



NORTH MIDDLESEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE
 Ashby – Pepperell – Townsend, Massachusetts

PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES – February 6, 2023

Virtual via Zoom

PRESENT

Chairperson	Craig Hansen	Member, Pepperell ~ Absent
Vice-Chairperson	Michael Morgan	Member, At Large ~ Absent
	Randee Rusch	Member, At Large
	Thomas Casey	Member, Pepperell
	Lisa Martin	Member, At Large
	David Carney	Member, Pepperell ~ Absent
	June McNeil	Member, Ashby
	Jessica Funaiole	Member, Townsend
	Susan Robbins	Member, Townsend ~ Absent

ALSO PRESENT

Brad Morgan	Superintendent of Schools
Gary Burboa-Reese	Assistant Superintendent of Schools
Nancy Haines	Business Manager
Robin Eibye	Recording Secretary

7:00 OPEN PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE FY 2022-2023 SCHOOL CHOICE

1. Vice-Chairperson, June McNeil, opened the meeting at 7:05 pm and announced the School Committee was meeting virtually via Zoom, practicing social distancing, and in accordance with the Governor's suspension of specific open meeting laws.
2. It was announced that the meeting would be recorded.

Roll Call:			
Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

3. Ms. McNeil informed the Committee and attendees that the North Middlesex Regional School Committee's next meeting would be at 7:00 pm on Monday, March 6, 2023, via Zoom.

It was confirmed the School Choice Public Hearing would occur later when the District better understood enrollment numbers.

7:05 OPEN PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE FY 2024 PROPOSED BUDGET

At 7:06 p.m. Thomas Casey motioned, and Lisa Martin seconded to open the Public Hearing for the FY 2023-2024 Proposed Budget.

Roll Call:			
Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 5/0/0.

Superintendent Morgan and Business Manager Nancy Haines presented an overview of the Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Recommendation for the North Middlesex Regional School District. The presentation is attached for reference.

Mr. Morgan said NMRSD, like all districts, continued to deal with the residual impacts of COVID-19 and other challenges that impact the budget. Mr. Morgan said the challenges included move-ins, state mandates, special education eligible students, post-pandemic academic and social-emotional student needs, and class size limits resulting in the need for additional staffing. Mr. Morgan said that based on current projections, the District requested an additional 5.25 FTEs for FY2024, which resulted in 15.71 FTEs over FY2023.

Mr. Morgan and Ms. Haines discussed the need for additional guidance and school adjustment counselors, the nationwide shortage of those going into teacher preparation programs and the increase in those leaving the profession, staffing challenges, Chapter 766 School Tuition, potential Ashby Elementary School and Hawthorne Brook Middle School building projects, substitute teachers’ and nurses’ pay, safety issues, the Pepperell planned housing project, regular transportation and special education transportation contracts, utility costs, health insurance, and budget impacts.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Quinton Cutler, Pepperell Finance Committee, asked about the timeline for the District's final numbers. Superintendent Morgan said he expected the governor’s numbers before the Budget Adoption meeting on March 6th.

Mr. Cutler asked:

1. Was the \$1 million Excess and Deficiency balance reasonable?
2. Could it be lowered?
3. How does the District determine the amount needed for Excess and Deficiency?

Nancy Haines said because the District had several buildings and limited reserves, E&D funding was needed for unforeseen issues.

Mr. Cutler asked about transportation and state funding. Mr. Morgan said the state mandated the District to provide a seat for every student; however, the state's reimbursement was only 70% of transportation costs leaving the District to fund the remaining 30%. Mr. Morgan said the state prohibited regional districts from charging families for transportation.

Townsend's Town Administrator, Eric Slagle, said all three towns were facing budget issues. Mr. Slagle noted the proposed budget was not sustainable and a significant override would be needed for the towns to afford the proposed budget.

Randee Rusch responded to Quinton Cutler's question about the E&D and said the E&D balance ensures the District's credit rating, saving money over time when borrowing funds.

Mike Bussell, acting Town Administrator of Ashby, said it would be tough for the towns to manage the proposed numbers.

A discussion ensued about the proposed budget and the need for additional state funding to maintain costs.

Mr. Morgan said the proposed budget was a level service budget.

Thomas Casey said the District was responsible for meeting all students' needs, and larger class sizes would make meeting all students' needs more challenging.

Ms. Rusch said drafting the budget was a process, and the District would continue to look for savings and creative ways to reduce the budget and keep the services needed to meet students' needs.

Mr. Cutler said a lot of work went into the proposed budget over the past several months, and the District and towns have good working relationships.

Ms. McNeil asked if anyone wished to speak about the budget, and no one responded.

Mr. McNeil thanked everyone for their input on the proposed budget.

At 7:58 p.m., Lisa Martin motioned, and Jessica Funaiole seconded to close the Public Hearing for the FY 2023-2024 Proposed Budget.

Roll Call:

Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 5/0/0.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Following review, Thomas Casey moved, and Jessica Funaiole seconded to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 5/0/0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Robin Eibye confirmed no one signed up to speak during public comment.

REPORTS/INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Chairperson's Report – C. Hansen
 - None
2. Superintendent's Report – B. Morgan
 - None

NEW BUSINESS/GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Out-of-State Travel – T. McMahon
Timothy McMahon said the high school Winter Color and Percussion Guards' would travel to Salem, New Hampshire, to compete on February 18 and March 11, 2023.

Thomas Casey motioned, and Randee Rusch seconded the School Committee to approve the NMRHS Winter Color and Percussion Guards' out-of-state trips to Salem, New Hampshire, to compete on February 18 and March 11, 2023.

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 5/0/0.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN

1. Accelerated Repair – L. Martin
 - Next meeting: February 9, 2023.
2. AES Building Committee – J. McNeil
 - On February 2, 2023, the School Committee voted to rescind their vote to appropriate Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000) to pay the costs of developing a feasibility study for AES. The town of Ashby approved \$300,000 for immediate repairs.
 - Next meeting: February 7, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
3. Building Committee – C. Hansen
 - None
4. Communications – T. Casey
 - October – December Update will be published shortly.
5. Finance (L. Martin)
 - Next meeting: February 10, 2023.
6. Negotiation & Personnel (T. Casey)
 - None
7. Policy (R. Rusch)
 - Next meeting: February 8, 2023

ADJOURN – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN

Thomas Casey motioned, and Randee Rusch seconded to adjourn.

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	-	Michael Morgan	-
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes	Susan Robbins	-
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 5/0/0.

Documents Reviewed / Referred To

- 2023 02-06 Public Hearing Agenda
- FY2024 Budget Message (2nd Draft)
- FY24 Budget by Function – Budget Hearing 2-6-23
- FY24 Budget Summary – Budget Hearing 2-6-23
- 2023 02-02 Minutes
- 2023 01-30 Minutes
- Accounts Payable Warrants
- Payroll Warrants
- Donations

Respectfully submitted,
Robin Eibye, Recording Secretary

APPROVED: March 6, 2023
