School Principal of the Year;
- Dr. Thomson said we have conducted an equity audit and incorporated the recommendations into our Strategic Plan and have significantly improved in our equity journey.

Dr. Thomson said this a only a short list and these accomplishments are only possible because of the talented and dedicated staff and administrative team that make the Norwood Public Schools a special place and a great learning community. He said he would be remiss if he didn't mention the incredible support he has received from parents and the honor it has been to work with the incredible students of Norwood. He then thanked the Town of Norwood for this opportunity and the School Committees with whom he has served. He said these past years have been the highlight of his professional career and that the months ahead are being committed to continuing the work of the Norwood Public Schools.

The Members had an opportunity to thank Dr. Thomson for his years with the Norwood Public Schools and to explain that there will be a process put in place, adding that the School Committee will need some time to figure out the next steps. This item will be on the September 27th agenda.

**Budget: Budget Sub Committee Update:** Ms. Stewart updated that the Committee has received the approved minutes from July 17, August 24, and September 7 meetings as well as the to-do lists that were generated from those meetings. The Committee has scheduled the meetings out for the rest of the school year. They will be meeting on Thursdays at 12:30 2-3 times a month through June. The schedule is also on the website. A meeting has been scheduled for tomorrow because the date for warrants for Town Meeting to go to town hall got moved up a week. They will meet tomorrow as a sub committee to decide what the warrants will be. We also had to add an additional School Committee Meeting for next Wednesday, September 20th, 8 p.m. (remotely) to go over the warrants as a full Committee.

Ms. Stewart updated that on September 20th at 5:30 there will be another Budget Balancing Committee Meeting. The Sub Committee will meet again on September 21st for further review of the Middle School staffing and operations for the new Middle School that opens up in 2025. There will also be more discussions around ESSER Funding which ends in September 2024 and there are 11.18 positions in ESSER that we will need to find additional funding for. Dr. Taylor and Ms. Sheridan are working together to finalize Objective #1 of the Strategic Plan. This will be back on the agenda for September 27th for approval of Objective #1. (Ms. Stewart reminded that the Committee has already approved Objectives #2-5.)

Ms. Stewart also said there is on-going work with the Sub Committee around HR analysis as well as the 5 year projections that the Town has requested through BBC.

FY23 Fourth Quarter Final Report:

-Norwood Public Schools - FY23 Budget	\$52,801,033
-FY23 Expended	\$51,963,429
-FY23 Available Balance	\$1,222
-% of Budget expanded / encumbered	\$99.99%

Funds returned to Town \$1,222

-OOD Special Ed Students - Actual 88n vs. Budget 69 - increase of 14 students  
-watch alert - as OOD special ed students continue to climb;  
-FY21- 64 students; FY22 - 67 students; FY23 - 84 students; FY24 currently at 72;

-Prepaid Out of District Tuition - \$402,737;

-SPED Stabilization Fund YTD Balance - \$700,000

-FY23 District received \$578,386 in Extraordinary Relief.

-To qualify, the District's claimable costs under CB had to exceed previous year by 25%.

-Special Education Transportation continues to climb, but the good news is that vans are beginning to be delivered and we now have enough drivers for the current fleet.

-In FY22, there were changes made to the Medicaid program resulting in additional revenue for previous year's claims. FY23 is more typical of the reimbursements we should expect on yearly basis;

-Director of Finance Recommendation:

Work collaboratively with Town to come to agreement to transfer Medicaid, reimbursements to Special Education Stabilization Ed Fund by Town Meeting Warrant Article each year.

-In FY23, the District also received Homeless Transportation Revenue in the amount of \$31,931.

-FY23 - Approximately 50.78 grant employees - benefits/pension for those eligible paid by the grants - Estimated cost for health/dental/pension for grant employees \$331,294.

-FY23 after Budget School Committee approve positions - 16.7  
All positions were covered by hire down savings.

Special Ed Staffing Requests / Contract for Paraprofessional Services: Ms. Cimeno updated on the staffing challenges this year, particularly with paraprofessionals who work with our most vulnerable students. Ms. Cimeno wanted to update the Committee on where the Special Education staffing is as of today.

Ms. Sheridan said she has worked with Ms. Cimeno to find a temporary plan of action with this challenge. She said they have worked on a temporary solution by hiring 6 (of 12) contracted paraprofessionals, a 0.6 Psychologist, 1.0 SLP (maternity leave), and .6 OT (maternity leave). Ms. Sheridan informed that this will cost \$771,538.50.

The funding sources to cover this amount would be:

- SC Budget Transfers;
- ESSER III - there is \$236,600 designated for contracted services for the paras;
- Circuit Breaker - \$256,132

The Budget Transfers would be as follows:

- The money in the General Fund for psychology would be transferred to contracted service line;
- There is \$50,000 in contract service line which, to date, there is no requisition for - so the \$50,000 would be used to fund some of this;
- There would be a transfer from the paraprofessional line in the amount of \$146,312.50.

Regarding the contracted paras, there is 20-30 day termination clauses so if the situation changes and we can get more para in, we can cancel those contracts with a 20-30 day notice and the amount we are talking about tonight will be much less. To buy-out the paras, the minimum would be about \$22,500 and that does not include benefits. Ms. Sheridan and Ms. Cimeno don't feel like we should try to buy out any of the paras until we find out if they are a good fit for our schools and students.

Ms. Sheridan said they will be trying to find paras through Indeed, through newspapers and from job fairs.

Dr. Giblin made a motion to table this item until the September 20th School Committee Meeting to give the Members time to process the information, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz.

Ms. Cimeno and Ms. Sheridan said this is an evolving situation and by tabling this item, classrooms that are very under-staffed will be delayed another four weeks due to processing, fingerprinting and on-boarding new staff.

After some discussion and clarification, the Committee voted against the motion 1-4 (Dr. Giblin voted in favor).

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the contracted services for:

- 6 paraprofessionals;
- 0.6 Psychologist;
- 0.6 SLP; and
- 0.6 OT

This was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1 (Dr. Giblin abstained),

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve a 2.8 FTE paraprofessional to fill the need for services as well as a 1.0 SPED Teacher, which was second by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1 (Dr. Giblin abstained).

Budget Transfers for School Committee Approval:

(1) \$163,096.75 - from Collective Bargaining Reserve to various salary accounts.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

(2) \$6,000 - to purchase rugs and furniture for a Balch classroom - moved from textbooks and instructional supplies to furniture line.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

(3) \$6,042.25 -for desks for the Innovative Pathways Program (furniture line) from instructional equipment line.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

Grant Approval/ Amendment of ESSER Grant: Ms. Sheridan shared information on two grants that needed approval:

- \$50,000 Innovative Career Pathways Support Grant - for current Healthcare Pathway Program; and
- \$25,000 - to provide innovative pathway program resources

Total: \$75,000

Ms. Stewart made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Ms. Sheridan reviewed the ESSER Amendment. She said we are continuing on with four (4) interventionists, one (1) BCBA and the .6 nurse. She said we have \$236,600 for SPED contracted services. Ms. Sheridan reviewed what has been added:

- Wish to hire a part-time Grant Coordinator (under 20 hours a week with no benefits);
- Additional Tech Support for summer - (interns);
- Additional SPED teacher at the High School;

- Mental Health Support;
- Contracted paras;
- Increasing mental health contract - MacLean' Hospital;
- Character Strong software;
- Increase Adjustment Counselors - one at Balch and one at Callahan (moving them to full-time);
- Increase in nursing to keep .6 nurse position

We removed:

- Some PD more that was not used;
- Psychologist that has not been able to be filled;
- Summer School Coordinator stipends

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the amended updated Spending Plan that we were provided tonight, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair moved Approval of Student Activities up in the agenda.

Ms. Sheridan reminded that every year the Committee needs to vote on the Clubs and on the maximum balance allowed for the Student Activity Accounts at the Middle School and High School. Ms. Sheridan said the the packets, the Members received the list of clubs she got from each principal. She said there is one new club added which was a Homework Club. She recommended keeping the maximum balance in those two accounts at the \$25,000 that it already is.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the submitted list for the FY24 Student Activity Clubs, which was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1. (Mr. Hiltz had stepped out and was not present for the vote.)

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve that we keep the maximum balance of each Student Activity Account to \$25,000, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 4-0-1. (Mr. Hiltz had stepped out and was not present for the vote.)

Ms. Stewart asked that all the material given to the members this evening be added to the packets.

Capital Outlay Committee Update: The Chair updated on the recent Capital Outlay Meeting. There was a lot of discussion around debt service and that the Capital Outlay Committee did not want to make recommendations around funding sources and wanted to continue with the long term planning first. They did not vote to endorse list yet. The Chair will let everyone know when the next Capital Outlay Meeting will be.



**Old Business: Middle School Building Committee Meeting Update:** Dr. Thomson said Monday's meeting was recorded and televised and there is some good progress going with the Middle School.

Mr. Hiltz said budget-wise we are in a healthier place than we were previously. He informed that there were monies appropriated for this fiscal year from the state to go to projects in the MSBA that were within a certain time-frame as costs skyrocketed over the past couple of years. He added that there is no guarantee that we will get any of it but there is a possibility that we could. Mr. Hiltz informed that the next couple of meetings will be held on:

- October 16th - 4:30;
- November 20th - 4:30; and
- December 11th - 4:30

Ms. Stewart said regarding the funding from the state that we can apply for, she thanked John Rogers for advocating for that. That is one of the many things that Ms. Smith and she met with him about. She said we will need to apply for it.

Ms. Stewart said that in addition to the Middle School Building Meeting on Monday, there was a MSBA Meeting on Tuesday that the Chair, Dr. Thomson, Dr. Taylor and Ms. Stewart attended. At this point everything is on track with no issues. The project is tentatively expected to be fully completed some time between June 17 - June 19, 2025. Students will be in the building in September, 2025. The MSBA will be doing site visits on November 8th and January 10th virtually.

Chair informed that the Middle School Public Forum for the naming of the building will be on Tuesday, September 26th at the High School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m.

**Elementary Sub Committee Update:** Mr. Hiltz said the members have received the minutes from the last two meetings.

He informed that the Pillars Document is still being worked on and will be ready for a consultant.

**Approval of Elementary Study RFP:** Mr. Hiltz thanked Ms. Sheridan for putting together an RFP for the Elementary Study. Mr. Hiltz explained the process of going out for quotes (quicker route) vs. going out to bid (most advantageous proposal but will take longer).

After much discussion, Dr. Giblin made a motion to take the recommendation of the Elementary Sub Committee and go out for quotes, which which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Committee voted in favor 3-2. (Ms Stewart and Ms. Sibbing-Dunn voted against).

Ms. Stewart asked for the proposal to be reworded so that it isn't heavy on redistricting, but includes reconfiguration of grades and other options.

Approval of Student Activities: (moved up in agenda)

**Policy: Policy Sub Committee Update:** Ms. Sibbing-Dunn updated that they are still working on the KCD template and it is almost ready. She said the priority list has been shaken up a couple of times. The next meeting will be on September 19th and then every other Tuesday after that.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn also added that she and Chair Mazzola will work on dividing up how the policy maintenance will be done.

Staff Handbook Approval: The Chair said we will table this until the next meeting.

**New Business:** None.

**Consent Agenda:** Acceptance of (1) One Donation:

-Bay State Textiles - August Rebate \$716.70

Mr. Hiltz made a motion to accept this donations/rebates, which was seconded by Dr. Giblin . The Committee Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

**School Committee Addenda:** Ms. Stewart welcomed everyone back to a new year. She said she believes it is quite evident that there are a lot of challenges and transitions coming up this year and she would encourage everyone to continue to collaborate and work as a team, to communicate and be transparent.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn welcomed everyone back and sent kudos to the cast of *Matilda* for a great job last weekend.

Dr. Giblin welcomed everyone back and she thanked everyone who worked very hard to make sure our student and staff had a smooth opening. Dr. Giblin agreed that *Matilda* was very good, as she attended with her family.

Mr. Hiltz echoed his colleagues by welcoming everyone back to school. He also congratulated Allison Doliner on her 100th career win as Norwood High School's Field Hockey Head Coach and he then wished all the fall sports teams a great season.

Chair Mazzola welcomed everyone back and encouraged anyone interested in

working in the schools to reach out. She said there will be another meeting ,which was just added, for next Wednesday nigh at 8:00 p.m. remotely.

**Executive Session:** Chair Mazzola informed that there would be an Executive Session for contract negotiations.

Mr. Hiltz made a motion for Executive Session at 9:49 p.m. which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Committee Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

**Adjournment:** Ms. Stewart made a motion for adjournment at 11:29 p.m., which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted:

Donna G. Doliner, Clerk  
Norwood School Committee