

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING NOTES

TO: ALL STAFF MEMBERS
FROM: Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
DATE: May 17, 2007

Date of School Committee Meeting: April 30, 2007

Location: Library, Norton Middle School

Attending:

Committee Members: Mr. Kevin O'Neil, Mr. Thomas Golota, Mr. Andrew Mackie, Mrs. Beth McManus, Mrs. Margaret Werner and Student Representative Larissa Weiner.

Call to Order:

Vice-Chairman O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings:

A motion was made by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, to approve the Regular Session Minutes of the prior meeting held on April 9th. On a 3-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes. Mr. Mackie and Mrs. McManus abstained from the vote.

A motion was then made by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. O'Neil, to approve the Executive Session Minutes of the meeting held on April 14th. On a 3-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve the Minutes. Mr. Mackie and Mrs. McManus abstained from the vote.

Reorganization of Norton School Committee:

Dr. Ansay welcomed the newest elected members of the Norton School Committee, Mr. Andrew Mackie and Mrs. Beth McManus. She then explained that the reorganization of the Norton School Committee is required by the School Committee Bylaws at the first meeting following the Annual Town Elections. After Vice-Chairman O'Neil opened the meeting, he turned the election process over to Dr. Ansay who acted as Chairman pro tem for the purpose of receiving nominations and conducting the election for the Chairman of the Norton School Committee.

Dr. Ansay asked for nominations for Chairman. Mrs. Werner made a motion, seconded by Mr. Golota, to nominate Mr. O'Neil as Chairman. Dr. Ansay asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Mr. O'Neil accepted the nomination. Since Mr. O'Neil was the only nominee, Dr. Ansay cast one ballot and announced Mr. O'Neil as the new Chairman of the Norton School Committee.

Chairman O'Neil then assumed his duties and conducted the election for Vice-Chairman. Mrs. Werner made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mackie, to nominate Mr. Golota as Vice-Chairman. Mr. O'Neil asked if there were any other nominations. There were none. Mr. Golota accepted the nomination. On a roll call vote, the committee unanimously accepted Mr. Golota as the new Vice-Chairman.

Mr. Mackie then volunteered to serve as the committee's Legislative Representative. On a roll call vote, the committee unanimously accepted Mr. Mackie as the new Legislative Representative. Mr. O'Neil then welcomed Mr. Mackie and Mrs. McManus, the newest members of the committee.

Public Hearing on the School Choice Program:

The School Choice Program requires a public hearing and then a vote by the School Committee on whether or not to participate for the following year. A Choice School District has to publish the number of seats that are available to children from other communities. With the financial constraints that Norton has, and large class sizes, Dr. Ansay recommended that Norton not participate in the School Choice Program for the 2007-2008 school year. Chairman O'Neil said he would entertain a vote not to participate in the School Choice Program. On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted not to participate in the School Choice Program.

Vote to Approve New Math Program:

Mrs. Amy Berdos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction K-12, was in attendance to present the new math series for the committee's review. Copies of the new series were provided for the committee. Dr. Ansay announced that she is excited about the change in the math program, and is excited about what it will do for the students. Mrs. Berdos explained that the school district began by piloting two different math programs in the fall. She recommended that the committee accept Houghton Mifflin's "Math Expressions" as the new math series. According to Mrs. Berdos, "Math Expressions" is a very balanced program that incorporates student participation and combines the best of both traditional and reform mathematics. She said the program really takes into account the different learning styles of our students, uses manipulatives for concrete examples, and uses "math boards" as a daily learning tool.

Mrs. Berdos announced that the teachers and parents have been very pleased with the "Math Expressions" program. She said they consistently say that they are amazed how much the children can do. She said that this program teaches for deeper meaning, and "spirals" in the sense that it takes all of the math curriculum strands, and exposes them to all of the children all year long.

Mrs. Berdos explained that the "Math Expressions" text is a consumable book with wonderful rich vocabulary. She asked the committee to approve this complete K-5 program tonight.

A discussion ensued about the new math series. Mr. Golota commended the “Math Expressions” program. He said he has seen the program in action with his own third-grader at the L.G. Nourse School. Mr. Golota said the program asks kids questions which make them think. Mr. O’Neil asked if this program supports the memorizing math facts. Mrs. Berdos explained that this program gives students multiple strategies, and that memorizing is an option. But, she said, there are other options too. She said the program addresses “fact fluency” on a daily basis.

Mr. Mackie recommended that the committee should not vote on the new math series tonight. He said he would like more of an opportunity to look at the materials. He also had numerous questions about the program. Mr. Mackie said that he would like to have the Department Chairman for Mathematics be present at the meeting when a vote is taken on the new math series. He said he’d also like to hear the words of the students themselves to find out if they like the new program. Mr. O’Neil asked Mr. Mackie if he could prepare a list of his questions and e-mail them to Dr. Ansay. He suggested that perhaps a few of the teachers could also attend the School Committee meeting the next time the new math series is placed on the agenda for approval.

Mrs. Werner said she believes kids need more than a knowledge of math facts. She said they need to know numbers with a deeper understanding. Mrs. Berdos concurred. However, she said this program also does do a great job with basic facts. A parent from the audience said she thought the school district was leaning more toward adopting the “Fast Math” program. She said she loves that particular program. She also said she would like to get more information about all of the choices. Chairman O’Neil announced that he would like to defer the vote and give the committee a chance to do a little independent research. The committee unanimously accepted this suggestion and deferred the vote on the new math series.

Public Hearing on the FY '08 School Operating Budget:

Dr. Ansay explained that the budget, in accordance with the Town Charter, has appeared in “The Sun Chronicle” newspaper. She presented three different budget scenarios to the committee and provided copies for those in attendance. She reviewed for the audience what the FY '08 proposed School Committee budget will provide. A question and answer session from the audience followed. Dr. Ansay asked the committee how she should proceed at Town Meeting scheduled for May 14th, and which budget she should submit then. She also asked the committee how she should proceed with the override issue at Town Meeting. A lengthy discussion about the budget and the override ensued between the committee and the audience.

Mr. O’Neil entertained a motion on supporting a “needs-based budget” which would mean the reinstatement of positions, opening of the libraries, and alleviating the need to cut custodian, clerical and educational assistant positions. On a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to approve a recommending a “needs-based budget” at Town Meeting.

Mr. O'Neil entertained a motion on supporting an over ride and asking for an over ride at Town Meeting. On a 4-1 vote, the committee voted to approve supporting an over ride and asking for an over ride at Town Meeting. Mr. O'Neil, Mr. Golota, Mr. Mackie and Mrs. Werner voted "yes". Mrs. McManus voted "no".

Vote to Award "Before & Award School Child Care" Contract:

The Before & After School Selection Committee, comprised of Mrs. Werner, Mr. Golota and Mr. Edmund Goulart, presented their recommendation. Dr. Ansay explained that the process was criteria-based. She further explained that the firm which came out with the first place rank was "Knowledge Learning Corporation". Mrs. Werner and Mr. Golota explained that the contract being awarded is a one year contract. Mr. Golota said they felt "Knowledge Learning Corporation", being the current child care provider for the school district, has been doing a great job. He said that the school district already has enough turmoil, and does not need any additional turmoil that may be caused by changing child care providers at this time.

Mr. Golota made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mackie, to award the "Before & After School Child Care" contract to Knowledge Learning Corporation for one year, with an option for a second and third year extension. On a 5-0 vote, the committee unanimously voted to award the "Before & After School Child Care" contract to Knowledge Learning Corporation.

Vote to Make Recommendation to Finance Committee & Town Meeting Regarding Costs for Middle School and Yelle School Repairs:

Dr. Ansay explained that a motion would be needed to recommend \$966,200 to Russo-Barr Associates for the cost associated with the Norton Middle School and Yelle School roof/flashing and masonry/beam repairs respectively, pending appropriation by the Town. On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee voted 4-0 to recommend \$966,200 to Russo-Barr Associates for the cost of repairs, pending appropriation by the Town. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote.

Information on Superintendent's Advisory Group:

Dr. Ansay explained that she has been meeting with members of the community monthly for 1-2 hours to gain support for the schools. She explained that this group is called the Superintendent's Advisors. She said she updates members on what is going on in the schools since the previous month, what problems we have encountered, and what good things are happening in the schools. She said members have an opportunity to ask questions and fill her in on perceptions of the school system around town. According to Dr. Ansay, these discussions also help with "rumor control". She said members of the Superintendent's Advisors include Ms. Harriet Kodis, Mr. Timothy O'Connell, Mr. Paul Doherty, Ms. Sue Alexander, Mrs. Virginia Coleman, Det. Jacob Dennett, Mrs. Linda Messer, Ms. Donna Olson, Ms. Pat Polio, Mrs. Lynn Regan, Mr. Paul Helmreich and Mr. Christopher Rappold.

Dr. Ansay explained that it is refreshing for her to hear some of their suggestions and recommendations. She said she thinks this process is going to grow and help us to be better at what we do. Chairman O'Neil said he thinks it is nice to have advisors to collaborate with outside of the work environment.

Personnel:

Leave of Absence:

Mrs. Melissa Oddi-Morrison, NHS Art Teacher, effective September 27th through June, 2008.

Registration:

Mrs. Susan Hayes, LGN Assistant Secretary, effective May 4, 2007.

Appointment:

Mr. Darnell Andrews, NMS Structured Resource Room Ed. Assistant, effective April 23, 2007.

Adjournment to Executive Session:

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, on a roll call vote, the committee unanimously voted to enter Executive Session at 9:10 p.m.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, May 21, 2007, 6:30 P.M., Norton Middle School

Enjoy the season!



These Meeting Notes are intended to keep the school district and the community informed in a timely fashion following a meeting of the Norton School Committee. They have not been officially approved by the committee.

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