

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Norton, Massachusetts

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date of School Committee Meeting:** December 3, 2007

**Location:** Library, Norton Middle School

**Attending: Committee Members:** Chairman Kevin O'Neil, Vice-Chairman Thomas Golota, Mr. Andrew Mackie, Mrs. Beth McManus, Mrs. Margaret Werner and Student Representative Emily Carmichael.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings:**

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee voted 4-1 to approve the Minutes of the prior meeting held on November 19, 2007 at the Norton Middle School. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote.

**Approval of Budget Transfers (2):**

Dr. Ansay explained that the first transfer would move money from the salary account to the textbook account. She said this transfer is necessary because a replacement nurse, computer technician, and psychologist were all hired at a lower salary than was budgeted for former employees. She said these excess funds would be better used for numerous textbooks at the high school and middle school levels. She announced that all five schools would receive money for their textbook funds. According to Dr. Ansay, the second transfer takes money from the Special Education fuel line to support costs related to transportation for 2-3 homeless students.

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee voted 4-1 to approve the budget transfers. Mr. Mackie voted against the transfers.

**J.C. Solmonese Opening of School Report:**

Principal Mary E.R. Brown was present to provide the J. C. Solmonese opening of school report. Members of the Solmonese Parent Organization and Site Council were also present.

Mrs. Brown reported that class size is very good at JCS. She also pointed out that the morning buses have been very punctual, despite all of the road construction in town. Mrs. Brown explained that the afternoon buses have been delayed periodically, especially during the first week of school. She remarked that the first day of school was particularly difficult in terms of afternoon buses. The last bus left JCS at 4:45pm on the first day of school. She said the Norton Police Department has met with the administration to discuss the issue. Yet, currently, there is still a 10-25 minute wait for buses at the end of the school day at JCS. Mrs. Brown said that the JCS staff members have been great in terms of helping out with the buses. She said she appreciates all of their help and cooperation.

According to Mrs. Brown, JCS has once again experienced a reduction of classroom teachers due to budget cuts. She pointed out that this year, JCS has also experienced a reduction in one special education teacher transferred to LGN, and a .5 reduction in secretarial help in the office. She remarked that she is thrilled to have two full-day Kindergarten classes at JCS now, with the second full-day class opening on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

Mrs. Brown discussed the recent changes in special subjects offered at JCS. According to Mrs. Brown, physical education and health have been combined into one class called wellness. She also explained that second graders and third graders are all having foreign language classes. Also, despite the reductions, she said all JCS students are receiving Music and Art classes. Mrs. Brown said she is very thankful for this because she believes special subjects are so important for the education of the total child. According to Mrs. Brown, the JCS library has also been reopened with the help of parent volunteers. She is hoping the Kindergarten classes will also be able to participate in the library. Mrs. Brown thanked all of the volunteers, and also thanked Mrs. Leigh Francis, former JCS Librarian, who has been very helpful. Mrs. Brown explained that the children have been very excited to use the library again, and she said the teachers have been very helpful. She explained that the volunteer effort has given everyone a new appreciation of how much the school librarian truly does.

Mr. Golota remarked that children are so excited to be able to take home a book from their own school library. He thanked all of the JCS library volunteers. Mrs. Brown thanked the library volunteers also for all they have done.

According to Mrs. Brown, SPOKE was temporarily housed at JCS during the fall. She explained that the Curriculum Director's office and one special education class were also temporarily housed at JCS during the fall. She said this temporary arrangement worked well while the Yelle School was undergoing construction. She remarked that SPOKE was once housed permanently at JCS, and the Curriculum Director's office was also once housed permanently at JCS. Therefore, it felt like a homecoming to welcome them back to JCS, she said.

According to Mrs. Brown, this year JCS approaches the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening. She explained that the school looks so good because of the pride and dedication of the JCS custodial staff. She further explained that all of the JCS bathrooms have been refurbished and updated.

Mrs. Brown discussed the goal at JCS which is to always create a positive learning environment. She announced that there are currently 267 parent volunteers at JCS, and explained that parent involvement is a key ingredient to success. She also discussed the importance of communication between all three elementary school principals. She said that the elementary principals have tried to establish a regular time to meet together.

Mrs. Brown then commended the reading department at JCS and said they have been working very hard this year. She described their reading incentive program for the summer, and another incentive program which is being planned for the winter. This upcoming winter program will be based upon the Winter Olympics. She said she takes her hat off to the staff. Mrs. Brown said she has always had great respect for the reading department, but she is particularly thankful for the amount of work they have put into the new programs this year.

Mrs. Brown explained that a new English Language Arts program is being piloted at JCS this year, and a new Math program is also being implemented at the same time. She said it is important to give the teachers flexibility to grow with the new programs. She commended the teachers, remarking that they have been extremely professional and dedicated. She said the teachers all met by grade level on the district-wide Professional Day, and it was very beneficial according to Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown explained that the computer technicians were very busy this summer installing new computers in all classrooms. She further explained that many exciting events are planned throughout the year at JCS. She said, despite all you hear, she still believes that the Norton Public Schools provides an excellent education. It is a beautiful place to be, she said.

Mrs. Brown introduced her new staff: Mrs. Heather Cashman, *Art*, Mrs. Leslie MacDonald, *Speech*, Mrs. Kristen Howard, R.N., *School Nurse*, Mrs. Tanya McNeil-Ayers, *Foreign Language*, Mrs. Alice Newman, *Kindergarten*, and Mrs. Karen Giatrelis, *School Psychologist*. She also introduced the JCS Site Council: Mrs. Paula D'Ercole, Mr. Dan Dwyer, Mrs. Christine Kofton, Mrs. Maureen Allen, Mrs. Sandy Ross, and Mrs. Linda O'Connor.

Next, Mrs. Brown introduced the Solmonese Parent Organization and commended them for being such a pleasure to work with. She said the SPO members are willing to roll up their sleeves and work hard. She said she can't imagine what she would do without them, and greatly appreciates their efforts.

SPO Director, Mrs. Michelle Petersen, described the goal of the SPO. She explained that the SPO aims to make all children feel comfortable at JCS. She said they work hard to make sure the SPO is visible. This year, the SPO enhanced the playground, provided a "Popsicle Party" to welcome new Kindergarteners, and provided a "Donuts with Dad and Muffins with Mom" event. Mrs. Petersen said that during these tough fiscal times, if we work together we can make a difference. She also explained that research shows children have an increased chance of success with parents who are involved in their lives. She commended Mrs. Brown and described her as second to none. She said Mrs. Brown is absolutely amazing, as she is doing the job of a principal, assistant principal, transportation director, and special education director at JCS. She said it has been a privilege and a pleasure to get to know Mrs. Brown as a mentor and a friend.

Mr. Mackie commended the library volunteers at JCS. He said the entire community is extremely appreciative of their efforts during such difficult school times. Mr. Dwyer said he is proud to be a member of both the SPO and the JCS Site Council. He explained that he attended JCS as a child, and that the school had a big impact on him. He said that is why he is back at JCS volunteering today. Mrs. Brown remarked that she knew Mr. Dwyer when he was a child attending JCS. She said it has been wonderful to see him come back. She also remarked that the new Police Chief in Norton is a former JCS student also. She said you never know which former students might come back to JCS in a new role someday.

**NHS Student Council Field Trip to Cape Cod:**

Dr. Ansay urged the committee to support this trip. She said the benefits are many. She explained that every requirement seems to be addressed, such as parental permission slips, the itinerary, chaperones, costs, transportation and lodging. Mr. Dewar was present to further expand on this request.

A discussion ensued. On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee voted 4-0 to approve the request for the high school Student Council to travel on a field trip to Cape Cod. Mr. Mackie was not present at the table for the vote.

**NHS Foreign Language Requirement:**

Dr. Ansay explained that she asked Mr. Dewar to take the necessary steps in instituting a foreign language requirement at Norton High School. She said she believes this is long overdue. She said such a move will benefit students planning to attend college, and will also benefit students in their future role in this global economy and the world of work. Mr. Dewar and Mrs. Patricia Penza attended this meeting to review the details of the proposal. Dr. Ansay explained that the move will not require any additional staffing.

A discussion ensued. On a motion by Mr. Mackie, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee unanimously approved the new foreign language requirement at Norton High School.

**PERSONNEL:**

**Resignation:**

Mr. Todd Mattera, NMS Educational Assistant, effective November 30, 2007

**Appointments:**

Mrs. Jessica Komenda, HAY Educational Assistant, effective November 28, 2007

Mr. Mark Liberatore, Boys' Varsity Basketball Coach

Mr. William Foley, Boys' Assistant Basketball Coach

Ms. Joan Valenti, Boys' Freshman Basketball Coach

Ms. Megan Mierzwinski, Girls' Assistant Basketball Coach

Mr. Robert McCoy, Girls' Freshman Basketball Coach

Mr. Kent Taylor, Girls' Winter Track Coach

Ms. Kim Bray, Swimming Coach

Mr. Patrick Coleman, Wrestling Coach

Ms. Nicole Ledbetter, Varsity Cheerleading Coach

**Adjournment to Executive Session:**

On a motion by Mrs. McManus, seconded by Mr. Golota, on a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:15 pm.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

**Monday, December 17, 2007, 6:30 P.M., Norton Middle School.**

