

*Natick Public Schools  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES  
January 12, 2015*

The School Committee held a joint meeting on Monday, January 12, 2015 at 7:15 p.m. in the School Committee Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Town Hall. Chair Mistrot called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Members Present: Tom Campbell, Dirk Coburn, Paul Laurent, David Margil, Amy Mistrot, Firkins Reed

Members Absent: Anne Blanchard

Others present:	Peter Sanchioni	Superintendent of Schools
	Anna Nolin	Assistant Superintendent
	Liam Hurley	Director of Finance
	Timothy Luff	Director of Student Services
	James Araujo	Teacher Representative
	Sharon Reilly	Recording Secretary for the School Committee

**Approval of Out of State Travel – NHS Speech Team**

Ms. Amanda Parker, Speech Team Group Leader, came before the School Committee requesting permission for the Speech Team to travel to Columbia University, New York to compete in the annual speech invitational from January 23-25, 2015. Mr. Coburn moved to approve this trip. Mr. Laurent seconded. It was unanimously approved.

**Approval of Impact Study Task Force Minutes**

Chair Mistrot requested that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Impact Study Task Force meeting of December 17, 2014. Since the work of the task force has ended, the School Committee as the body who created the task force is empowered to approve the minutes. The minutes were circulated to all members of the task force for their review prior to approving this evening. Mr. Coburn moved to approve these minutes. Mr. Campbell seconded. They were unanimously approved.

**Public Speak**

Chair Mistrot asked if anyone wished to come forward for Public Speak. No one came forward.

**Members Concerns**

Ms. Reed announced that Natick Together for Youth will be meeting tomorrow at 8:30 – 10:00 in the Teachers cafeteria of Natick High School. She encouraged people to attend this great community-wide organization.

Chair Mistrot announced that Dr. Sanchioni will be presenting the FY'16 budget to the Finance Committee on Thursday, January 15, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the School Committee Room, third floor, Town Hall.

Ms. Reed announced that an event will be held in honor of Martin Luther King next Monday, January 19 at 11:00 a.m. at Wilson Middle School. Natick Police Chief James Hicks will be the keynote speaker.

Ms. Anna Nolin reported that she and the Elementary Principals met last week with Natick families to talk about shifts in the Common Core State Standards, upcoming changes to the ROSP (Report of Student Progress) and the PARCC assessment in order to help families better understand how Natick continues to prepare students for college and career readiness. The session was positively received. Ms. Nolin has sent a blog post to NPS subscribers as well as posted the info to her website, which can be found at <http://natickhighwebdesign.com/curriculum/index.html>

At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Coburn moved for approval to take a 5 minute recess while the School Committee waits for the Board of Selectmen to join them for the FY'16 budget presentation. Mr. Margil seconded. It was unanimously approved.

At 7:35 p.m., members of the Board of Selectmen and the town administrators joined the meeting for the Superintendent's FY'16 budget. Present for the Selectmen were: John Connolly, Charles Hughes, Nicholas Mabardy and Chairman Joshua Ostroff. Martha White, Town Administrator and Jeff Towne, Deputy Town Administrator were also present.

### **FY'16 Preliminary Budget Presentation**

Chair Mistrot welcomed the Board of Selectmen to the meeting to hear the Superintendents FY'16 preliminary budget for the Natick Public Schools.

Chairman Ostroff stated that in the context of the school budget, the Board of Selectmen does not yet have a position as they have not yet heard the budget. He indicated that the Selectmen have heard a number of citizens concerns with the tenor that the Board of Selectmen has to do more for the schools. Chair Ostroff, speaking for himself and not for the Board, stated that he is very committed to providing the best possible education for the children in Natick, and he looks forward to working with the School Committee, the Finance Committee and Town Meeting to see how that can be done with the current revenue constraints and budget model we have. If looking at some other way to get more revenue needs to be done, it won't be the first time. He is appreciative of the more deliberative approach that the boards have embarked on.

Dr. Sanchioni, Mr. Hurley and Dr. Nolin presented an overview of the FY'16 Preliminary Budget. Dr. Sanchioni stated that this is a first pass at the budget which will see many changes and permutations between now and Town Meeting in April.

The following budget goals were reviewed:

- Meet all mandated and fixed costs
- Appropriate negotiated COLAs
- Maintain all professional staff positions
- Add additional staffing positions needed to address high academic class sizes.
- Add additional staffing positions needed to provide mandated Special Education services across the District.
- Appropriate calculated increases in energy costs
- Appropriate calculated increases in transportation costs
- Meet all mandated costs associated with Special Education

- Educate the 5,400 students we serve daily to superior levels of achievement through high-quality instruction

The FY'16 Preliminary budget request is in the amount of \$55,362,217, a \$3,867,400 (7.5%) increase over FY'15.

The FY'16 Salary Budget request is in the amount of \$42,818,335, a 7.7% increase over FY'15.

Included in this request are a total of 26.1 staff additions:

16.6 FTE Classroom Teachers

7.5 FTE Pupil Services

2.0 Other

- Major Personnel Increases:
 

• Cost of Steps	\$ 673,265
• Lane Changes	\$ 447,041
• COLA	\$ 530,819
• Staff Additions (26.1)	\$ 1,475,451
• Retirements/Other	<u>\$ (71,074)</u>

The FY'16 Expense Budget request is in the amount of \$12,543,882, an \$811,898 (6.9%) increase over FY'15.

- Major Expense Increases
 

• Administrators' Requests	\$ 143,268
• Technology	\$ 243,955
• Curriculum & On-Line Learning	\$ 230,663
• Transportation	\$ 126,543
• All Other	\$ 67,469

Dr. Nolin and Mr. Hurley discussed in more detail the makeup of the \$811,898 expense budget.

Dr. Sanchioni reviewed an enrollment chart showing how Natick Public Schools enrollment has increased over the years. 601 students have been added in the last six years and enrollment continues to grow. He pointed out that most of the staff increases in this budget are needed to maintain the level of service that we have currently.

Dr. Sanchioni outlined the budget calendar as follows:

- Preliminary Budget Presentation to Fin Com – January 15<sup>th</sup>
- Public Hearing; Capital Paul Comerford; Special Education Tim Luff – February 9<sup>th</sup>
- Technology Dennis Roche – February 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Fin Com – February 26<sup>th</sup>
- Teaching, Learning and Innovation – March 9<sup>th</sup>
- There will be additional meetings of the Fin Com Sub Committee for Education and the Financial Planning Committee that are not yet scheduled.

Dr. Sanchioni looks forward to continuing a great dialogue to develop a final budget.

A discussion continued.

### **School Committee Members Concerns/Questions**

- Is this truly a level service budget particularly in regard to class sizes and case loads at various levels and various disciplines - teachers for various subjects, nurses, guidance? Compare and assess how close to level service it really is.
- So many mandates requiring administrative work and time – is this taking away from teaching time?
- Concern was raised about caseloads for guidance counselors and nurses. Dr. Sanchioni stated that the guidance counselor load at NHS was adjusted this past year and should be able to absorb the increased high-school student enrollment for the next year or two before additional staffing will be needed. However, the nursing to student ratios are below state mandates at several schools. Medically fragile students and student with social and emotional issues can significantly impact a nurse’s ability to service students on any given day. Several schools need additional nursing support to ensure compliance.
- Concern that a level service budget at such a critical time for education – new curriculum, new test (PARCC), new teacher evaluation – makes it exceedingly hard to keep pace and continue to build on the strides NPS has made.
- Question about modulars– last available elementary classroom space was filled in September 14 at Memorial – only option to maintain class sizes below 25 at the elementary level is to add modulars – site to be determined. Middle schools are both overcrowded and have exceeded expected capacity. Kennedy was not approved for a renovation/rebuilt project with the MSBA this year – Dr. Sanchioni has high hopes for next year. Six modulars are already in place at Kennedy that helps to address the immediate overcrowding.

### **Board of Selectmen questions/concerns**

How long have we known that the prediction of enrollment is not working – elementary schools are too small, high school is too small – what are we going to do so we don’t make sure the same thing doesn’t happen when and if Kennedy is planned for a rebuild/renovation?

Dr. Sanchioni stated that enrollment information is an ongoing focus, is presented monthly at School Committee meetings, and the data is included as part of the agenda materials. Relative to the high-school project, despite vigorous negotiations with the MSBA, they mandated the project enrollment based upon their projections and would not accept the higher projections made by Natick. Natick was not in a position to forgo the 53% reimbursement provided by the MSBA. Accepting their mandates was a contingency for their support.

However, relative to future needs, NPS presented a study about middle and elementary capacity in 2012 in which enrollment projections were included as well as options to address Natick’s building needs. It must be noted that even the best enrollment projections have been hard to keep pace with the actual enrollment growth in Natick.

Mr. Hughes asked if NPS has checked with MWRTA to see if they can assist with funds for the 15-passenger van that is being requested in the capital budget? They are very good at getting capital equipment through federal and state grant programs. Mr. Hurley will follow-up.

What about funds for 1:1 sustainability? Dr. Sanchioni explained that current funding needs required to sustain the 1:1 laptop program are built into this operating budget. NPS is grateful for the Technology Stabilization Fund, which has been created and funded by the town. Future funding of the Tech Stabilization Fund will be determined if/when the town feels there are appropriate revenues to support the fund.

The district will be launching a voluntary program to determine the interest level for parents who would like to partner with the schools to purchase computers for their students. NPS may look to possibly use the Tech

Sustainability funds to provide for families who may need financial support if a parent funded model moves forward.

A request was made by the Board of Selectmen to receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

Concern for the more financially constrained taxpayers was raised with hopes that the School Committee can find options to address the needs of the schools without going through an override. Response was that at this time, the School Committee knows little about available resources. They look forward to working with the Finance Committee and the Financial Planning Committee to determine a responsible way to move forward both to service the educational needs and to be a partner with the taxpayers.

What elementary school is impacted most by enrollment? Ben-Hem & Brown

Any thoughts for using East School? Natick Public Schools Achieve Program is currently being housed there. The school has limitations due to ADA requirements for elementary-aged children.

Mr. Hurley provided enrollment numbers for students enrolled in Natick Schools through the McKinney-Vento Act (homeless) and the number of homeless students that are transported to other districts and the associated costs. The district is currently hosting 90 homeless students. Forty three students are returning to their school or origin and the remaining 47 students are being absorbed in the Natick Public Schools.

Chairman Ostroff has looked at the draft document of long term needs assessment and believes it is a good attempt to diagnose the problem, however, it does not address the solutions. He inquired about the timetable for presenting an outlook for the different options and strategies to address this comprehensively. He shared concerns that NPS has yet to provide options for the capacity issues for the elementary schools.

Chair Mistrot stated that the School Committee has been hesitant to come forward with an explicit detailed strategy under the guise of working collaboratively with the town as funding is determined through a collaborative process. This document is a medium to invite discussion about strategic possibilities to address the issues articulated in the draft report. There is a need to connect solutions with the right revenue source.

In an effort to get a clearer picture of the longer-term needs of NPS versus town revenue projections, Chair Ostroff would like to see budget request estimates for the next three years.

Chairman Ostroff reported that the BOS had received a question about defunding or not fully funding the retirement system and wondered if the Superintendent feels it would be difficult to attract teachers to Natick if this were to happen.

Mr. Ostroff will be looking to schedule a Financial Planning Subcommittee meeting in the near future.

The Board of Selectmen left the meeting to continue with their meeting on the 2nd floor.

Further discussion on the budget process was held by the School Committee.

Mr. Margil is concerned that there is a disconnect between the time when the Superintendent goals are set and when the budget is set. Feels there should be a better way to link.

Strategic planning for the entire town needs to be improved. There is a lack of communication.

Mr. Campbell raised the idea that schools are the economic engine of the town, which has led to increased home values and sales. As the driver of value in people's greatest investment, he feels that there needs to be a focus on funding the schools to the level required to provide an appropriate education. Although all town services are affected by the increased real estate turnover, the enrollment increase is exponentially higher and the most costly increase attributable to the real estate boom in Natick.

Mr. Coburn raised that we may be approaching a place where an operating override is something we need to discuss. The current revenue projections are unable to keep pace with the requirements of the schools, which is driven by the sustained enrollment increase. Although new building has added enrollment, most of the enrollment is coming from turnover of existing homes, therefore revenue is not keeping pace with the influx of enrolled students.

Chair Mistrot raised concerns that it is was critical to hold the Financial Planning Committee soon where actual strategies will be discussed to address these budget scenarios presented by both the town and NPS.

### **Report from Long Term Needs Assessment Subcommittee**

Mr. Laurent, Mr. Campbell and Mr. Margil presented the Long Term Needs Assessment Draft Report which was put together as a result of the establishment of the Long Term Needs Assessment Subcommittee. This subcommittee has been meeting since May 2014 to look at multiyear scenarios of the needs to sustain the programs of the Natick Public Schools, with a particular focus on the financial needs, and to make more transparent the increasing pressures being placed upon the school district's budget. The Subcommittee is comprised of Mr. Paul Laurent, Chair, Mr. Tom Campbell, Mr. David Margil with Dr. Sanchioni and Liam Hurley as ex-officio members. The report reviewed:

- Rising Enrollments
- Projected Growth
- Building Capacities
- Staffing Growth
- Faculty Caseloads
- Options for Modulars
- Rebuild vs. Renovation Costs – Dore & Whittier Report of May 2012
- Five Year Capital Plan
- Historical & Projected Staff Growth
- Special Education
- Transportation Costs

Mr. Laurent pointed out that this report will serve as a tool to share with other constituents in town such as Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen, Financial Planning Committee, etc. in order to come up with a long term plan for the town. School Committee members were asked to review and communicate any additional changes to Mr. Laurent. Mr. Laurent indicated that some of the charts/numbers need to be refined before the report is distributed to these groups later this week. Upon the revisions, Chair Mistrot will share the LTNA draft report with the Financial Planning Committee to hear their feedback on the report and take collaborative input before next steps are addressed.

At 10:15 p.m., Mr. Campbell moved to adjourn. Ms. Reed seconded. It was unanimously approved.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Peter Sanchioni, Ph.D.

Superintendent  
Secretary to the School Committee

Sharon Reilly  
Recording Secretary

**Documents provided via Novus Agenda**

Draft Residency Policy  
School Committee Minutes - December 15, 2014  
Canine Search Info  
Draft List of Future Agenda Items

**Correspondence/Information:**

2014-2015 Enrollment Update