

NORTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Norton, Massachusetts

MEETING MINUTES

Date of School Committee Meeting: March 10, 2008

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 6:37 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Review and Approval of Minutes of Prior Meetings:

A motion was made by Mr. Mackie, seconded by Mrs. Werner, to approve the Minutes of the prior meeting on February 11th. The Minutes were unanimously approved on a 5-0 vote.

A motion was made by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, to approve the Minutes of the prior meeting on February 25th. Mr. Mackie abstained from the vote due to his absence at this meeting. The Minutes were unanimously approved on a 4-0 vote.

Approval of Budget Transfers (2):

a) Dr. Ansay discussed the first budget transfer request which would move Norton Middle School Special Education Teacher Salary funds to the MS, HS and HAY Special Education expense lines. She explained that funds were available because a veteran teacher left mid-year, and it is necessary to purchase software that will convert text to speech.

b-1) Dr. Ansay discussed the second budget transfer request which would move Norton High School regular education Teacher Salary funds to the Norton High School expense line. She explained that funds were available because of the fact that a high school teacher retired mid-year and was replaced by someone at a lower salary. This transfer would support crucial and timely training for Academic Coordinators in the "Observing & Analyzing Teaching" training in order for them to evaluate teachers according to the district's practices, RBT (Research for Better Teaching) model.

b-2) Dr. Ansay discussed the request to move Teacher Salary funds to purchase one TB (terabyte) dual drive storage system to more effectively back up SIMS & EPIMS student/teacher data required by the Department of Education at each of the five schools.

On a motion by Mrs. Werner, seconded by Mr. Golota, the committee unanimously voted to approve these budget transfer requests.

Full -Day Kindergarten Survey Evaluation:

Dr. Ansay explained that the school department surveyed Kindergarten parents recently. Of the 229 Kindergarten parents surveyed, 138 returned the survey. Dr. Ansay summed up the survey results by explaining that it appears there is still a need for half-day Kindergarten. She explained that people feel that not all children are cut out for being in school for a full day at the age of 5 or 6. However, she said those parents participating in the full-day Kindergarten program are thrilled with all aspects of the program and are very pleased that we brought it here to Norton.

Dr. Ansay said she found all of the responses to the survey interesting and said the data will assist us in any adjustments to the program that we may need to make on the administrative level.

Mr. Golota clarified the issue of half-day Kindergarten. He explained that the school department will always need to offer the option of half-day Kindergarten until we can offer a full-day program that is free. He said we are obligated to provide free public education, and cannot offer only the full-day Kindergarten program with a cost attached.

FY '09 Budget Discussion:

Dr. Ansay explained that the School Committee approved a level service budget of \$23,481,712 (\$543,656 & 2.37% increase over FY '08). She discussed that the Town Manager and Finance Committee have dictated a \$370,736 decrease beyond level funding. This equates to \$914,392 in reductions. Dr. Ansay asked the committee if they wish to remain with the 2.37% increase, vote to accept a level funded budget, or vote to approve a \$22,567,320 budget which represents \$370,736 less than this year's budget despite increases in goods and services for FY '09 that we have little control over.

Mr. O'Neil pointed out that the budget will be presented to the community at the April 7th School Committee meeting. Mr. Golota asked if the committee would be discussing all of these budget options at this meeting. Mr. O'Neil replied yes. He explained that the slide show presentation will outline all of the cuts. According to Mr. O'Neil, this discussion will involve a wide interest in the community, and should be given a public forum with advance notice so that the public can attend.

Mr. O'Neil asked Miss Carmichael if high school students have any idea what is taking place with the school budget. Miss Carmichael explained that high school students are not really aware of this issue. Mrs. Donna Gradie, former School Committee member, was in attendance in the audience. Mrs. Gradie mentioned the importance of having the committee's liaison to the high school attend the parent board meeting at that school. She explained that this is an excellent opportunity to inform parents about the budget and other issues.

Mrs. Christine Kofton, a board member of the JCS parent group, was also in attendance in the audience. She agreed with Mrs. Gradie regarding the parent board meetings and the importance of having a School Committee liaison attend a meeting to discuss the budget. According to Mrs. Kofton, JCS has a huge parent turnout at their parent board meetings, and a lot of these young parents don't understand the budget. She said it would be very helpful to have a member of the School Committee attend one of these meetings to explain the budget. Mr. O'Neil thanked Mrs. Kofton for being in attendance tonight. He agreed that it is important for the School Committee to connect with the parent boards.

Mr. Mackie suggested that communication could be better between the School Committee and the parent boards at each of the five schools. Mrs. Kofton explained her idea of having one system-wide parent board with a representative from each school that meets annually with the School Committee. She explained that everyone is segregated, and a system-wide parent board would help to get everyone together.

Mr. O'Neil explained that we are well ahead of schedule with our discussion about the school budget. He said there will be plenty of time to fine tune the figures before the presentation to the community on April 7th. He emphasized the importance of this upcoming budget presentation, stating that the townspeople should understand what they are really voting for.

Athletic League Cost Study:

Dr. Ansay explained that Mr. O'Neil had requested that this item be placed on the agenda. According to Dr. Ansay, Mr. O'Neil makes this request annually to investigate transferring Norton's current athletic enrollment in the Tri-Valley League to the South Coast League (towns of Freetown-Lakeville, Bourne, Wareham, Westport, Seekonk, Dighton-Rehoboth, Fairhaven, Somerset, etc.) for the purpose of competitiveness. She further explained that a vote of the entire School Committee is necessary to direct the administration to engage in this study. She said areas to be considered include travel, league availability and dues. Dr. Ansay pointed out that neither Athletic Director Pillsbury nor Principal Dewar support this transfer.

A discussion ensued. Mr. O'Neil suggested that Norton does not match up very well in the Tri-Valley League because of the difference in the social economics of the other towns participating in this league. He listed some of the other towns in this league which include Ashland, Dover-Sherborn and Westwood. Mr. O'Neil said he believes Norton is much more at par with towns in the South Coast League. Mr. Golota agreed that the issue is worth a look.

Mr. O'Neil explained that the high school principal has the ultimate authority about which league the school will participate in. He suggested that changing leagues might provide a positive financial impact in terms of transportation costs. Dr. Ansay discussed how this study might be conducted in order to analyze the cost of transportation to each town in the two different leagues. She said she supports the idea of a financial study to determine if there would be a savings involved with changing leagues.

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mr. Mackie, the committee unanimously approved a preliminary financial study of transferring Norton's athletic enrollment to the South Coast League.

Personnel:

Retirement:

Mrs. Kathryn Rogers, NHS Special Education Teacher, after 35 years of service.

Adjournment:

On a motion by Mr. Golota, seconded by Mrs. Werner, the committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 7:55 pm.

NEXT MEETING DATE:

Monday, March 24, 2008, 6:30 P.M., Norton Middle School Library.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia H. Ansay, Ed.D.
Secretary pro tem
