

NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH SCHOOL COMMITTEE
NORTH ATTLEBOROUGH, MA
NOVEMBER 2, 2020
6:00 P.M. VIRTUAL MEETING

The North Attleborough School Committee held a virtual meeting on Monday, November 2, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman McKenna called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance Roll Call:

School Committee:

John Costello - Present	Secretary Ethan Hamilton - Present
Kathryn Hobbs - Present	Kevin O'Donnell - Present
Carol Wagner - Present	Sarah Stone - Present
Chairman James McKenna - Present	Town Council President Keith Lapointe - Present

Central Administration:

Superintendent Scott Holcomb - Present	Assistant Superintendent Michelle McKeon - Present
Business Administrator David Flynn - Present	Interim Dir. of Facilities and Grounds - Christopher George - Present
Administrative Assistant Mary Chagnon - Absent	

Student Representatives:

Shruti Srinivasan - Present	Brody Rosenberg - Present
Dylan Desrosiers - Present	Joseph Perriello - Present
Grace Noreck - Present	

Mr. McKenna announced the meeting was being held remotely due to the Executive Order of Governor Baker on March 12, 2020.

The Pledge of Allegiance followed.

Recognitions

Superintendent Holcomb introduced Senior students Mia Antunovic and Shruti Srinivasan, recipients of the Certificate of Academic Excellence. Mr. Holcomb read a statement written by Mia's guidance counselor, Kara Simmons, highlighting her academic career at NAHS. Mr. Holcomb continued and read a statement by Shruti's guidance counselor, Melissa Kelly, describing her NAHS achievements. Chairman McKenna called on each student and asked them to explain what attributed to their successes. Both students mentioned their parents, teachers and peers as the supporters that have influenced them through the years. Discussion ensued.

Superintendent Holcomb reported on the USDA extension of Universal Free School Meals through June 2021 and congratulated the Food Service Department and thanked specifically David Flynn, Heather Baril and all the cafeteria workers for all the work they do to provide our students with breakfast and lunch throughout the year.

Presentations

Chairman McKenna called on the NAHS Student Representatives to provide us with the happenings at the high school. Shruti Srinivasan reported on the yearbook senior pictures being due November 13th. Shruti stated the entire Student Advisory Committee was confident in the way administration was handling things at school as far as policies and rules that are in place to keep them safe. They felt the practices that have been put in place have prevented the spread of the virus around school. Shruti stated that outside activities and events that are not sponsored by the school could have a negative impact on the positivity rate. Dylan Desrosiers reported on graduation at the High School. He stated June 4th - June 6th have been put aside as potential dates for the ceremony and at this time all end of year senior activities have been put on hold. Dylan also reported the Graphic Design department receiving new laptops, enough for each student to have one on loan for the duration of their class to be able to run the software needed for the class. Brody Rosenberg provided updates on the Seal of Biliteracy program and a new program called Friendly Faces that has bi-lingual students sitting with new students who speak other languages to help make them feel more comfortable in their new environments. Brody also reported on the Biology Olympiad, a national science competition that NAHS students will be participating in. Joseph Perriello reported on fall sports at the high school. He stated field hockey, soccer, cross

country and golf are wrapping up and went very smoothly. COVID guidelines were followed very well with no positive incidents being reported. Clubs are starting up and all the meetings are being held virtually and are held during X block or after school. Joseph stated having clubs take place during X block gives all students a chance to participate because it is during school hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Grace Noreck discussed difficulties and successes students are having with distance learning. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna introduced Interim Facilities and Grounds Director Chris George. Mr. George reported on updates the maintenance department has completed over the last month including protection shields being installed, ventilation protocols, and flushometers. Mr. George stated the grounds crew was working on leaf removal, moving 620 student desks to the appropriate schools, and repainting lines at Martin School. He reported on the continued sanitization protocols by the custodial staff. Mr. George reviewed ongoing Capital Improvement Projects including the purchase of SPED vehicles, district carpeting, and ceiling repairs at Community, Amvet and the High School. Mr. George stated the track has been engineered by NESRA Engineering and the NAMS walk-in freezer has been installed. Mr. George gave an update on the timeline of the Community School Roof project. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna called on Superintendent Holcomb for a report on COVID-19. Mr. Holcomb introduced Director of Student Services Meg Camire, Nurse Leader Melissa Badger, and Department of Health Nurse Ann Marie Fleming who offered a report on where we stand with student and staff incidents. Mrs. Badger reported an addition to the Coronavirus website accessed through the NA Schools' website that gives an update on positive cases and transmissions in and out of school. Mrs. Badger stated all known cases seem to be household transmission and not through the schools. Mrs. Badger stated she would be sending a health advisory out to all parents directing them to the information on the website. Mr. Holcomb requested that those listening in the community remain cognizant of guidelines Governor Baker set forth and practice social distancing, limited size gatherings and mask wearing to help alleviate any increases in positive cases. Mr. Holcomb introduced Mrs. Ann Marie Fleming who explained the reports from the state Department of Health which shows each community in the state with a rating based on positive cases. Mrs. Fleming reported that North Attleborough changed to red last week. Mrs. Fleming stated the positive cases that turned NA red were not transmitted within the schools at this point. There is no indication for the need to close the schools. Mrs. Fleming stated constant monitoring is in place in collaboration with the state DPH, DESE and our local DPH. Superintendent Holcomb stated evidence at this point is showing the virus is not spreading through school-age children, however there is always the chance it may and if and when it does, protocols will be put in place regarding classroom/school closures. Mrs. Camire reported on the rapid test kits that the school district has applied for. These kits are made available through a joint effort of DESE, the state DPH and the Department of Defense. The free kits are being made available to school districts. Mrs. Camire stated school nurses are the primary point of care for our students and it makes sense that having these kits available would be a benefit to all. She explained nasal swab tests would be administered with parental consent in the COVID-19 waiting rooms at each of our schools to students who were symptomatic. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna introduced Superintendent Michelle McKeon who gave an update on Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. Mrs. McKeon stated administrators, teachers and curriculum departments have been busy piloting and implementing many new programs and tech tools to keep our in-person, hybrid and remote students engaged and excited to learn. Mrs. McKeon reported the leadership team was prepared to facilitate the Professional Development Day that was planned for tomorrow. SEL training was being reviewed and next steps were being planned. Plans are in place to identify and address gaps caused by the "Covid Slide". Mrs. McKeon stated they would be analyzing baseline data with teachers to develop plans to close the gaps, increase student achievement, and plan for instructional recovery. She mentioned a grant funded After School Program being put in place to help struggling students. Mrs. McKeon gave an update on the Deeper Learning Collaborative (DESE Kaleidoscope Group) and the training that has taken place at Amvet Boulevard School and North Attleborough Middle School. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna called on Superintendent Holcomb for a review of his 2020-2021 goals. Mr. Holcomb stated the goals that were developed and voted on were created pre-Covid19. Mr. Holcomb wanted a review of these goals to determine if the goals are still viable under the current pandemic climate. Mr. Holcomb started with the District Improvement Goal on increasing communication through the creation and dissemination of a quarterly central administration newsletter. Mr. Holcomb reported the 1st edition was slated to be sent to parents next week and stated that this goal was still viable and able to be met during Covid times. Mr. Holcomb referred to the next goal of the superintendent advocating and implementing the 2021 School Committee budget was also viable and guaranteed but was looking for clarification on what the benchmark would be for what that looks like. Mr. Holcomb stated he needed to know what exactly the school committee was looking for since he would be assessed on the completion of this goal, what is the benchmark for success and what it would look like as it is measured. Superintendent Holcomb continued to the professional practice goal, enhancing climate and culture across the district by building positive relationships and increasing visibility at schools. Mr. Holcomb stated that due to the current COVID 19 pandemic, and the structure of our Hybrid/Remote Learning models it has

made it impossible for him to increase his visibility at schools. He stated this goal may need to be looked at for revision. Superintendent Holcomb continued on to the Student Learning Goal, virtual learning opportunities for students and staff will be improved and expanded. Mr. Holcomb stated this goal would be viable in current times. Mr. Holcomb requested clarification from the School Committee on the Budget FY21 goal and his professional practice goal. Discussion ensued.

School Committee Members Community Announcements

John Costello encouraged everyone to vote. Kathryn Hobbs mentioned the poinsettia sale by the Music Department and thanked the community for their support. Kevin O'Donnell recognized all veterans and acknowledged Veterans' Day coming up. Sarah Stone and Carol Wagner encouraged everyone to vote and stated all districts would be voting at the high school. Carol Wagner also stated everyone should thank our veterans for the sacrifices they made to keep us safe. Keith Lapointe wanted to make the School Committee aware of the process of the Master Plan being updated. He also stated that the Town Council recently asked for the open space plans for the town such as fields, hiking trails, dog parks etc. Mr. Lapointe described the new transparency initiative where a CIP program and all the Town Council measures that have come forward to the council that have been posted on the website for all to review. James McKenna also recognized our veterans.

Action Items:

Chairman McKenna called for a motion to approve the bills dated October 9, 16, 23, and 30, 2020; so moved by Kevin O'Donnell, seconded by Carol Wagner, so voted by roll call vote:

Roll call vote:

John Costello - Yes	Secretary Ethan Hamilton - Abstain
Kathryn Hobbs - Yes	Kevin O'Donnell - Yes
Carol Wagner - Yes	Sarah Stone - Yes
Chairman James McKenna - Yes	
Motion passed 6-0-1	

Chairman McKenna called for a motion to approve the minutes dated October 5, 2020; so moved by Kevin O'Donnell, seconded by Carol Wagner, so voted by roll call vote:

Roll call vote:

John Costello - Yes	Secretary Ethan Hamilton - Yes
Kathryn Hobbs - Yes	Kevin O'Donnell - Yes
Carol Wagner - Yes	Sarah Stone - Yes
Chairman James McKenna - Yes	
Motion passed 7-0-0	

Discussion Items

Chairman McKenna referred to Superintendent Holcomb for an update on the FY21 Budget as well as the Circuit Breaker reimbursement. Mr. Holcomb introduced Business Administrator David Flynn who provided the committee with an update. Mr. Flynn stated we had a good start to the school year with some turnover of staff but replacements hired balanced out so we are in good shape there. He explained that we started the year at \$850,000 below a level service budget. Mr. Flynn described a request that was made for a \$200,000 increase to the Special Education Tuition line item that was not included in the approved budget. He reported the 5 year prior average of the state Circuit Breaker reimbursement had been approximately \$869,000 until last year it dropped to \$583,000. This year it went up to \$742,000 which is an increase over last year but is still \$127,000 less than our average reimbursement which helps to offset the Special Education tuitions. Mr. Flynn stated this ties in to the need to have this money in the budget with no other source to pay for these tuitions. Mr. Flynn explained the vote by the School Committee not to have transportation fees this year due to COVID has caused an additional \$225,000 in revenue that will not be realized. He stated the vote not to charge for full day Kindergarten has resulted in another \$400,000 in revenue not coming in at this time. Due to COVID and buildings and facilities not being accessible to outside organizations, we have seen another \$50,000 in fees not being collected. Mr. Flynn stated with the district being 2 months into the school year and 4 months into the fiscal year, these shortages need to be on everyone's radar. He stated that whether it be free cash or the higher than expected amount of state aid coming in, there needs to be a method of getting additional funds into the school budget.

Chairman McKenna called on Town Manager Mike Borg for a report on the recently certified free cash of \$4.6 million. Mr. Borg explained he would stand by his statement made during Budget negotiations that any funds turned over to the town from each department that would later be certified as free cash would be sent back to each department. He stated he would advocate to the Town Council for the \$80,000 turned back from the School Department would be returned to them for the FY21 budget. Mr. Borg

stated the majority of the \$4.6 million came from a combined turnback from all departments in town maintained through spending cuts and a hiring freeze imposed which netted \$3.2 million. Mr. Borg stated \$1 million of the certified free cash came from CIP projects that were put on hold that were not underway which had no effect on the school department. Mr. Borg went on to state that leaves approximately \$300,000 - \$400,000 in free cash that is unallocated. Mr. Borg explained he was also tracking the Cares Act and \$2.5 million of reimbursements for the school department for COVID related expenses which he felt should offset some of the deficits the school department is experiencing. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna moved on to the topic of FY22 budget. Business Administrator Flynn stated he would be referring the proposed level service budget to the Budget Subcommittee at some point within the next couple of weeks. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna stated during the week of October 21st the Commissioner of Education indicated as a result of the Hybrid/Remote learning approach, our grading policy may need to be updated/adjusted to take this into account. Mr. McKenna called on Superintendent Holcomb for his insight into this requirement from the state. Mr. Holcomb reported there was a dichotomy across the districts on the policies being used. Some districts are maintaining the grading policy they followed pre-COVID that is utilized for both Hybrid and Remote learners. Other districts have modified their policies between what they are observing in fully remote compared to hybrid learners because of the differentiation between the groups of children. Mr. Holcomb introduced Assistant Superintendent McKeon for further clarification. Mrs. McKeon reported that our remote students are fully integrated into our hybrid classrooms and are all taught by North Attleborough educators and following the same curriculum. Assessments are the same for all students. Therefore, the decision was made to grade all of our students by the same policy that was in place pre-COVID. Mrs. McKeon stated the recommendation would be to grade fully remote students the same as hybrid students and students who attend in-person four days a week. Discussion ensued. Chairman McKenna called for a motion to refer the topic of grade policy revision to the Curriculum Policy Subcommittee, so moved by Kevin O'Donnell, seconded by Carol Wagner, so voted by roll call vote:

Roll call vote:

John Costello - Yes

Kathryn Hobbs - Yes

Carol Wagner - Yes

Chairman James McKenna - Yes

Motion passed 6-1-0

Secretary Ethan Hamilton - No

Kevin O'Donnell - Yes

Sarah Stone - Yes

Chairman McKenna moved on to the topic of additional students attending school four days a week and called on Superintendent Holcomb for an update. Mr. Holcomb stated that we have DESE guidance that certain groups of students need to be in school 4 days a week and reported that in North Attleborough we have brought certain cohorts of students back to school 4 days a week. DESE's guidance referred to "high needs" students. Mr. Holcomb explained the umbrella of students falling under "high needs" would include those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, students needing support, students on active 504s, on active IEPs, homeless students and students of teachers. Mr. Holcomb stated discussions are underway to bring additional students back based on the availability of seating within the 6ft. distance. These additional students would be brought back beginning the week of November 15th. Principals are working with the Assistant Superintendent along with the Office of Student Services to make a determination to reduce subjectivity to create equity as to who we bring back. Mr. Holcomb reported the things being looked at are students who were retained, homeless students, and the availability of seats on the bus. Discussion ensued.

Chairman McKenna moved on to the topic of snow days and called on Superintendent Holcomb for an update. Mr. Holcomb reported that DESE has left the decision making process up to the Superintendents' discretion and the state is divided on the topic. Mr Holcomb stated it has been decided in North Attleborough that unless there are power outages and the storm would make travel on the roads too dangerous, the day will become a remote learning day and students would not have to make the day up at the end of the year. If the inclement weather does result in power outage and travel on the roads would be too hazardous, the day will be designated a snow day and no learning will take place on this day. Discussion ensued.

Public Questions/Comments

Shanna Jennings, 215 Sheldonville Road, a parent of students who attend Amvet questioned whether or not discussions have been had about bringing back groups of children by grade level. Ms. Jennings stated she knew of several towns in Massachusetts, namely Westwood and Wellesley, that have called by all Kindergarten and Grade 1 students to full-time in person learning. Mr. Holcomb responded that he would have to look into it. Mr. Holcomb stated staff number restrictions would need to be considered. Ms. Jennings also asked if families would be asked how they feel about sending kids back to school full time and do we consider it safe sending our students back full time.

Chairman's Report

Chairman McKenna offered his thanks to all administrators and teachers for their hard work and dedication.

Executive Session

Chairman McKenna called for a motion to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect hereto; and to discuss negotiations with Non-Union Personnel which may have a detrimental effect if held in open session he so declared, so moved by Kevin O'Donnell, seconded by Carol Wagner. Discussion ensued. So voted by roll call vote:

Roll call vote:

John Costello - Yes

Kathryn Hobbs - Yes

Carol Wagner - Yes

Chairman James McKenna - Yes

Motion passed 6-1-0

Secretary Ethan Hamilton - No

Kevin O'Donnell - Yes

Sarah Stone - Yes

Chairman McKenna stated they would be returning to regular session.

Meeting adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 11:10 p.m. Mr. McKenna called for a motion to adjourn, so moved by Kevin O'Donnell, seconded by Carol Wagner, so voted by roll call vote:

Roll call vote:

John Costello - Yes

Kathryn Hobbs - Yes

Carol Wagner - Yes

Chairman James McKenna - Yes

Motion passed 7-0-0

Secretary Ethan Hamilton - Yes

Kevin O'Donnell - Yes

Sarah Stone - Yes

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Mary Chagnon.