

**Town of Norwood  
School Committee Meeting  
School Committee Room @ Savage Educational Center  
Hybrid  
Wednesday, February 14, 2024**

A hybrid meeting of the Norwood School Committee was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. (The public is able to 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 and Ms. Kate Sibbing-Dunn

**Committee Member Excused:** Mr. David Hiltz

**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

**Minutes:** Ms. Stewart made a motion to approve the following minutes:  
-February 7, 2024 (Business Meeting); and  
-February 7, 2024 (Executive Session Meeting);  
This motion was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

**Correspondence:** None.

**Warrants:** None.

**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 (pre-register by calling the Superintendent's Office at 781-762-6804 by noon the day of the meeting, or sign in at the meeting; and (2) Call the Superintendent's Office at 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 for Public Forum and the Chair declared Public Forum closed at 7:07 p.m.

**Appearances:** Honor Ensembles / Tri-M MOU: Mr. Jeff Kerr joined the meeting remotely to go over a proposed MOA for the Honors Ensemble. He informed that it would be the same as last year. Last year was extremely successful and the program has grown over the past year from 180 to over 250 students. Mr. Kerr is requesting that a MOU be created for the 23-24 School Year in order to allocate funds for the Tri-M Advisor position at NHS. This role is currently being added to the new stipends but has used the funds from the role of NHS Director of Jazz Combo (\$2,013) in the past.

Mr. Kerr informed that they did not honor the assistants that helped last year and he is hoping to have a Director and an Assistant Director for each ensemble.

Dr. Giblin said she understands what is being talked about this evening, but it's not matching up with the documents the Members have received.

Dr. Giblin made a motion approve this request pending a written addendum to this packet about where each of these will end up being implemented, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Mr. Kerr can bring this back to the next meeting.

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

Black History Month: Dr. Thomson shared some of the activities that went on at all levels of the Norwood Schools during Black History Month. Some of these activities included:

- Collect, learn from the Black History Trading cards featuring inventors, athletes, artists, and leaders;
- Participate in Black History Spirit Days;
- Doing research projects on a Black History "Greatest of All Time" person.

**Budget:** Budget Sub Committee Update: Ms. Stewart updated on the Budget Sub Committee and said there was a Budget Sub Committee Meeting yesterday and most of the information from that meeting will be shared by Mr. Wells tonight. Ms. Stewart then shared the upcoming budget-related meetings:

- Tomorrow there will be a BBC Meeting at 4:30 p.m.
- Next week Dr. Thomson and Mr. Wells will work with the administrators on diving deeper into priorities;
- Upcoming Sub Committee Meetings: February 29th, March 7th and March 14th;
- March 6th School Committee Meeting - there will be a budget update;

- March 7th -the School Committee will meet with the Finance Commission at their meeting;
- March 20th School Committee Meeting - there will e a budget update;
- March 21st - there will be another Sub Committee Meeting to finalize the budget materials that will come to the SC and FinCom on March 27th;
- March 27th - School Committee Budget Hearing - final vote on the budget we are sending to Town Meeting. There will be a joint meeting with FinCom. The full FinCom will meet with the full SC at this meeting. FinCom will need to vote to recommend (or not) the budget. Ideally, the SC would like their approval and to be collaborative, but the SC can send a budget to TM to be debated on the TM floor that is different than what BBC wants or what FinCom endorses.

FY24 Budget to Date Report: Mr. Wells reviewed the FY24 NPS Budget Update through 2/7/24:

-FY24 NPS School Budget	\$54,824,884
-Expended	\$24,246,639
-Encumbrances	\$30,161,196
-Available Balance	\$416,849
-% of Budget Expended	44%
-% of Budget Expended/Encumbered	99%
-Budget Offsets required to balance budget	\$0
-Adjusted Available Balance to date	\$416,849

Mr. Wells reviewed the following:

- Budget Funding Sources/Strategies;
- FY24 NPS Budget Update through 02/07/24 by DESE Function Code;
- FY24 BTM by Major Categories;

Funding Sources:

- Special Education Circuit Breaker Funding:
  - Beginning Balance: \$2,702,054
  - YTD Expend./Encum. \$3,395,409
  - Balance to Date: \$1,322,706
  - Anticipated FY24
    - Carry Over to FY25 \$1,500,000
- FY24 NPS Budget Update Revolving Funds; (7 FTE Employees paid out of Revolving Funds)
- FY24 NPS Grant Update - Mr. Wells shared all the grants and informed that we are currently applying for more grants.

FY25 Budget Version A: Mr. Wells reviewed the Norwood Public Schools FY25 Superintendent Recommended Budget.

-FY25 NPS General Fund Budget:	\$62,326,003
--------------------------------	--------------

Mr. Wells shared the different options:

- 13.6% increase      \$7.7 million    (level services)
- 9.95% increase     \$5,641,474    (Superintendent's Recommendation)
- 6% increase         \$3,401,000
- \$5% increase       \$2,834,000

(This includes FY25 Circuit Breaker funds application of \$5,429,703)

Mr. Wells reviewed:

- General Fund by DESE Function Code;
  - Instructional Services Continue to be largest percentage of Budget - 76.19%
- General Fund Budget - Payroll vs. Expenditures;
  - Salaries Continue to be largest percentage of Budget - 81%
- FY25 General Fund Budget by Major Categories;

Budget Challenges:

- Special Ed. Transportation & OOD Tuition;
  - Special Ed in-house transportation continues to rise 3 years from 185 to 203 students. OOD Special Ed Students continue to rise - 3 years from 68 to 79 to 86 students.
- Norwood Select Student Profiles;
  - First Language Not English;
  - English Learners;
  - Low Income;
  - Students with Disabilities;
  - High Needs

There was some discussion around these profiles. Dr. Thomson said that Norwood is just about at the 60% mark for our students being either one or a combination of low income, EL or Special Education.

Ms. Stewart reminded that it is important to have these numbers because your "high-needs" drives the Chapter 70 increase and your students with disabilities drives the Circuit Breaker.

Dr. Thomson said those numbers have continued to climb since October 1st but we are being funded next year based on October 1st numbers.

FY25 Budget - District NEW Staffing in Budget:	\$629,267 - 7.6 FTE
-Education Interventionists - 5.0 FTE	
-BCBA - 1.0 FTE	
-Adjustment Counselor - 1.0 FTE	
-School Nurse - LMPA - 0.6 FTE	

Dr. Thomson said the plan for the new Middle School was to gradually add some positions. We have not been able to do that and this budget does not allow for that to happen again, for the third year in a row.

Funding the Budget:

Revolving Funds:

-NPS continues to monitor and evaluate how to effectively use our Revolving Funds, as it is drawing close to the limits they can support - Budget Offsets increase \$460,885 - Mr. Wells said we are hitting the peak of the curve, adding that these accounts are becoming depleted. We are using the funds that are there to support the budget every year and the money is not going to last forever. We are spending down the balances that are in these accounts. Mr. Wells said we need to keep an eye on this.

-Circuit Breaker-\$4.5 million is an estimate;

-Medicaid - only one quarter has been reported back to us at this point but it was about the same as the first quarter last year so we are anticipating similar money coming in (around \$300,000)

-Grants - We are seeing the end of Stimulus and Covid Grants; ESSR is also coming to an end; (\$2.73 million is what we have for grants now and he would anticipate about the same for next year).

-Chapter 70 Aid - Historical Comparison - Mr. Wells informed that we have received about \$10.7 million (since FY20) of additional Chapter 70 money from Student Opportunity Act. There was some discussion around the Chapter 70 money which gets added into the Town's revenue stream. Chair Mazzola said that discussions are coming around fiscal responsibility and moving forward.

Dr. Taylor reminded that the money is tied to the Student Opportunities Act, which is a plan that we have to report on annually. She said that because of the split, we are unable to accurately report on what we are doing with that money.

Ms. Stewart reminded that Ms. Sheridan told the Committee that they may be called out for this when the end of the year audit comes back as we were not be able to identify where all of the SOA money went.

Dr. Taylor said we need to submit next year's plan in April of this year and we have some explaining to do.

Ms. Stewart asked Dr. Thomson if he can find the original SOA Plan so we all have the same depth of knowledge of where we started.

-Net School Spending - Mr. Wells informed that we are still in a good place;

-What will we accomplish with this Budget:

- No reductions to current staffing levels;
- Absorption of ESSR 3 positions into appropriation budget;
- Meet the needs of an increasing diverse student population;
- Additional attention to educational learning loss and social emotional needs of students through targeted intervention;
- Continuation of 1:1 Chromebooks;
- Curriculum refresh - Music;
- Professional Development - diversity, equity, inclusion, technology and instructional practice;
- Continue Community Service;
  - Minds Matter Interface Referral Helpline;
  - Metrowest Youth Behavioral Survey
- Continued use of Grants/ Revolving Funds to meet educational objectives and close operational funding gaps

There was much discussion around the Budget presentation.

**Old Business: Long Term Agenda Review:** Chair Mazzola reviewed the March 6th School Committee Meeting agenda items.

Ms. Stewart reviewed the items that were bumped from the Jan. 24th agenda:

- Wellness Curriculum update;
- Visual Arts Curriculum update;
- More details on Objectives 3 and 4 of the Strategic Plan;
- Dr. Fraczek coming in to talk about Project Lead The Way

Ms. Stewart added that we should schedule out on the Student Services Audit as well as the Elementary Task Force. She added that we will need the last quarterly report in the spring and the Budget Transfer Report. Ms. Stewart said in the Budget Meeting yesterday there was some discussion that they would like the Athletic Fee and Waiver Report for Fall and Winter Athletics.

For the Budget Workshop on February 28th, Ms. Stewart said the following information would be helpful:

- Access to whichever document houses the spending plans for the grants;
- Enrollment projection grids for FY24-25;
- Medicaid Reimbursement - some positions are in grant funding which means we can't file for reimbursement. Ms. Stewart would like to see if there is a creative way to move things out of grants to get reimbursement but move other things into grants.

Chair Mazzola reviewed the items on the March 6th agenda with the Committee.

**Policy: Policy Sub Committee Update:** Ms. Sibbing-Dunn said there is nothing to report this evening.

Dr. Thomson said, regarding the School Committee Administrative Assistant position, he will be phone screening some candidates tomorrow afternoon. The Chair said that the hope is to have a new School Committee Administrative Assistant by the end of the month.

**New Business: Strategic Plan Discussion - SIP Alignment:** Ms. Stewart reminded that the 5-Year Strategic Plan will be ending in June. She wanted to discuss this evening whether a new Strategic Plan should be started or a bridge plan should be created. She said that we are doing two-year School Improvement Plans and alternating when they come before the Committee. This year, the Willett, LMPA, Coakley, Cleveland, Prescott and Balch are all ending this spring and are anticipating on bringing a two-year plan to the Committee in May. The Committee should provide guidance if that's the expectation or go back to a one-year cycle with them and wait until a new Strategic Plan is in place.

Dr. Thomson said there will be a new Superintendent who will need to do an entry plan and figure out what his priorities are. He said the Committee could choose 2-3 objectives or strategies to use as a one-year bridge plan so Mr. Luff can become familiar with what we've done and where we are.

Dr. Giblin suggested taking the audits that have been done over the past two years and select some of the "low hanging fruits" to use as the bridge plan.

There was some discussion around the audits and what is already embedded in the Strategic Plan.

Mr. Munoz thought "less is more", saying that mastering something instead of trying to be above-average at a bunch of things is a better way to go.

Ms. Stewart made a motion to modify our policies for one year and to ask the Principals of the Willett, LMPA, Coakley, Cleveland, Prescott and Balch to do one-year plans, which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee voted in favor 4-0.

Dr. Giblin recommended that they codify what they are already planning on doing next year and present it in written form which can be put in a couple of buckets for the Committee to approve as a one-year bridge plan.

Dr. Munoz will reach out to the principals to see when the School Councils are meeting and he will be able to figure out a timeline after that.

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

Daddy's Dairy - Mustang Sally Fundraiser - \$228.28

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

**School Committee Addenda:** Mr. Stewart had none, but she asked everyone to watch the BBC meeting.

Ms. Sibbing-Dunn had none.

Dr. Giblin had none.

The Chair had none.

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

Ms. Stewart made a motion for Executive Session at 9:45 p.m. which was seconded by Ms. Sibbing-Dunn. The Committee Members were polled and voted in favor 4-0.

**Adjournment:** Ms. Sibbing-Dunn made a motion for adjournment at 11:25 p.m., which was seconded by Dr. Giblin. The Members were posted and voted unanimously in favor 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted:

Donna G. Doliner, Clerk  
Norwood School Committee