

*Natick Public Schools  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
September 20, 2021*

The School Committee held a meeting on Monday, September 20, 2021 at 6:45pm in the School Committee Room and via Virtual Meeting. Chair McDonough called the meeting to order and took roll call at 6:52pm.

Members Present: Julie McDonough, Donna McKenzie, Henry Haugland, Hayley Sonneborn  
Catherine Brunell, Cathi Collins

Others Present: Dr. Anna Nolin Superintendent  
Mr. Tim Luff Assistant Superintendent  
Dr. Peter Gray Assistant Superintendent  
Ms. Rose McDermott Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary  
Jefferson Wood Teacher Representative

Chair McDonough moved for approval for the School Committee to enter into Executive Session for this purpose:

1. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Units A, B, S and Title 1, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares;

Ms. Collins seconded. Chair McDonough called for a roll call vote. All in favor of entering into Executive Session for this purpose:

Dr. Fuxman – Yes

Mr. Haugland – Yes

Dr. McKenzie – Yes

Ms. Brunell – Yes

Ms. Sonneborn - Yes

Ms. Collins – Yes

Chair McDonough – Yes

It was approved by a vote of 7-0-0. Chair McDonough stated that the School Committee would be returning to the general session at approximately 7:10pm. The School Committee proceeded to the Training Room to conduct this session.

At approximately 7:13pm, the School Committee returned to open session.

### **Announcements**

Dr. Nolin announced that the School Committee voted in full support of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Vaccination Policy for staff and will be voted in public at the next meeting.. Kennedy Middle School tours are on Saturday, October 23, 2021 from 8am-10:30am and from 12pm-1:30pm. The ribbon cutting ceremony will begin at approximately 11am and the dedication of the planetarium to Ed Jameson will be immediately following. Dr. Nolin announced that this past week, our Interim Director of Teaching, Learning and Innovation is receiving her credential for her Superintendent's license. Dr. Nolin announced that Jayashree Pillai, Natick High School math teacher,

was accepted into the Department of Education Teacher Cabinet Advisory at the state level and that Nandini Alagappan, Kennedy Middle School math teacher, has been accepted into the highly selective, Inspired Fellows Program.

### **Public Speak**

Chair McDonough did not receive any virtual requests and she asked if anyone in person wished to come forward for Public Speak. No one came forward.

### **Recognition of Jim White Retirement**

Chair McDonough and the School Committee thanked Mr. Jim White, Director of Public Health, his 41 years of service. The School Committee read a resolution in Mr. White's honor. Mr. White and his family were present via Zoom. He was very thankful and appreciative for the association with Dr. Nolin and the School Committee. Mr. White was very thankful and expressed that Dr. Nolin is a prize and was a pleasure to work with.

### **Consent Agenda**

1. Approval of School Committee Minutes of August 16, 2021 and Retreat Minutes of August 19, 2021
2. Approval of Donations
3. Warrant Review

Ms. Collins moved approval of the consent agenda. Mr. Haugland seconded. It was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

### **Discussion and Vote: Vaccination Policy for Athletics and Extracurriculars**

Dr. McKenzie began by announcing that the Policy Subcommittee unanimously supported this policy. This policy mandates testing for the unvaccinated. Dr. Nolin would call this an interim safety/pandemic policy. Dr. Nolin read aloud the highlighted information, which are the changes. Students are required to pool test if they are to participate in any athletic or school sponsored extra-curricular activities. Staff are required to be vaccinated by October 30, 2021. Dr. Nolin reviewed the different models that were considered. Dr. Dr. Nolin assisted with the motion - Voting to affirm the interim policy on issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic with the amendment to start the testing vaccination program October 30<sup>th</sup>. Dr. McKenzie moved that motion and Ms. Collins seconded. Several Natick residents provided comments to the School Committee. The comments reflected parent's wishes for their choices to be respected. The Committee responded that they aren't contemplating mandating vaccinations for students. We are talking about mandating testing. We have a whole community to consider and the safety and well-being of the whole community. Chair McDonough reminded everyone that this is about mandating pool testing not vaccinations. Chair McDonough asked for a vote. It was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

### **Update on Hiring and ESSER III and Surplus Funding**

Dr. Nolin shared that we received a \$50,000 ear mark grant today for mental health needs for students in Natick. She informed the Committee that we also filed for another grant today for teacher diversification. Each grant has an earlier expiration date than ESSERII, ESSERIII and the IDEA money that was discussed for Special Education. The idea is to spend the funds that will expire first. The parameters for the grants, all have similar expectations for spending on items related to COVID recovery. Dr. Nolin reviewed the updated, detailed, staffing spreadsheet that had been shared and how the funds would currently be disbursed. We also will be able to provide more stipends to athletic as well as provide stipends for extra clubs and curriculars. The district will track the data and bring it back to the School Committee. Dr. Nolin will continue to update the School Committee at future meetings.

Mr. Luff left the meeting at 8:40pm and returned at 8:52pm.

## **FY22 Budget Baseline Report**

Dr. Gray had provided a memo with the actual baseline budget and update on our chart of accounts. He has taken suggestions from the School Committee. We are continuing to refine our accounts. The proposed format going forward will give more detail. Dr. Gray will inform the Committee of any transfer adjustments. There are several School Committee approved, transfers coming up in the future due to recovery. Dr. Gray will continue to provide detail and the actual expenditures at the end of each quarter.

### **Discussion and Vote: Revision to District Strategic Plan**

Dr Nolin gave an overview of the Strategic Plan process. She reviewed the changes with the major change being the addition of an equity goal. The next review was of the action steps that support the achievement of the goals. These are the major focus areas that Dr. Nolin has heard from the community as being the concern. The Committee had previously decided to host a late January retreat that would allow them to review the plan and give feedback. A School Committee member was confused and asked for clarity on what a “yes” vote means. Chair McDonough explained that the vote tonight is for the pieces that would achieve that goal. This Member asked to pull this discussion and vote. They do not support this because they, haven’t seen this format. Dr. Nolin reminded the Member and entire School Committee that they have had this exact plan since August 1, 2021, and it was workshopped. The member doesn’t understand the urgency of voting this tonight. Dr. Nolin reviewed that they have had the information. The school improvement plans are based off this document and there’s a deadline in October. Staff must set their professional goals with DESE by that time. Mr. Haugland motioned to approve all of the goals for the 2020/2021 school year. Dr. McKenzie seconded. Ms. Brunell motioned to postpone this vote until October 4th to give our committee adequate time to look at this material. No one seconded. Motion failed. Another Member took exception to the idea that there hasn’t been sufficient time. Ms. Collins moved the question. Dr. McKenzie seconded. The motion passed with a vote of 6-1-0. Ms. Brunell asked that it be recorded why she voted no and Chair McDonough decided that she would afford the opportunity for each member to then state why they voted yes. Ms. Brunell voted no because she feels we are setting our administration up for a very difficult process throughout this year without measurable strategic objectives. Dr. Fuxman voted yes because this is an inner process, a school district with over 5000 students is very complex. He believes we are building a puzzle; we are providing a framework for what we are asking everyone to do. By providing the framework, we will have one unified picture of what we want our district to look like. Mr. Haugland concurs with Dr. Fuxman’s comments. He voted yes because he’s spent 5 decades working on strategic plans. How important it is to measure what you can and to pay very close attention to how you’re going to evaluate the items you can’t measure. Ms. Sonneborn voted yes and she is interested in seeing how it pans out at each of the school levels. Elementary- pre-K are going to be different between MS & HS. She feels we are getting hung up on measurables. She stated that if we want to hear more about district hiring practices, she would like to hear the antidotes at each level. I do think that these things are measurable. She would like to hear what’s going to be done. What steps are we taking and are they effective? How will they be measured at the end of the year. We are all wanting the same things. Dr. McKenzie voted yes, concurred with what the last three School Committee members said. She has a skepticism about objectivity and knowledge. Aren’t we teaching our kids to be critical thinkers? Some knowledge is subjective and anecdotal. Ms. Collins voted yes and stated that the strategic plan and goals are a vision and/or declaration of what we believe is important. That is not the same as smart objectives, action steps, etc. That’s what is coming. Without adopting these goals, how in heaven’s name is the Superintendent and her team supposed to know where we want the school district to go. This allows Principals and Administrators to move forward and develop a school improvement plan. This helps us realize our desired state. That’s all we were asked to do. It is what we have been supporting for the past 3 years and we need to continue to get it done. Chair McDonough voted yes and thanked Dr. Nolin for taking the feedback after the evaluation this year and distilling this down and reformatting the information in a way that is clear that the strategic plan consists of 5 goals and there are focus areas within each of those

goals and there are specific tasks or pieces that will be done to support the larger plan. She believes this very clearly explains where it goes. We actually don't vote on this. This was put on the agenda and asked specifically by Ms. Brunell. What we have always done is vote on the school improvement plans. We are supporting this because this is what we have been supporting for the past 3 years and we need to continue the work to get it done.

### **Member Concerns**

School Committee Clerk, Dr. Donna McKenzie reminded everyone that there is a Policy Subcommittee meeting on Thursday. The meeting begins at 1:30pm in the School Committee Room in the Town Hall. Ms. Brunell asked if the Parent Coordinating Council was going to begin again. Dr. Nolin informed her that the wheels fell off that wagon because of the pandemic. She hopes that once the PTO chairs are voted in that they can begin that again.

Teacher representative, Mr. Jefferson Wood, virtually, was reflecting back on last week's meeting and the concerns raised about the way data is disseminated. With all due respect, the staff in the schools are the ones in constant contact and communication with parents of students. He feels that our parents are well-informed. He was reminded again that the concerns about vaccinations, testing, protocols continue to raise passions and tempers on both sides. The staff that populate all of our schools and the parents you were addressing in your meeting earlier, are the same parents we are having conversations with via email, at our doors, etc. on a day-to-day basis. The concerns they bring to you tonight are the ones they are consistently sharing with us. School committee - You represent the community, and you also represent the staff in your buildings who are working with the children and parents you are talking about. We are the people in the trenches doing the work of the school district every day. He reminded them once more, that the staff are also themselves, parents with the same strong feelings that they have to deal with and compromise. They are doing hard work on a daily basis.

At approximately, 9:50pm Ms. Collins motioned to adjourn. Dr. McKenzie seconded. It was unanimously approved by a vote of those present 7-0-0.

Anna Nolin  
Superintendent  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Rose McDermott  
Executive Assistant/Recording Secretary

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

### **Documents Provided in Novus Agenda and materials used at this meeting:**

Superintendent's Presentation  
Resolution for Jim White  
School Committee Minutes of August 16, 2021 and Retreat Minutes of August 19, 2021  
Donations Report  
Warrant Report  
Interim Covid Pandemic Policy and Student Vaccination  
COVID Recovery Staffing Spreadsheet/ESSR III Spending Proposal  
Fy22 Baseline Budget Review  
District Strategic Plan