

Town of Norwood
School Committee Meeting
School Committee Room @ Savage Educational Center
Hybrid
Wednesday, October 25, 2023

A hybrid meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, October 25, 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 (remote); Dr. Joan Giblin (Acting Chair); Ms. Teresa Stewart, 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:
-October 5, 2023 (Executive Session);
-October 11, 2023 (Business Meeting); and
-October 11, 2023 (Executive Session)

This motion was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

Correspondence: Dr. Thomson informed that he would include the correspondence with his *Superintendent's Report*.

Warrants: Chair Mazzola informed that she has signed warrants on behalf of the School Committee. Chair Mazzola then shared the warrant report which totalled \$2,226,160.15.

Public Comment: Acting Chair Giblin 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 Acting 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.

There was no one registered in advance or at the meeting for Public Forum and the Acting Chair declared Public Forum closed at 7:08 p.m.

Appearances: LMPA Staff Request: Ms. Cimeno was here this evening to give an update on staffing. She was happy to let the Committee know that a position in the TASC Program has been filled and she has an interview with a BCBA on Friday. She said that they did lose one paraprofessional at the Middle School.

Ms. Cimeno said she was here this evening to request a .3 increase to an FTE making it a .8 position due to a new student at LMPA.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the increase of .3 FTE paraprofessional at the LMPA, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

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

-MSBA - Good News:

-Increased funding to address escalation of construction costs

-Affinity Groups: (Strategic Plan #5.2 - Teacher Retention Strategy)

-Started this week

-BIPOC

-LGBTQ

-White Ally Group

-FERPA - Federal Educational Right and Privacy Act

-Two parts: First the right to review educational records;

-Second - prohibits educational institutions from disclosing "personally identifiable information in education records".

Discipline without the written consent of the student, or,

if the student is a minor, the student's parents (20 U.S.C.S Sect. 1232g(b).

Schools that fail to comply with FERPA risk losing federal funding.=

-Nov. 7th PD Day - Election Day and Professional Development

-Friday Nov. 10 - Veteran's Day

-Featuring the second session of Trauma Informed Instruction.

Reminder - Friday, November 10th is the observance of Veteran's Day - No School.

-Job Openings:

- Assistant Transportation Director;
- BCBA;
- Special Education Teacher;
- Title 1 Teacher;
- Paraprofessionals;
- Van Drivers;
- Extended Day Staff

Budget: Budget To Date - Quarterly Report: This item was tabled.

Quarterly Budget Transfer Report: This item was tabled.

Budget Sub Committee Update: Ms. Stewart said in the packets this evening there is a variety of information:

- Budget Balancing Committee Meeting of October 18th;
- Budget Sub Committee Meeting of October 19th;
- Finance Commission Meeting of October 19th

Dr. Thomson, Ms. Sheridan and Ms. Stewart went to Budget Balancing on October 18th and the Committee will find in their packets:

- 5 Year Forecast Mr. Mazzucco put together;
- Some assumptions and details Mr. Mazzucco put together;
- Local receipt information Mr. Mazzucco put together; and
- Some information around Free Cash, Forbes and the Stabilization Fund.

Ms. Stewart said this was a short meeting. She said they were basically checking in and deciding how they wanted to move forward.

Ms. Stewart said that Ms. Sheridan will be diving into some of the items on the Cherry Sheet and numbers on the School side. She added that November 6th will be the next BBC Meeting. Ms. Stewart said there is some discussion around Compensated Absences that Ms. Stewart is still trying to figure out and Ms. Sheridan is looking at the numbers on the School side.

Ms. Stewart reminded that for our current fiscal year, in addition to our FY24 Budget (\$54,824,884) we had the Supplemental School Appropriation (\$1,859,643). That Supplemental money is what we went to Town Meeting for as Special Warrant Articles and that is not considered part of our base budget. Ms. Stewart said that we do need to have a discussion around what that money covered and if we still need it.

Ms. Stewart said there are some assumptions around Middle School staffing that she is not sure are accurate. Dr. Fraczek is working with Dr. Thomson and Ms. Cimeno on some analysis and will be coming to the Budget Sub Committee Meeting on November 2nd and then to the full School Committee on November 15th.

Ms. Stewart also informed that there was some questioning around the General Government Budget and a warrant article for \$.1.5 million for the Fire

Department Budget. She said it seems to be rolled into the baseline budget for the Town.

The Members had an opportunity for questions and sharing concerns.

Ms. Stewart updated on the Budget Sub Committee Meeting:

- Talked about the Para situation with Ms. Cimeno;
- Checked in on the Contracted Services situation;
- Enrollment update;
- Talked about some out of district placements - after budget was approved 3 more students had to go out of district;
- Additional costs Ms. Sheridan will report on - Out-of-District placements;
- Planning for Next BBC Meeting - will talk about ESSER and CFCE Grant (finding additional funding)
- HR (Dr. Thomson, Ms. Sheridan and Dr. Taylor will continue to meet with HR Department)

Next meeting will be on November 2nd.

Ms. Stewart then updated that they went to the FinCom Meeting on Oct 19th. FinCom will discuss and hopefully approving our warrant articles on November 2nd. There was some around the request for a Student Services Audit but she felt they did a good job answering the questions.

There was also a lot of questions around the Superintendent Search process, adding that they want to see an itemised list of costs and they want it by Friday.

Old Business: Superintendent Goals Update: Dr. Thomson updated on the following Goals:

A. Student Learning Goals:

1. "Last year we used educator goals to ensure implementation of the CRSP practices. These were also problems of practice used in our instructional rounds work last year. This focus was on implementing specific practices in our classrooms. In evaluating our efforts and progress we have observed effective progress in these practice. In evaluating our state of implementation the administrative team determined we should then work with our teachers to implement whole domains of Culturally Responsive practice. This change to our expectations would raise implementation from instituting a few practices to instituting many practices contained in a domain. In this fall's goal setting period we have updated our educator goals to reflect on the next stage of our progression."
2. "Last year we successfully expanded our instructional rounds from the High School and Prescott to include the Balch, Oldham and CMS. This year we will continue this expansion to include the Willett, Cleveland and Callahan Schools. These have already been scheduled and we will use the same protocols and training documents as last year."

B. Professional Practice Goals:

1. "I have continued my regular visits to our schools this fall. I have mainly been looking for climate indicators and I have had to focus on schools that are seeing student behavior issues. Now that our goals are revised I will eventually shift to also assessing and sharing with principals what I am seeing in the CRSP domains."
2. "As I previously updated the committee at the 9-27-23 meeting in my update in June we conducted a communication survey and we have implemented the takeaways from that date. Specifically we have standardized communication methods by school and are sending district wide flyers on Tuesdays. We will be offering a short video to help parents customize *Parent Square* to their communications preferences."

C. District Improvement Goals:

1. "I continue to be involved with the Middle School Building Project. I also work closely with Paul Riccardi to ensure I am up to date with the building progress. Currently, we are laying the foundation and looking forward to the steel being erected in November. The project is on budget and we are hopeful that we will receive increased funding from the MSBA to address the sharp increase in building costs seen post-Covid."
2. "The Strategic Plan was updated with the last part Objective One being approved on October 11, 2023. We will continue to track our progress and report out at regular intervals. As you know the plan is expected to expire in May, 2024. The question the committee should consider is whether the district should engage in a full process, pause or wait for the next Superintendent."

Dr. Thomson updated that the goals work is on track and on schedule.

Ms. Stewart thanked Dr. Thomson for the outline. Ms. Stewart said Dr. Thomson linked to the Mid-Cycle with evidence. She asked if that was updated because there had been some changes and she didn't think it was ever updated. Dr. Thomson said it was not updated. Ms. Stewart said that somehow, we need to go back in the minutes and update it (Mid-Cycle check in document - March 8th) so when we update Dr. Thomson in a few months it reflects the Committee's discussion.

Ms. Stewart then reminding that there were some items in there that the Committee agreed should be reported to the School Committee that have not been reported yet. (Due in the summer/early fall). She said we should get caught up on those and get them on the Long Term Agenda.

Regarding the Strategic Planning update, Ms. Stewart said that we are already off target with Objective 1 and 2. She reminded that we need to figure out when the next Strategic Plan update will be

Ms. Stewart then reminded that we need to start the evaluation process in January so when we talk about the Long Term Agenda we need to get this back on the agenda for December 6th or 20th to firm things up.

Norfolk County Youth Substance Use and Mental Health Task Force: Chair Mazzola updated that neither she nor Ms. Stewart were able to attend last week's meeting. There are some materials the Chair has received that she will share with the Committee.

Long-Term Agenda: Ms. Stewart shared her concern around things that have been getting bumped from the Agenda since the summer. She worries that there is only one meeting in November (there is already so much on the agenda for November 15th) and there isn't enough time to get it all in due to all the other things the Committee has going on. The items regarding the Long-Term Agenda were outlined on the To-Do List from the October 25th School Committee Meeting.

Approval of Superintendent Job Description: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn and Mr. Hiltz updated reading the Superintendent Job Description. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said they sent the description over to Attorney Murray and received some edits from her on the job description. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn reviewed the edits. The Members received a "red-marked" version of the job description with Attorney Murray's edits. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn and Mr. Hiltz showed Attorney Murray's updated version to Mr. Jim Hardy of MASC. He didn't feel like the link of the job description is going to make a huge difference. She said people understand what is implied by the statute around this role. She said that in the interest of time, since they want to get the job posted and they are coming up on the Thanksgiving holiday, they would be all right going with the job description version Attorney Murray sent.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to update the Superintendent of Schools Job Description with all of the recommendations from our Attorney, Melissa Murray. This motion was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Approval of Timeline for Superintendent Search: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn and Mr. Hiltz updated on the timeline. There are two versions of the timeline that Ms. Sibbing-Dunn reviewed. (Version A or Version B). Ms. Sibbing-Dunn shared that the goal is to be able to post the job description by the end of this week. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said they would also put out the invitation for staff and parents who would like to be on the Search Committee. She said they would bring their recommendations to Committee on November 15th. Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said they would like to put the advertising materials out on the MASC network on October 27th.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn reviewed the timeline for *Version A* vs. *Version B*. *Version A* would have an announcement on February 7th and *Version B* would have an announcement on February 14th.

Ms. Stewart asked why there are no community forum/focus groups on this timeline.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said that they asked Mr. Hardy this question and he said he preferred a community survey over a community forum as community forums tend to bring out a lot of personal agendas. But she said we could add a forum if we wanted. A public forum is on Mr. Hardy's radar for either the week of November 6th or 13th and she will work with him on that.

Ms. Stewart also asked why site visits were not scheduled for finalists. Again, Mr. Hardy did not recommend this part of the process as it is not an authentic experience, but added it is more of a show. He said there are more authentic ways around this.

Ms. Stewart said she thinks it's a mistake not to do site visits.

Dr. Giblin asked Dr. Taylor and Dr. Munoz if they have been involved in searches with site visits.

Dr. Taylor has been involved and does feel it is a "dog and pony show" that lasts about 90 minutes. It is usually a round table conversation with people who are in support of that person.

Dr. Munoz said he hasn't been involved in searches yet, but he agrees with Dr. Taylor that they will be putting their best out there unless they are leaving a situation with a huge conflict.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said the goal (and recommendation from Mr. Hardy) is to aim for three candidates and interview on three different days, see some of the schools, meet some of the staff and have an evening meeting where the public can meet the candidate.

Ms. Stewart said that in her past experience, we should all be there, ask the same questions on the same night so that the public can see all the interviews back to back. There was much discussion around this topic.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said that we can do separate visit days but have one day of interviews if the Committee would rather.

Acting Chair Giblin made a motion to approve the timeline in the blue with the addition of a public forum facilitated by the consultant and reserve the decision around interview all on one night vs. Interviews over three nights until conversations between Search Chairs and NCM can happen and bring it back to the Committee at a later date, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart for discussion.

Ms. Stewart just wanted to add that she believes we should do site visits.

Regarding the motion on the table, the Members were polled and voted in favor 4-1 (Mr. Hiltz voted against).

At this point in the meeting the Acting Chair asked for a two-minute recess. The Committee unanimously agreed.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn informed that they need approval for invitation language to so it can go out this Friday for the staff and community to apply to participate on the Search Committee. The make-up of the Committee is as follows:

Two School Committee Members

Two Town of Norwood Representatives:

- One from Finance Commission and
- Director of Facilities

Five NPS staff representing administration, elementary, middle and high schools

- Four parents/guardians: representing SEPAC; Pre-K through Grade 4; Grades 5-8; and Grades 9-12

As was discussed at the last meeting.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said this invitation will go out through parent square and then we will request that administrative office push it out to an all-staff email.

Jody Smith said she will send it out to her members.

The Community Survey is a pdf created by MASC and will be in a format that will get more complete answers. We will send out through the same avenue and also put out on social media. MASC will create a summary for us.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said they are looking for approval for the invitation, the community survey and the brochure that was similar to the last search brochure.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said Priscilla and Dr. Taylor have been very helpful with this.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve Invitation for Involvement in the Search Committee, Community Survey and the brochure for the position with the edits that they will make based on this evening's discussion, which was seconded by Acting Chair Giblin. The Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

Policy: Policy Sub Committee Update:

Staff Handbook: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn informed that we need to vote to approve this staff handbook and to ask the principals to pinpoint a few people who would be willing to give us feedback in May so we can take the feedback to review.

Dr. Taylor said this version of the handbook puts us in compliance with DESE. If we can get feedback from staff, we can add those items specific to Norwood in the book.

Dr. Taylor informed that the Superintendent and Town HR has reviewed it.

Ms. Stewart reminded this came from our policy audit and as it evolves, we may want to run it by our attorney.

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

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said she and Chair Mazzola have worked on a spreadsheet for keeping track of the MASC policy updates and it is helping them to stream-line the process.

Policy JLCA Update: RE: Physical Exams for students: Asked Mrs. Driscoll to review and take out the language that does not apply. We do have a certain amount of vouchers for physicals but don't actually provide physicals.

Mrs. Driscoll and Jon Longley should be at November 15 meeting.

Policy JICA: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn updated around the dress code - MASC has recommended expanding the language but the principals would like to keep it the same at the moment until a current court case has a finding.

Report on Section D: (table)

Policies BDF and BDFA: (table)

Policy Template for School Capital /PTO Projects: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said they have created a template for School Capital donations and PTO Projects to use when getting donations. This template will guide the PTO's around working with the Facilities and Business Departments. There was a lot of discussion around this document being shared with other groups, including the boosters clubs.

Guidelines Document: Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said we are using this guideline for now but it reads very broadly and they will go back and do more work clarifying on this item.

There was much discussion around moving this process forward in a way that everyone understands and is on board with.

Chair Mazzola informed that this was supposed to be a companion document to go with the template.

Acting Chair Giblin made a motion to approve both of these documents, and amend them to apply to all capital donations with the intent that these are not used

as barriers but as facilitators and guides for our administrators to work with the community, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn.

Ms. Stewart made an amendment to the motion, adding that:

- For PTO's this process should begin with the Building Principals;
- For Athletic Boosters, the process should begin with the Athletic Director;
- For Fine Arts Booster, the process should begin with the Fine Arts Director.

Acting Chair Giblin accepted that amendment. The Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

New Business: DESE Comprehensive Review: Dr. Thomson reminded that the visiting teams were here in the middle of February. We did receive a draft report in June and we were instructed to review the draft and make comment and corrections (the end of June). We did receive this report in August and we started looking at it at our administrative retreat the end of August and again several times in the fall and produced this report. Dr. Thomson said there is nothing in the report the Administrative Team was surprised about. Many of the recommendations are in the strategic plan. They have changed the process twice since our last review so we really can't go back to compare the two.

What is a DESE Review?

- Review is focused on the Six Standards of District Effectiveness.
- Supports Continuous District Improvement Efforts.

Strengths Identified in Report:

- Curriculum Review Cycle - Elementary English, Math and Science meet CURATE or Ed Reports Standards
- Expanded Curriculum Coaching;
- Focus areas - Self Identified areas for growth (Strategic Plan);
- Expansion of accelerated math at middle level;
- Expansion of AP courses;
- Classroom Organization and Productivity;
- Positive climate in schools;
- Staff strength - growth areas were pre-identified in instructional rounds;
- District commitment on HQ Tier 1 instruction;
- Fully integrating CRSP teaching practices within classrooms;
- Launch a new SEL Program (FY24);
- Core instructional delivery strategies to meet ALL students needs;
- Increase inclusionary practices with a rigorous curriculum;
- Purposefully planned small group instruction;
- Financial Management - Improvement in reporting and internal controls;

-Pockets of strong student engagement - mixed results

Areas for improvement:

- Improve collaboration between town and school (Finance and HR);
- Increase long-term financial planning with town;
- More references to the Strategic Plans and Budget documentation;
- Increasing the amount of rigor in Tier 1 to continually reduce the number of students requiring an IEP
- Continue to develop processes for rigorous, differentiated instruction with Tier 1;
- Increase student perspectives; most instruction is teacher-driven vs. student-driven (more student talk vs. Teacher talk);
- Improve higher-order thinking skill sets (NHS);
- Increase student discourse in the early grades.

Ms. Stewart said even though we already had a lot of this on our radar, coming from someone else is very powerful. Ms. Stewart said she knows it is going on the website, but she thinks that when the Committee goes to the Finance Commission in December we should spend a couple of minutes and share this with them as well.

Consent Agenda: Acceptance of (2) Two Donations:

- Bay State Textiles - donation - \$995.50
- 20 containers of vintage tinker toys from FM Global

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

School Committee Addenda: Chair Mazzola had none.

Ms. Stewart said tinker toys are awesome and she'd love to see pics of the kids with them.

- Backstage boosters and Fantasy Footsteps - there is one more show on 10/28, adding that it is a great event;
- Masons Orient Lodge - TONY Awards - currently accepting nominations from the community until 10/31;
- School Heath Council on November 14th - 3:30 at NHS library
- MASC/MASS Conference - Ms. Stewart reminded that Dr. Thomson had previously informed that we have been chosen to present. Ms. Stewart informed that earlier today Dr. Taylor and she met to go over the presentation that we will be giving, adding that it is on *Embedding Equity Work and Partnership with the District Community*. They will be co-presenting with Mass InSight and Members from the Mansfield Public Schools and School Committee. The presentation will be on November 9th at 9:20 and it will be an hour presentatio

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn wanted to encourage the community to give each other grace (especially with the on-line forums) with all that is going on in the world at this time. She reminded that our children are listening and absorb everything they hear and see, adding that so many of our families are trying so hard to navigate these times. She reminded that social media can help connect us to each other and to collaborate and share resources, but sometimes misinformation and negativity can take hold when legitimate concerns are being presented. She reminded that there are so many good things going on in the schools.

Mr. Hiltz had none.

Dr. Thomson forgot to mention that when you read through the DESE report, it is easy to see the dedication of the staff coming through.

Dr. Thomson then shared that he just got word that the Norwood Field Hockey Team defeated Medway 5-1 and has gone undefeated in the TVL League. Junior Shay Larkey, has broken the school scoring record.

Dr. Giblin congratulated the field hockey team and then informed that there is an Executive Session this evening.

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

Mr. Hiltz made a motion for Executive Session at 9:36 p.m. which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn . The Committee Members were polled and voted in favor 5-0.

Adjournment: Ms. Stewart made a motion for adjournment at 10:39 p.m., which was seconded by Mr. Hilt . The Members were posted and voted unanimously in favor 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted:

Donna G. Doliner, Clerk (Remote)
Norwood School Committee