

*Natick Public Schools
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 9, 2015*

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday, March 9th, 2015 at 7:15 p.m. in the School Committee Room, 3rd Floor, Town Hall. Chair Mistrot called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

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

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
	Brandon Thornhill	Student Representative

Public Speak

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

Chair Mistrot reported that she attended the Business Professionals of America Conference in Framingham today where students from Natick High School performed brilliantly. They had an exceptional day in multiple components of the competition. Mr. Doug Scott will come to a future meeting to request approval of out of state travel for these students to travel to Anaheim for the National Competition and to acknowledge them and the Robotics Team. Chair Mistrot stated that these are the just some of the types of programs that we want to be able to continue to focus on in the district.

Dr. Sanchioni announced that our Health and Wellness Department was selected as a District of Distinction (62 in the country) by District Administration for their creative and innovative programming for health and wellness.

Teaching, Learning & Innovation FY'16 Budget

Dr. Nolin gave a detailed presentation of the Office of Teaching, Learning & Innovation goals, projects and upcoming potential initiatives. She highlighted both current and future state and federal mandates relative to curriculum, instruction and assessment in order for members to understand the obligations of the department. She demonstrated her core objectives for the department and how they tie to her budget priorities seeking to grow the curriculum and teacher professional development/training beyond mere compliance. She also gave a detailed description of per pupil funding for curriculum and instruction for the past several years.

Dan Weddle, Memorial parent, asked about the cost of the Framingham State Professional Development program. Ms. Nolin stated that the program cost is between 50-80K but supports approximately 40 educators for a two-year learning study, which she believes is worth the investment for the training provided.

Tricia Connors, Brown parent, asked about iPads for the elementary schools. She knows Brown School PTO contributes funds for the purchase of iPads and wondered about the other schools. Ms. Nolin indicated that all schools do some sort of fundraising for technology.

Continued Discussion on FY'16 Budget

Chair Mistrot provided copies of a document from the Deputy Town Administrator Finance, Jeff Towne, which outlines the financial management principles relative to town reserves. This information is being provided since so many people are requesting that the town reserves be used to make up the school's budget deficit of \$1.8M. Chair Mistrot stated that Mr. Towne will be joining the meeting later to explain these principles.

Chair Mistrot stated that the schools have been asked by the Board of Selectmen to provide a fully articulated cut list for the \$1.8M deficit if no additional funds were available.

Dr. Sanchioni presented the FY'16 level service budget in the amount of \$54,340,059, a 5.5% increase over the FY'15 budget appropriation. This budget currently includes the addition of 13.1 staff members (FTE's) as outlined below, which is down from his original request of 26.1 staff members (FTE's). The 13.1 positions requested for a level service budget are as follows:

Classroom Teachers

- **Elementary**
- 1.0 Elementary Teacher Grade 2 Brown (would bring class size to 20)
- **Middle School**
- 2.0 Teachers at Kennedy (Additional 45 students)
- **High School**
- 1.0 English Teacher (23 above 25)
- 1.0 Math Teacher (21 above 25)
- 1.0 Science Teacher (14 above 24) Teacher
- 0.2 Increase World Language Teacher (Mandarin IV)
- 1.0 Social Studies Teacher (20 above 25)

Pupil Services

- *1.0 Special Education Teacher at Kennedy – Grade 8
- *1.0 Special Education Teacher at Ben Hem
- *1.0 Social Worker at NHS
- *0.5 English Language Learner Teacher at Kennedy
- *0.4 English Language Learner Teacher at NHS
- 1.0 Nurse split between Kennedy and Brown (1:660)

Other

- **1.0 NHS Dean for Instruction, Data and Student Initiatives**

Total 13.1 FTE's

*** Compliance Increases**

Positions not included in the level service budget - Total of 13 FTE's reduced from original budget request are as follows:

Classroom Teachers

- **Elementary**
- 4.0 Elementary STEM Instructional Technology Specialists
- Increase 0.1 Art and 0.1 Music Teacher at Brown
- **Middle School**
- 0.5 World Language Teacher at Kennedy/Wilson
- **High School**
- 1.0 English Teacher (23 above 25)
- 0.2 Increase Art Teacher (Ceramics/Sketchbook)
- 1.0 Physical Education and Wellness Teacher
- Stem Pathway/Dual Enrollment Advisor/Department Head Stipend (No FTE added)
- 0.6 Computer Science Teacher

Pupil Services

- 1.0 High School/Middle School Evaluation Team Leader
- 1.0 Assistive Technology Specialist – District Wide
- 1.0 Guidance Counselor at Kennedy/Wilson
- 1.0 District Wide Paraprofessional
- 0.5 On-Line Learning Coordinator split between Kennedy and Wilson

Other

- 1.0 Technology Specialist

Mr. Hurley reviewed the FY'16 expense budget in the amount of \$12,216,527, an increase of \$484,543 from FY'15 (and reduced from the initial budget presentation by \$327,355).

Dr. Sanchioni reviewed the current enrollment, enrollment projections, budget percentage breakdown – salaries 77%, expenses 7%, building operations 3%, tuitions 9%, transportation 4%, per pupil expenditures for Natick vs. surrounding towns.

Dr. Sanchioni articulated a cut-list as requested by the Board of Selectmen to understand the impact should the school budget have to absorb the current, \$1.8M budget shortfall.

Use \$ from ASAP Revolving Account	\$100,000
Cut New Staff Request 13.1 to 2.9	\$552,366
Lower Insurance Exp for New Staff	\$70,000
Raise Fees	\$200,000
Use \$ from Preschool Tuition Account	\$40,000
Use additional Circuit Breaker \$	\$100,000
Total	\$1,062,366

Reduce Expense Requests

- Technology
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - Elementary Schools
 - NHS
 - **TOTAL**
- | | |
|--|------------------|
| | \$50,000 |
| | \$50,000 |
| | \$15,000 |
| | \$60,000 |
| | \$175,000 |

Reductions

Lower Non-Rep Salary Pool	\$25,000
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Eliminate Technician	\$43,000
Eliminate Secretary (2)	\$100,000
Eliminate KEIPS	\$100,000 *(201K-Grant)
Eliminate FEIPS	\$133,551
Eliminate MS Curriculum and Team Leaders	\$44,874
Cut Activities and Clubs by 50%	\$91,313 (HS/MS)
Salary Savings	(\$47,758)
Total	\$585,496
Grand Total	\$1,822,862

The largest change articulated within this presentation is the elimination of the KEIP program. The Governor's Budget eliminates the current Kindergarten grant, which represents \$200K in our budget and provides 2/3 of the funding to provide a second adult/teaching assistant in all K classes. Given this surprising grant elimination at the state level, Dr. Sanchioni now included the elimination of this critical program for Natick as the current budget environment/lack of funding would not allow for another \$200K in funding from within the NPS budget.

Committee members expressed their serious concerns associated with the outlined potential reductions being presented and stressed that these reductions will degrade the system, most specifically the loss of the KEIP and FEIP programs as the K and grade one years are critical, formative years in our educational system. Without the additional support from the teaching assistants, early learning issues may not be noticed and remediated, which could lead to a potential increase in Special Education referrals.

Chair Mistrot asked Mr. Jeff Towne, Deputy Town Administrator, who was now present, to explain the document distributed earlier, the Financial Management Principles of the Town. Mr. Towne discussed the various funds: the General Stabilization Fund, the Operational Stabilization Fund and the Capital Stabilization Funds and explained what these funds are for and how these funds are meant to be used, usually for capital or other non-recurring expenses.

Mr. Ostroff, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, came forward and stated that the Board of Selectmen who were now present, met earlier this evening. With specific interest to long-range, budget planning, the BOS voted to ask the Financial Planning Committee to consider what alternatives are available to the town to address the conservatively forecasted structural deficit and to report back no later than September with options to deal with budget shortfalls as currently predicted.

At this time, they did not vote to use other funding resources for the FY'16 budget such as local option taxes, reserves, or make any recommendations on cuts, fees, etc. They are waiting to on School Committee to approve a budget appropriation request, which they hope to receive prior to their next meeting on Monday, March 16. They have been working collaboratively with the School Committee over the past several months and hope to resolve this difficult budget situation.

Chair Mistrot asked if any members of the public wished to speak to the budget.

Cathi Collins came forward and asked if the two potential reductions in the secretarial staff were in fact two people or two, full-time equivalents. Chair Mistrot answered, two people. She also asked Dr. Sanchioni if he received additional funds, what position would be the first he would restore. Dr. Sanchioni responded –

KEIPS's and FEIPS. She stated that budgets are about priorities. She looks forward to seeing the detailed budget with line item changes during the Education Subcommittee meetings and the Finance Committee meeting. She encouraged members of the public to attend these open meetings, which are all posted. She is happy to see that the Financial Planning Committee is looking at future budgets. She stated that an override may or may not be needed but detailed explicit information must be made available to make proper decisions.

Mr. Richard Sydney, Town Meeting member precinct 8, former Finance Committee member and former Chair of the Education Subcommittee, came forward with a couple of questions. Mr. Sydney asked when the revised budget forms would be available online. Chair Mistrot replied that the updated PowerPoint presentations have been posted but the final detailed budget will be updated once finalized. Mr. Hurley reported that today, the website was updated to include the FY'16 Level Service budget (format used for Town Meeting). Mr. Sidney pointed out that if it is determined that there is a need for an override, we will have to work together as a community to find innovative ways to help those on fixed incomes. All parts of the town are affected by these budget constraints – cuts have been made to both the town and municipal side. The schools are very important in this town and have done a great job over the years with very little money.

Melissa Witham, Memorial School parent came forward and spoke about the large Kindergarten class sizes that they were looking at for Memorial School last year before they added the extra teacher. She said that she would have been willing to pay some sort of enrollment fee rather than have the large class sizes if it didn't get resolved. She inquired as to whether we could impose an enrollment fee for Kindergarten. Dr. Sanchioni reported that half-day kindergarten is required by law, and Natick had made the wise choice to implement the full-day program many years ago. Imposing a fee would pit families against one another - those that can and those that can't afford it, and he fears that those that need it the most would not use it. Ms. Witham offered other suggestions such as charging enrollment fees across the board (\$100) or instituting an education tax to those using the system, or using unpaid interns. Dr. Sanchioni replied that we do use interns now where we can but it is not always something you can count on. You can't charge an enrollment fee or implement an education tax. She then asked about a capital campaign? Dr. Sanchioni indicated that he has seen other communities institute capital campaigns.

Zachary Gates, West Natick resident, spoke to his understanding of the legal duties incumbent upon the town in providing for public education. He quoted a statement from the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts made in 1993, that "education is a duty of government and not merely an object within the power of government." He cited two court cases that he thought the Board of Selectmen should familiarize themselves with, *McDuffy* and *Hancock*.

From the DOE website, the *McDuffy v. Secretary of the Executive Office of Education*, " was brought on behalf of students in certain property-poor communities who alleged that the school finance system violated the education clause of the Massachusetts Constitution. In words unchanged since 1780, the education clause states in part that "[i]t shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish... the public schools and grammar schools in the towns." Mass. Const., pt. II, ch. V, § II. The plaintiffs claimed that the Commonwealth had failed its constitutional duty to provide them with the opportunity to receive an adequate education of sufficiently high quality."

Also from the DOE website, *Hancock v. Commissioner of Education*, 443 Mass. 428, 822 N.E. 2d 1134 (2005) was initiated in 1999 as the successor to the *McDuffy* case.³ The *Hancock* plaintiffs, representing students in nineteen school districts, alleged that the Commonwealth was failing to provide public school students the constitutionally required education outlined in the *McDuffy* decision.

It is Mr. Gates assertion that the Board of Selectman should justify why they are going to cut the appropriation as drastically as they are contemplating. Stabilization funds could adequately be used according to the statute. He urged the School Committee not to approve this awful bare minimum budget.

Tricia Connors, Brown School parent, inquired as to what part of the organization pursues grants from our corporate neighbors such as TJMaxx, Mathworks, Cognex? Dr. Nolin responded that we do reach out to them where we can, however, many of the grants they offer have specific requirements, which do not align with the Natick Public Schools. On another matter, Ms. Connors urged the Committee that when they are looking into the possibility of using reserves, keep in mind the very dire need for a rebuilt Kennedy Middle School and how that may be affected by dipping into any stabilization funds.

Ms. Kerry Rothschild, long time Natick resident came forward and expressed that she is happy to see the growth in Natick but concerned that it is disproportional to the revenue stream. She understands that there is a budget issue in the short term but does not want to lose site of future needs given the growth in the town. Other revenue streams must be looked at or the problems will continue year after year. There are major things that could be done such as looking at the property the town owns, add parking lots with retail above, adding more solar, selling some of the town properties, target taxing to commercial businesses, over 55 housing, etc. How does one get involved in this? Chair Mistrot replied that the grass roots of this will happen at the Financial Planning Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the Finance Committee, the School Committee, the Board of Selectmen and the administration from both the municipal and school departments. Mr. Margil also suggested she check with the Economic Development Committee, which was established after the operational override in 2008. He believes they are still active and may be able to provide context relative to the request for a split-tax system for Natick.

Ms. Leah Phillips, Brown parent of 1st grader and kindergartner for next year came forward to say she wants to be the School Committee's cheerleader for them to push the town where it needs to go. She would have supported the budget with the additional 26 hires. She is not happy about the level service budget with 13 hires and definitely not happy with the level staff budget. She has been before the Committee before to raise concerns of the large kindergarten class size (last year at Brown), now Grade 1 and had it not been for the tutor that was added in that class, she wouldn't have put her child in that class. She invited the Board of Selectmen to visit kindergarten classroom and see what it really is like. She stated that parents like her will support the Committee and will pay for what they think is a valuable service. She thanked the Committee for being transparent and hopes they continue to release the detailed information as requested such as the cut-list provided at tonight's meeting. Stakeholders need the information to make educated decisions. They can't communicate effectively if they don't have the information to talk to their peer group.

David Mangan, Lilja parent, raised a concern that although the schools continue to achieve strong results with a lower than state average per pupil spending, but fears that we will lose our good teachers because they are seeing their environment being underfunded. That is a concern that he thinks would provide valuable context for the Board of Selectmen to consider in making a decision about a possible future override and for taxpayers to consider should an override be allowed.

Dan Weddle, Memorial Parent, came forward and asked are the schools doing everything they can to lower energy costs. Dr. Sanchioni reported that solar panels have been installed on six of the nine schools, and we continue to pursue other avenues to reduce energy costs.

Ali Aker, Johnson parent, came forward and stated that in speaking to the idea of an override, her family moved into this town a few years after an override was passed. It was a big selling point as their family believes education is valued above all else – a town that passes an override would be a town they would be happy to live in. She feels there is a lot of energy in this room and in the town, and there are many people who are passionate about education. She appreciates the work being done to find pockets of money to fund this budget, but this larger budget issues need to be addressed as well. We have to ask for more money from our generous community.

Natasha Clark, Ben-Hem parent can't thank the Board of Selectmen and School Committee enough for their time. She asked for clarification on how this budget could improve in the next 20 days as pointed out by Dr. Sanchioni. Dr. Sanchioni and Chair Mistrot explained the next steps in the budget process which will be looking at revolving funds, reserves and coming up with a number to go forward with to the town. Ms. Mistrot referred her to read a document that was put online today, called: Analyzing the Governor's Budget for FY'16 which she thought might be helpful. Ms. Clark stated that all vehicles of government need to be working together and plan for the future. She is happy to help.

Beth Rosen Sheidley– Johnson and Wilson parent. Recently moved from Newton where their elementary school ballooned to almost 600 students in a short time. She witnessed huge class sizes, wonderful teachers leaving, and inexperienced teachers being brought in to replace the lost teachers. Her children have had the best teachers at Johnson and Wilson, which is a testament to what has been built here. She would fully support an override if it came to that but was quite shocked that shortly after moving to Natick, an assessor came to assess her property and subsequently her property taxes were reduced. Given that property values are increasing and the market is hot, perhaps the home assessments are a vehicle for another possible revenue stream.

Julie McDonough, Brown parent, has been to countless meetings and implores the School Committee not to cede any more positions. We need the 13.1 positions as well as the 13 that were cut. Natick needs every single teacher on the list.

Katie Joyce is a parent of twin girls at the preschool and a little boy who will be entering in a couple of years. She is also a member of the state board of early education and care. When they moved to Natick two years ago, they looked for towns who had passed overrides and who offer full-day kindergarten. Education is very important to them. Natick's preschool is the very best she has seen anywhere in Massachusetts. We are so fortunate to have this program. She wished we were talking about expanding the preschool so there isn't a wait list or a lottery because every child deserves a chance to be at that preschool. Our children only have one chance in kindergarten, one chance in first grade, one chance in second grade, and at any point in that continuum, they can fall off the track. We are at a turning point. People will leave this amazing community. She suggested go big or go home, let's get an override to cover several years. She thanked the Committee for all that they do. She knows of a lot of people who would be willing to do a full, grass roots campaign to get an override as soon as possible.

The School Committee discussed holding an additional meeting prior to next Monday, March 16. They agreed to hold a meeting on Saturday, March 14th at 9:00 a.m., place to be determined to be notified by email to NPS email subscribers. It is the intention that a final review will be made of this cut list and any additional options with the intention to vote a Natick Public School budget request for FY'16.

At 11:20 p.m., Mr. Coburn moved to adjourn. Mr. Campbell 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

Request to Approve Donation

Information on Bus Subsidy Warrant Article 18

School Committee Minutes of February 10, 2015 and February 23, 2015

Teaching, Learning & Innovation FY'16 Budget Presentation

FY'16 Budget PowerPoint Presentation

Information on Fees

Request from Natick Historical Society to reproduce and historical panels

Correspondence

Enrollment Update