

**Town of Norwood
School Committee Meeting
School Committee Room @ Savage Educational Center
Pivoted to Remote
Wednesday, December 20, 2023**

A remote meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, December 20, 2023. The meeting was called to order at 7:06 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: Dr. Joan Giblin, Interim Chair; Ms. Teresa Stewart and Mr. David Hiltz

Committee Members Excused: Ms. Anne Marie Mazzola, Chair (traveling for work); and Ms. Kate Sibbing-Dunn (sick)

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; Mr. Matt Wells, Interim, Director of Finance and Operations

The start of the meeting was delayed a few minutes due to NCM having sound difficulties. The Committee logged out of the meeting and logged back into the meeting. The sound issues were resolved and the meeting began.

The Interim Chair said that this meeting was scheduled to be hybrid but needed to pivot to remote. There was a note put on the door at the Savage Education Center informing that the meeting had switched to remote.

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

- December 6, 2023 (Business Minutes); and
- December 6, 2023 (Executive Session Minutes)

Mr. Hiltz seconded the motion. The Members voted in favor 2-0-1 (Dr. Giblin abstained).

Correspondence: None.

Warrants: Interim Chair Giblin informed that the warrant report would be postponed until Chair Mazzola was back.

Public Comment: Interim 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 remote meeting this evening due to a lot of illness, and a note has been posted to the

door at the Savage Educational Center to let the public know. The public can access the hybrid 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 Interim Chair reminded that there are now two ways the public can participate in the public comment portion of the meeting hybrid meetings. (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 for Public Forum and the Interim Chair declared Public Forum closed at 7:13 p.m.

Appearances: HS France Overnight Field Trip Request: Mr. Buhler came back before the Committee to seek approval for the French exchange trip. Mr. Buhler said there is now two options for dates:

- The week before February vacation; or
- The week after April break

Mr. Buhler submitted to the Committee a poll he took amongst the parents, adding that it looks like only 10% were opting for the February time and the majority, about 60%, were going for the April time. The rest were undecided.

Ms. Stewart thanked Mr. Buhler for doing this extra work. She reminded that at the last meeting we asked him to look at alternative dates because their initial proposal was the end of April and into May, which is during the 4th term and just before AP exam time. Ms. Stewart said that usually the Committee does not approve trips for that time. Ms. Stewart said she still has the same concerns she expressed at the last meeting so she is more comfortable with the February date.

Dr. Thomson said he is a little concerned with the February date and weather concerns at that time of year.

Mr. Hiltz said with trips like this, there is never a perfect time.

Dr. Thomson said Dr. Galligan had just messaged him to let him know that the February dates would overlap with any post-season play.

After some discussion, Mr. Hiltz made a motion to approve the original April dates, which was seconded by Interim Chair Giblin for discussion. The Members were polled and voted in favor 2-1 (Mr. Hiltz and Interim Chair Giblin voted in favor). Ms. Stewart stated for the record that she is not opposed to the trip, just the timing of the trip.

New IEP Process: Ms. Lori Cimeno said that in the Fall of 2024, districts are required to implement the new IEP Form that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has created. It has been over 20 years since there has been a document that fully reflects the regulations and requirements of the IEP process. She informed that we have been in professional development with DESE as well as with our Department and working with SEPAC in order to create a PD for parents in the spring regarding the new document. This is an on-going process and we have received a grant to help support the efforts. At some point we will see a financial implication of the new document given the complexities of the document. There will be more to come on the IEP project. Ms. Cimeno said we are required to have it in motion in the Fall of 2024, but believes it will take two years to get everyone rolled over to the new document.

Dr. Giblin suggested posting the slides that Ms. Cimeno sent to the Committee on-line for the public to access.

Ms. Cimeno and Dr. Thomson will also get the information out to the families through *Parent Square* after the holidays.

Special Education Update: Ms. Cimeno updated that they recently presented to FinCom. She went over some of the data points with them of the current status of special education. She shared that our current October numbers for special education are 933 students. She said there are currently:

- 205 students in specialized programs district-wide;
- 150 students who are duly identified as special education and ELL;
- 33 students enrolled in the NPS as of July 1st with IEP's (last year in total we had 47);
- 19 students moved in over the last 2 1/2 year who require out-of-district placements (very unpredictable situation for us that has had a significant impact over-all on our budgeting);
- 73 students out-of-district and there are 6 in the process (some are extended evaluations and not permanent placements);
- (3) Three Chapter 222 placements (falls under Disciplinary Laws).

She said she shared the high-level challenges the Department is facing.

Student behavior continues to be a significant challenge for the Department and for the district as a whole. She informed that we are seeing many referrals to our Therapeutic Program. Our special education evaluations continue to grow tremendously. When Ms. Cimeno wrote this memo to the Committee there were 166 referrals (Nov. 30th) and there are currently now over 200 at this time. Ms. Cimeno said they continue to do assessments to see what high-level needs will need to be addressed in the future. She is also closely monitoring contracted services for the Willett and will be coming back with an update.

Student Services Transportation: Ms. Cimeno highlighted some of the pieces of the MA DESE Laws and Regulations - CR 28.05 (a-c). She reviewed the current transportation needs and shared the rationale behind the increase.

LMPA/Willett:

- 22 students eligible to access specialized transportation;
- 26 students accessing transportation;
- 23 students eligible to access specialized transportation at the Willett;
- 19 students accessing transportation;

Elementary:

- 72 students in specialized programs accessing transportation due to it not being their home school;
- 23 students in specialized programs do not access transportation as they are at their home school;
- 5 students in inclusion access transportation due to their disability ;
- 228 students in inclusion do not access transportation

CMS:

- 18 students in specialized programs accessing transportation due to their disability;
- 19 students in specialized programs do not access transportation;
- 2 students in inclusion access transportation due to their disability;
- 155 student in inclusion do not access transportation

High School:

- 16 students in specialized programs who do access transportation due to their disability;
- 46 students in specialized programs do not access transportation;
- 7 students in inclusion access transportation due to their disability;
- 144 students in inclusion do not access transportation

Out-of-District Transportation:

- 100% of Out-of-District students qualify for transportation;
- 73 student eligible;
- 69 currently accessing

Over past two years, 18 students have moved into district with out-of-district IEP's. They all qualify for transportation.

Major Influencers:

- Specialized program locations;
- Move-in with IEP related transportation

Ms. Stewart thanked Ms. Cimeno for this information.

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

following:

-TEC Update - TEC will be bring forth a request to modify the TEC Capital Reserve Fund:

- This modification will increase TEC's ability to plan for long-term needs;
- The BOD unanimously approved the request at its December BOD meeting.

TEC received a clean audit report from Powers and Sullivan.

-National Honor Society Induction - Dr. Thomson had the honor on Monday to attend the National Honor Society Induction where 82 new inductees were recongnized. He is proud to confirm that not only do these inductees represent academic scholarship but they also possess strong character, leadership and service.

-Topping Off Ceremony - Dr. Thomson shared pictures of the white beam that was signed by the students at CMS as well as other dignitaries in the crowd. Today's ceremony represents the ceremonial finishing of the steel superstructure of the building. As Dr. Thomson has mentioned before, the project is ahead of schedule and we are currently under budget.

-Job Openings -

- Daily Substitutes (College Students);
- Assistant Transportation Director;
- Confidential Secretary to the SC;
- Special Education Teacher;
- Title 1 Teacher;
- Paraprofessionals;
- Van Drivers;
- Extended Day Staff

-Importation Collaborations with Mustang Pizza - Dr. Thomson announced a collaboration with Mustang Pizza:

- Pizza in the shape of a dog bone;
- Pepperoni with a drizzle of honey an a pinch of sea salt;
- But you can choose your own toppings;
- 10% of proceeds will go to NPSI
- Daddies Dairy and Mustang Pizza collaborations are on-going

Budget: Budget Sub Committee Meeting: Ms. Stewart updated that in the packets, the Members have the materials that were shared with the Finance Commission on December 14th. The Members also received in the packets the materials, the agenda and the draft minutes from the sub committee meeting on December 15th.

Those in attendance at the Finance Commission Meeting were Ms. Stewart, Dr. Thomson, Ms. Cimeno, Mr. Wells, Ms. Sheridan (came back to join the meeting), Dr. Taylor, Chair Mazzola, Ms. Bourgeois were all there either in person or remote.

Ms. Sheridan gave the Quarter 1 Report to the Finance Commission. Ms. Cimeno and Ms. Bourgeois went over their memos. Ms. Cimeno share her information this evening and Ms. Bourgeois will be coming to talk to us on January 10th about the ELL information. Ms. Stewart said overall the meeting went very well. At the end there were some questions and concerns raised by some of the members of the Finance Commission around the staffing of the new Middle School. Ms. Stewart reminded that on November 15th, Dr. Fraczek came and presented staffing options to us. At the time the School Committee had voted to approve the more robust staffing of 17.85 FTE's. We had identified that this would probably be a topic of concern and something that we would probably need to bring to Budget Balancing Committee. Ms. Stewart said we will need to do that. On January 4th the sub committee meets and Dr. Fraczek will join us once again and we will work a little bit more on this.

Ms. Stewart said that all the information that was shared by Ms. Cimeno was reviewed at that meeting and a lot of information coming up on our agenda this evening was also reviewed at that meeting. Mr. Wells will share the FY25 Revised Budget Calendar; there are some grants that need approval this evening; and then Dr. Thomson will talk about transportation staffing. Ms. Stewart informed that we talked a little about the Supplemental Budget for FY24, adding that Norwood is slotted to receive \$348,000, but it is yet not know when we will get that money or via what mechanism. She said we continue to prepare for Budget Balancing, but at this point there is no meeting scheduled. We are hoping for a meeting in January.

Ms. Stewart said Dr. Thomson will come back to the School Committee on January 10th with an analysis and update on what's going on with Human Resources (part of Objective 1). Dr. Thomson will continue to work with the Administrative Team reviewing the ESSER funded positions (as a reminder ESSER funding will end in September so we need to figure out what we are doing with those 12 FTE's). He is also working with the Administration Team to assess those currently unfunded positions and to see if they can be reallocated or utilized elsewhere.

Ms. Stewart said, lastly, she continues to work with Ms. Cimeno on a regular basis to look at different topics around Student Services and determine what needs to come back to the School Committee.

The next Budget Sub Committee Meeting will be on January 4th.

FY25 Budget Calendar Update: Mr. Wells updated on some changes to the timeline:

- The Budget Workshop originally scheduled for December 6th has been rescheduled for January 22nd.
- The next items was regarding an Open House we were going to schedule for December 5th for Budget stakeholders to come and have conversations with the Business Office about their budgets. Mr. Wells

said he utilizes a slightly different process. He said he likes to keep his schedule wide open for a longer period of time. He said his schedule has been open since December 7th and will stay open until December 11th so the principals can find time in their schedule to meet. Mr. Wells said he will go meet them at their schools to talk what their concerns are around budgets. He said he has already had a couple of meetings and has one more scheduled at this point. He asked the Committee for a vote to approve the revised timeline.

Ms. Stewart updated that the Sub Committee will be going to the Finance Commission on March 7th for a discussion and then the Finance Commission will come here on March 27th. This is our Budget Hearing which will happen first then we will roll into a joint meeting with the Finance Commission, which we have never done before. At that point, hopefully we approve and then they approve. Sarah Sullivan, the new liaison to the School Committee has confirmed those two dates.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the updated Budget Calendar, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

Grant Approvals: Mr. Wells informed of two new grants that need to be approved from DESE:

- \$39,235 IEP Federal Grant (will help with rolling out the new IEP process);
- \$62,487 Mental Health Grant (supplements the safety care trainers and mentoring program that was approved through Town Warrant Article)

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the FC274 IEP Grant for \$39,235 and the FC332 SEL Mental Health Grant for \$62,487, which was seconded by Interim Chair Giblin. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

Old Business: Long Term Agenda Review: Ms. Stewart said hopefully tonight we will fine-tune Dr. Thomson's goal time-line.

- January 10th meeting:
 - Ms. Bourgeois give an update;
 - HR update memo from Dr. Thomson;
 - Elementary Study
- Quarter 2 Report -
 - Ms. Stewart asked Mr. Wells if January 24th is feasible. Mr. Wells said he thinks that will work but will check with Dr. Thomson,

Mr. Hiltz asked that we hold the February 14th meeting to a light agenda due to the Superintendent vote.

Superintendent Search Update: Mr. Hiltz updated that the Committee met on December 13th (all 15 members of the Committee in attendance) with Jim Hardy of MASC. He said there were 24 completed applications that they went through. They were able to whittle that number down to 9 applications. They will be inviting those

9 applicants in for interviews. Mr. Hardy will be producing the Executive Session Minutes from that meeting. The dates set for interviews are:

- Monday, January 8th;
- Thursday, January 11th;
- Tuesday, January 16th; and
- Wednesday, January 17th (date previously held as a snow date)

Mr. Hiltz shared with the Committee the list of what the School Committee is looking for.

Mr. Hiltz said that since we have 9 applicants to interview, they will be filling the dates of January 8th, January 11th and January 16th and will be actually scheduling into January 17th. He said they will be looking for another date to hold as a snow/weather day.

Mr. Hiltz said that from the 9 candidates, they will be moving 3 forward to the School Committee. Mr. Hiltz said they are working on scheduling those dates.

Ms. Stewart asked Mr. Hiltz to ask Mr. Hardy for the contract, as she doesn't think it's been signed yet. Mr. Hiltz said he was reminded and he will remind him again. Ms. Stewart asked him to have the contract sent to Mr. Wells but copy her on the email so that she can be sure we pay it from the correct line item.

Middle School Building Committee Quarterly Update: Mr. Hiltz updated that they met on Monday, December 11th for the monthly MSBC meeting. Mr. Hiltz said Dr. Thomson stole his thunder but the Topping Off Ceremony was held earlier today. They are beginning to wrap the building; they are still doing some rough-ins; and they will begin pouring the concrete for the floors. Mr. Hiltz reiterated what Dr. Thomson said that things are ahead of schedule and under budget. The meeting itself was relatively short. The State has gone back and due to the high costs of inflation, we will be getting some allocated money, but we don't have that figure yet. Monday, January 8th at 4:30 will be the next meeting. The meeting dates for January - June will be posted soon.

NCSO Youth Substance Use and Mental Health Update: None.

Strategic Plan Update: Dr. Taylor updated on a few of the Strategic Objectives. She said that Objective 5.1 and 5.2 have been paused due to competing needs in the district at this time. She said she will be reporting on Objective 1, 2 and 3 this evening.

Objective 1: This is primarily focused on aligning school and general government resources (financial systems, facilities and Human Resources), and how do we leverage both of those funding pipelines to best support our schools.

One of the things that has been rolled out is paperless retirement forms for the retirement process. The Facilities budget was presented on November 15th and there has been a lot of improvement and alignment within the reporting structures. Dr. Taylor said that the Committee still needs to review the Joint Facilities MOU.

Objective 2: We are primarily focused at this time on the Elementary Study Work Group. That group met for several months over the summer and fall. We have reached the point where we have selected a vendor and the district and the town are in the middle of revising the contract.

Objective 3: We are focused specifically on innovative instruction and personalised learning. We are focused on how do we leverage our collaborative structure? We have focused last year and this year on small group instruction and using data to be able to determine appropriate grouping for students. We have also been focusing on social/ emotional learning. We have rolled out *Character Strong* in grades 1-8. The High School continues to use *Highlander* and focus on culturally responsive work. The Visual Arts program is currently going through a curriculum refresh in addition to the Wellness Curriculum. Regarding secondary school professional development, they are focused on higher order thinking and there has been several instances of instructional rounds where district administrators have had the opportunity to collaborate with High School staff in doing classroom observations.

Dr. Taylor said we still need to continue to do some refinement around data driven decision making. And we will continue on with our Professional Development plan for spring of 2024.

Dr. Taylor informed that we have received the warrant for a student services audit. That group met last week and we have begun to examine models of students services request for proposals and we have done some analysis around what are the preferred component that we want to see in our audit. We need to create a timeline of what the rollout of the spring RFP will look like.

Regarding Objective 5.4, Dr. Taylor said we have done a great deal of work. She thanked Dr. Galligan and the High School team and the counselors at the Middle School and Elementary School levels. There has been a number of groups who have worked together to revise our School Emergency Operations Plan. There was a revision to the bullying procedures and policy; and there was a supplemental manual for how to provide counseling support and mental health services during a crisis.

Dr. Taylor informed that the Administrative Team took a field trip to our evacuation site and got an opportunity to think about and begin to strategise how and where we are placing students. We are going to spend the spring doing some fine-tuning so in the event of an emergency we are ready to go.

There was some questions and discussion around looking into another data collection reporting system that is a more effective and efficient tool, unless the Administration Team thinks this is fine. Ms. Stewart said her thoughts were that this is very time heavy for Dr. Taylor. She is also wondering what is going on with the rest of the Strategic Plan.

Elementary Study Update: Mr. Hiltz reminded that we went the route of an RFP with the help of Ms. Sheridan. We voted to approve the RFP with a company that has experience in this kind of process. We asked for input from stakeholders (transportation, special ed, building principals, etc.). Mr. Hiltz informed that the committee has not formerly met since then. Mr. Hiltz said we are still in the process of signing the contract. Mr. Hiltz said that we are not totally off the timeline. Mr. Hiltz said we are expecting that we will be getting this in the spring (April or May). Once we get the information, we can begin to make some decisions. Mr. Hiltz said when the contract is signed and done we will share with the Committee.

Dr. Thomson said we are working with the Town Purchasing Agency to get that contract exercised so we can have the conversation around the timeline and when they will start.

Ms. Stewart shared her frustration that the Committee approved the contract five weeks ago and was told that the contract was going to be taken care of before the Thanksgiving break. She said if things are changing she needs to know as Chair Mazzola and Ms. Stewart will be going into many budget meetings.

Interim Chair Giblin asked when the next BBC and FinCom meeting are scheduled.

Ms. Stewart said she does not have that at this point as certain members of BBC did not want to meet in December but the School Committee and Finance Commission is pushing for a meeting in early January. She is trying to get prepared for those discussions.

Interim Chair Giblin asked Ms. Stewart if she could send and email a few days before the next BBC or FinCom Meeting requesting any updates, changes or alterations to what has currently been on the objectives. Hopefully this will help Ms. Stewart stay prepared and allows for some flexibility.

Policy: Postponed.

New Business: Superintendent Evaluation Process: Ms. Stewart had talked to Chair Mazzola and she offered to guide this part of the meeting since the Chair could not attend this evening. In the packet the Members have a short document Ms. Stewart pulled together with the top part being what we previously agreed on for a timeline and the second part is what Ms. Stewart suggests the Committee finalize and vote on this evening.

After some discussion, Ms. Stewart made a motion that:

- Dr. Giblin and Mr. Hiltz will be the Superintendent Evaluation Team;
- Dr. Thomson's self-evaluation will be due on January 31;
- The School Committee's Individual Evaluations will be due on February 26;
- The Composite Document will be due on March 6.

This motion was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

Student Services Review: This item was tabled until the next meeting.

Wellness Curriculum: Dr. Munoz updated that we are in the process of a curriculum adoption. He updated that Mr. Ryan Quigley has done a wonderful job of researching curriculum in the past 6 months. Mr. Quigley has taken the lead on researching on what DESE standards are going to be for grades K-12, with an SEL component to it. Dr. Munoz said we are scheduled to meet with the whole Health and Wellness Department in January and Mr. Quigley will share some options with his colleagues.

Dr. Munoz said there has not been a lot of progress with the Visual Arts pilot and he will be able to give an update in late January / early February.

Transportation Staffing Request: Dr. Thomson said there is an immediate request to bring the Clerk position in the Transportation Office to a full time position. If the person needs benefits, Dr. Thomson has spoken with Mr. Wells and we can cover the position and the benefits out of the transportation revolving account.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the increase for the Transportation Clerk to be increased to a 1.0 FTE for the remainder of the year, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

Ms. Stewart updated that we do have an Interim Assistant Transportation Director now, but a lot of networking had to happen to get that person in the role. The job description and the pay salary for the Assistant Director is too low so Ms. Sheridan had started a market analysis that Mr. Wells will finish. The Budget Sub Committee will work with them on this in January and bring it back to the Committee. Dr. Giblin said that we pay the Town for HR functions and then asked if the Town's HR Department could help us with this.

Dr. Thomson said we can look into this.

Consent Agenda: Acceptance of (4) Four Donations:

- Richard Foster - STEM Scholarship - \$1,000 per year for two years - Class of 2024 and Class of 2025 (Two scholarships each of the two years: \$500 for Tech and Engineering and \$500 for Math);

Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the Scholarship and the donation, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

-Andrea (Dixon) Lavery Memorial Scholarship - \$2,000 per year - Class of 2024;

This is a perpetual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000.00 from Chris and Sheila Dixon.

Mr. Hiltz made a motion to approve this scholarship and donation, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart.

Mr. Hiltz said he knew Andrea and the Dixon Family and obviously it was a terrible loss. Andrea is very much missed and this is a wonderful way to honor her.

The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

-WCC Thrift Shop - \$500 Gift Card - LEAD Program;

Ms. Stewart made a motion to accept this donation, which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

-Simply Sweets - \$25.00 Gift Card - LEAD Program

Mr. Hiltz made a motion to accept this donation, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

School Committee Addenda: Ms. Stewart wished everyone a happy holiday break and she hopes the time off is restorative and brings everyone joy.

Mr. Hiltz echoed Ms. Stewart's sentiments and said there are two more wake-ups until break. He wished everyone an enjoyable time off.

Interim Chair Giblin said memorial scholarships are always a hard thing, adding that she's always grateful of the outpouring of support from the Community to the schools. It is a sad event to be accepting memorial scholarships. Interim Chair Giblin thanked the families and the businesses that continue to donate and support all of the different pieces of the schools. She wished everyone a very restful break.

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

Ms. Stewart made a motion for Executive Session at 9:28 p.m. which was seconded by Mr. Hiltz. The Members were polled and voted in favor 3-0.

Adjournment: Mr. Hiltz made a motion for adjournment at 10:20 p.m., which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Members were polled and voted unanimously in favor 3-0.

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

