



NEWTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

RUTHANNE FULLER– EX OFFICIO	
Newton School Committee Members	
WARD	
*	Bridget Ray-Canada, Vice Chair
*	Margaret Albright
*	Anping Shen
*	Tamika Olszewski
*	Emily Prenner
*	Ruth Goldman, Chair
*	Kathy Shields
*	Matthew Miller

VIRTUAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING Minutes

Date:	June 22, 2020
Location:	Remote via ZOOM Meeting
Time:	7:00 pm
Members Remote:	Goldman, Fleishman, Ray-Canada, Albright, Shen, Olszewski, Prenner, Shields, Miller, Mayor Fuller
Students Remote:	Weissell, Sawhney, Gaines
Staff Remote:	Toby Romer, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, Khita Pottinger-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, Beth Fitzmaurice, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Mary Eich, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Liam Hurley, Assistant Superintendent/Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, Jill Murray, Interim Director of Human Resources, Steven Rattendi, Director of Informational Technology and Library Services, John Jordan, Retiring Principal, Brown Middle School, Km Lysaght, incoming Principal, Brown Middle School, Orla Higgins Averill, incoming Principal, Angier, Ruth L'Esperance, Assistant Principal, Brown Middle School

At 7:00 pm Chair Goldman welcomed everyone to the Committee's remote meeting and asked Dr. Fleishman to begin with his Superintendent Update.

Dr. Fleishman said just as we couldn't celebrate our seniors in person this spring, another group we aren't able to celebrate in person is the retirees:

- ❖ Joe Siciliano, NNHS, math teacher and coach, 52 years
- ❖ Loretta Lamberti, Principal, Angier, 30 years
- ❖ John Jordan, Brown, Principal, Brown, 31 years

He spoke about their accomplishments in Newton and thanked them for their dedicated service throughout their careers and welcomed their successors, Orla Higgins Averill, and Kim Lysaght. Dr. Fleishman also announced that John Jordan will be honored at Brown with the John Jordan Auditorium.

Ruth opened the meeting to Public Comment:

Georg Gerber – 34 Hartford St., Newton -Spoke about the lack of special education services and legal action that resulted in the State and Federal mandating that the pandemic was not a free pass and districts must provide services to the extent possible. This lack of service will result in compensatory services and will be costly.

Kim Smith – 160 Boylston St, Chestnut Hill, stated that the Federal Covid 19 Relief sent so far to Newton is \$7.8million.

Appendix A on page 4 of the relief document outlines that the funds can be used for:

- o School distance learning, to the extent not funded from other sources, including
 - Planning and development, including IT costs*
 - Incremental costs of special education services required under individual education plans (IEPs) in a remote, distance, or alternative location*

She asked the Mayor and/or City Council will allocate these funds to the school committee when they receive them so they can help mitigate any future potential budget cuts. She also expressed concern regarding the Interface Project.

Micahel Hauseisen – 19 Churchill Terr., Newton, spoke about the challenges Newton faces including "Black Lives Matter," Equity and the school buildings. He said that NPS has to avoid another Horace Mann situation and asks that the Horace Mann work be added to the CIP. He also stated that NPS has to do better with Distance Learning.

Ruth closed Public Comment and asked David and Central Staff team to present the Fall Planning Update. Ruth said that we still do not have full guidance from the State, but the district has started to plan for the Fall.

Dr. Fleishman said that at the last meeting the team reflected on what we learned from the Spring and shared ideas for planning:

- Teams
- communication

He explained the Guidance for Summer School, stating that the Fall Guidance may not be the same:

- Capacity = 300
- 10:1
- No more than 12 in a room
- 6 ft. apart
- Teacher/class remain in same room
- No food service

He stated that it will be hard to open schools if Summer Guidance is still in effect. The district will look at the following and plan for three learning models:

- Timeline
- Buildings
- Modified In-Person Model
- Hybrid Model (some in/some out over 5 days)
- Full Distance Learning Model

The District will prepare for all three models, knowing that the status could change during the school year.

Dr. Fleishman said that we know:

- Need significant equipment and PPE which will be expensive and we'll have to order early and factor in the costs.
- Returning to normal will not be possible
- No normal schedules
- No large gatherings or school assemblies, etc.

What we don't know:

- Social Distancing recommendations
- # of students allowed in buildings/classes
- Student/staff ratios
- Space ratios
- Extra-curricular activities/sports (decision not expected until mid-July)
- Transportation guidance (decision not expected until mid-July)
 - o The district won't be able to make decisions until then for yellow buses, special education vans and METCO transportation

Dr. Fleishman then outlined the make-up of the planning teams:

PreK - 12 OPERATIONAL Planning Team:

- Health/safety
- NTA
- Facilities/Buildings/Furniture
- Technology (inside/outside classrooms)
- Food Services
- Transportation

Academic Planning Teams at each Level:

- Curriculum – what's realistic, what can we cover
- Assessment - Literacy/Math/Social Emotional
- Schedule – won't be the same
- Social/Emotional Support
- Professional Development

Special Education Planning Team:

- Expect DESE guidance will be broad
- Room for local decision making
- Staff accordingly to best practices
- Additional hours as needed

Summer Professional Development Team:

- Anti-racists practices
- Technology and Distance Learning
- Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Universal Design
- Trauma invested and healing centered practices

Examples:

- ☐ Book groups
- ☐ Course/modules for technology
- ☐ Expand teaching design – Universal Learning for all students built in
- ☐ How to build in wellness practices

Dr. Fleishman said the Summer Survey for families was going out later this week will focus on:

- Attendance
- Transportation needs
- Special Education needs

He said that over the summer he will communicate often regarding any new state/DESE guidance, NPS plans and reopening information which will also be posted on the NPS website.

Next Steps:

- Working Group Planning
- Monitoring DESE Guidance, which could change throughout the summer
- Some details subject to NTA bargaining

He concluded by saying that we are in the broad planning stage right now as we await more guidance from DESE.

Questions, answers and discussion included: Summer PD, mandatory or voluntary; Distance option for compromised students, Additional planning days and delay start for students; Later start for high school; PPE order; low survey results; universal program; after school programs; more communications; high school confirmation of class selections; scheduling for the three different learning models; calendar shifts – April break, graduations.

Ruth said that that the Central Staff team will continue to communicate and we may have the need to add School Committee meetings on this topic throughout the summer. She asked Liam and his team to present the Fiscal and Operations Update.

Liam explained that this update is through the end of May and is similar to previous updates:

- The district has experienced some savings due to the schools being closed, but the flipside is there will be some challenges in the areas of food services, transportation and Use of Buildings.
- We are carrying forward \$3.4 million
- Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) eligible, estimated at \$745K to address the financial effects of Covid 19 on school systems.
- Budget reserve of \$300k for Horace Mann and Oak Hill
- Horace Mann bids have come in for wall moves/sinks/acoustical ceiling tiles
- Oak Hill continuing as quickly as possible
- Challenges: Revolving Accounts; Food Services

Questions, answers and discussion included PPE purchases; masks; custodians work.

Ruth said that there are a number of questions that can't be answered right now regarding the ESSER money. It's a bit complicated; it goes to the City and then is dispersed to the school department. Hopefully we'll have more information at the July meeting.

Ruth asked Superintendent to present the FY20 System wide Goals Update which has been slightly compromised due to the pandemic.

David explained that since the mid-year update was presented there have only been 18 days of school. He recapped the important initiatives that the district had begun:

- Full Day Kindergarten (FDK)
- English Language Arts (ELA) working on more diverse literature
- Work on History Curriculum had just started

Challenges faced included- no faculty meetings at the beginning of the year and then no face –to-face meetings in the last few months. He said he’d talk a little more about March until the end of the year, but it might be more pertinent to talk about Instructional Technology (IT) and the fall.

- ☐ Difficult to communicate – pivoting to Distance Learning
- ☐ Administrative Council
- ☐ District Data Teams
- ☐ Middle School Content Teams

Our goals for next year should be:

- To continue our work pre-Covid
- Or Create new goals

We were not able to cover all of the curriculum we wanted to, but referred to something a guest speaker reminded us to do, not to look at the loss, but to look at the things we’ve gained. He also said that special education has been particularly difficult.

Social Emotional- the pandemic challenged every sense of social/emotional well-being, as our student representatives have reminded us of how hard this has been. We need to continue to support students with services like “Project Interface” which Newton Schools Foundation (NSF) has graciously offered to fund.

Managerial Goals

- Facilities: some projects delayed, but Lincoln-Eliot windows, and the Oak Hill and Horace Mann projects will continue
- Tech Infrastructure: more important than ever. Steven will articulate later in the update.
- Transportation: on-line, up and running
- Diversity hiring: have made some progress with the addition of our new Director of Human Resources and a Diversity Director

Community:

- Updates (like the idea of a regular day to communicate)
- Emails
- Social Media

Technology- Steven Rattendi reported on the following:

- Schoology Use – great rise (active sessions at Middle and High schools)
- Google Classroom (K-5 went from 49 to 234 active classrooms)
- Gmail usage – growth in received/sent)
- Google Drive – tremendous increase
- Zoom Accounts – May/June: 96,000 meetings

Challenges:

- Network reliability – resolved quickly
- Zoom security – education and managed domain
- Free software offers - More tools, but what happens after the free offers end
- Supporting staff/students at home – great variability

How we shifted:

Data Network/Tech Support:

- Worked primarily remotely
- Set up Gmail for all students & younger grades
- 1200 devices to families and aides
- Supported remote learning/teaching: family support account received more than 4,000 emails
- Registration Gateway and Transportation fee payment system on-line and operational

Instructional Technology Support Specialists:

- Worked overtime to transform and trouble shoot
- Support new instruction tool use
- Prepare resource materials, i.e. videos/documents

Great deal of last minute, on-the-fly adjustments

What's Coming:

Summer PD

- Self-paced tech resources organized by topic
- Live virtual webinars
- August office hours
- New teacher orientation – virtual materials

Devices/Installs/Unknowns

- Did not collect devices
- What's left in the buildings
- Safety issues of shared devices
- Increase number of devices- impact on network?
- Covid -19 Free Offers ending
- In building work catch-up
- Zoom free meetings and unlimited minutes ending soon

Ruth commented that it's all about flexibility, and challenges will always arise with technology. She then opened it up to questions, answers and discussion which included: Consistent platform use; budget impact; survey teachers re: best instructional tools; how to engage remote learners; technology setup for success; software costs/policy usage.

Brown Auditorium Naming

Ruth explained that a committee of faculty/parents had been formed to propose naming the auditorium at Brown in John Jordan's honor. It was a unanimous decision. The School Committee will discuss the naming at this meeting and vote on the motion at the next School Committee meeting. She said it was a thoroughly vetted process, following our Naming Policy. She asked for questions or comments. Margaret explained the Naming Policy process for the Committee.

Equity Policy Update

Ruth commented that there were a lot of communications and a number of School Committee discussions regarding the Equity Policy. The original proposal has been modified and will be in effect one year from now – July 2021.

Kathy Shields explained that the Equity Committee adopted some of the recommended changes:

- Postpone the effective date to July 2021
- Changed every 3 years to every 5 years
- Changed previews - took it out of equity spending caps

She explained the basis for the recommended changes including discussions with the elementary principals and feedback from the staff.

Ruth reiterated that this was a review of the CAS portion of the policy. She then opened it up to questions, answers and discussion which included: diversity of presenters; concerns about the uncertainty of the upcoming school year. Ruth asked for a motion to approve the Equity Policy revisions with the caveat that we will look at it again.

Motion: Shields

2nd: Miller

Vote: 6-1-2 (Absent – Mayor/Abstain – Albright & Ray Canada)

Ruth said we will move on to Superintendent Goals, the Superintendent's Assessment a single document that incorporated all of the members input), and the Superintendent's contract, which the Committee will vote on at the next meeting.

Superintendent Goals

Dr. Fleishman commented that he has been doing this a long time, but being a Superintendent during this pandemic is unimaginable. He said he was really excited about starting off the year. Then the pandemic hit. Now, he can't think of a single goal we were able to complete faced with this challenge.

However, we have accomplished the following and will continue to work on:

- Establish a strong team
- No new initiatives – refining those already in place
- This year has changed the way we look at our goals for next year
- Small group instruction will be in the fore-front
- One of our big goals, Race & Achievement was turned on its head due to outside events
- Our history teachers have been hamstrung due to what we've been through in the last few years. Now they are fired up to take on history completely differently.
- Education has gotten too conservative –too standards based. This is an incredible opportunity to take risks.
- Consistent Literacy Intervention (LII hasn't been feasible in the last few months)
- Worked on general education interventions – we don't want students on IEP's when the student struggles with SEL

Reflecting on the year that was really hard – we never lived or died on technology. We led with teachers and programs. We concentrated on richer electives and programs, small group instruction, but now we need to think about technology. Our challenge for the future is, how do we work in a distance environment. He concluded by saying that he's really proud of the people he's hired, Kathy Lopes, Diversity Director (or moved, in the case of Steven Rattendi, IT Director).

Ruth said it was useful to reframe technology the way he did. NPS hadn't made technology a priority until we had to. There were no questions for Dr. Fleishman.

Superintendent's Assessment

Each Committee member read their assessment (which are available on-line) of the Superintendent's performance which will be incorporated into a single document compiled by the Chair and Vice-Chair.

Superintendent Contract Extension

Ruth explained the process for renewing the Superintendent's contract:

- The School Committee discusses it in Executive Session and discusses with the Superintendent
- Then the Committee discusses and votes in open session

She further explained that the process has not been altered, and commits to more discussions on the contract process at another time as we are at the end of our process now.

This is a 3-year extension to begin July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024. Terms: Same as they have always been (posted).

There were no questions. Ruth asked the Members to send their assessments to Lisa so they can be posted and sent to Ruth and Bridget to collate.

Vote to Approve MASC Resolutions

Anti-Racist Resolution– No Vote :

Ruth explained that we usually discuss these resolutions twice and then vote, but because this is a statements of value, which is in-line with NPS' values there is no reason to vote on it. Bridget and Tamika stated they felt it had no value.

Covid-19 Resolution (not to be an unfunded mandate)

Motion: Prenner

2nd: Albright

Vote: 8-1-0 (Mayor absent)

Vote to Approve 5/27/20 Minutes

Motion: Shen

2nd: Shields

Motion: 8-1-0 (Mayor absent)

Chair Goldman called for adjournment.

Adjourned: 10:37 pm

Lisa Mazzola Date: September 16, 2020
School Committee Secretary