

Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes – Remote Participation via ZOOM and YouTube
May 4, 2021

Present Members: Chair Pauline Proch, Vice Chair Jennifer Iller, Secretary Steve Sortevik, and Dr. Tim Lepore. Also present from the Studio, NCTV Representative Matt Pommerfret and presenters as guests: SMRT Richard Webb, John McMeeking, Nicholas Vaughn, Director of Facilities Diane O’Neil, Director of Finance Martin Anguelov. This meeting is a Remote Participation Meeting via “ZOOM” in compliance with Governor Charles Baker’s mandate during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by Chair Pauline Proch who followed with reading into the Minutes, scripted instructions for procedure of this meeting under COVID requirements:

Read into the Meeting Minutes at the Start of the Meeting - Confirming Member Access:

This is Pauline Proch, Chair of the Nantucket School Committee. Permit me to confirm that all members and persons anticipated on the agenda are present and can hear me. Members, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative: Jennifer Iller, Zona Butler, Steve Sortevik, Secretary.

Staff, when I call your name, please respond in the affirmative: Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett; School Committee Clerk, Logan O’Connor; Director of Technology, Jennifer Erichsen

Good evening. This Open Meeting of Nantucket School Committee is being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker’s Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth due to the outbreak of the “COVID-19 Virus.” In order to mitigate the transmission of the COVID-19 Virus, we have been advised and directed by the Commonwealth to suspend public gatherings, and as such, the Governor’s Order suspends the requirement of the Open Meeting Law to have all meetings in a publicly accessible physical location. Further, all members of public bodies are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely.

The Order, which you can find posted with agenda materials for this meeting allows public bodies to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. Ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. This meeting will feature public comment. For this meeting, Nantucket School Committee is convening by video conference via Zoom Webinar App as posted on the Town’s Website identifying how the public may join.

Each vote taken in this meeting will be conducted by roll call vote.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04pm. A motion was made to approve the agenda by Tim Lepore, seconded by Steve Sortevik, and which was then approved unanimously by roll call vote. Mrs. Proch welcomed everyone to the Nantucket School Committee meeting and opened Public Comment.

Comments from the Public

None

Superintendent’s Report

Middle & High School Return to In-Person Learning Update

Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett reported on April 28 Cyrus Peirce Middle School welcomed 383 students through the doors for full time in-person learning with 42 students remaining in Cohort D. She stated the day went very smoothly and everyone was happy to be in person with students and staff reconnecting. Counselors were ready for individuals who needed some additional supports, lunch happened outside, in the cafeteria and in classrooms, and all seems well. The Superintendent also was excited to welcome the high school students back, with their return date upcoming for May 5. The NHS Principal had said schedules and rooms are begin tweaked prior to the first return date as many Cohort D students are asking to change into full time in person.

Dr. Hallett offered some newly established dates for the upperclassmen based upon Governor Baker’s relaxed protocol outlines and she informed the School Committee: Senior Banquet is scheduled for June 3, the newly established Car Parade for the afternoon of June 9, Graduation to be held outside at the Backus fields for June 12 (rain date June 13) and a tentative date for a Junior Prom on June 19.

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Dr. Hallett also wished to share some information regarding COVID relief funding. Having previously reported on and utilized the ESSER I grant, she spoke about the ESSER II grant being a large portion of money slated for professional services and instructional stipends for support and extra learning. This grant is upwards of \$425,000 and had an application timeline beginning April 17. Further down the road (Fall 2021) is an ESSER III grant, which is a substantial amount and will be available in the future. She cautioned these funds are not for hiring staff for additional full-time positions (the state has discouraged use of the funds in this manner, citing they are for now, not later) because they are considered finite, one-time opportunities with expiration dates attached to the regulations. Steve Sortevik asked about the 3 million dollars of relief funds from the state to the Town of Nantucket and wanted to know if the school was in line for some of this funding, and, has this been discussed. Dr. Hallett reminded the School Committee the federal funding from the state to the school directly has been almost 1.6 Million dollars and which in her view is plenty of money to support our efforts as we roll back into 'normal' school operations. She agreed the school is open to TON discussion about their funding but said for the moment, we are appreciative and comfortable with the funding coming to the district. The Director of Finance Martin Anguelov added he has had numerous discussions with the Department of Education and highlighted how funding for TON and for NPS is separate. The ESSER relief package funding(s) are designated specifically and directly to the schools. He repeated the ESSER I grant, \$375,000 for this past year of which \$81,000 is remaining for the year. He spoke to the new ESSER grants, how they expire yearly and therefore need to be utilized within specific timelines. Mr. Anguelov also reminded the budget year is steady feeling no need to ask TON for additional money on top of what we have been granted. Mr. Sortevik asked for clarification regarding the state paying for lunches through the entirety of next year as they did this past year. Mr. Anguelov affirmed that this is correct and when he presents the 3rd quarter budget numbers later in this meeting the School Committee will see the participation rates with odd numbers and lower than the reimbursement. He reminded the Committee that Chartwells still needs to be paid, and that overhead is higher than what participation rates took in even with reimbursements.

Enrollment

For May 2021, Dr. Hallett reported 1661 students for the district with 16 enrollments and 7 withdrawals. She cited the number for returning to in-person learning supports some of these entries.

School Committee Vacancy

The vacancy for the open seat from June 30th through Annual Town Meeting 2022 has been posted in the Inquirer & Mirror and is on the website. The process will begin for interview in June, and a candidate will be selected to fill the seat vacated by the resignation of Mrs. Butler.

School Counsel

Dr. Hallett provided a copy of policy BDG entitled "School Attorney" and discussed how this outline and explains the use of legal consultation. She talked about the pandemic contributing to much of the additional legal advice/expenditures for this year, referring to negotiations with the Unions, civil rights complaints, staff issues, immigration issues, and the district social media policy review. She affirmed that it is routine (but not constant) for the Superintendent to reach out to counsel on behalf of the Committee (if and when needed), and to date we have spent \$39,000 in legal fees. As she is new to the district, she has met and worked with two firms in her short tenure and asked Mrs. O'Connor to share any additional history. Mrs. O'Connor gave the information of one smaller firm Long & DiPietro, representing the school dating back to when Alan Myers was sitting Superintendent. Dr. Lepore confirmed using attorneys even earlier. A little over a decade ago, the School Committee asked to consider additional counsel (a larger firm) for quicker response times when Robert Pellicone was Superintendent, and which led to the established relationship with the firm Deutsch, Williams, Brooks & DeRensis. This firm specializes in education law and has connections to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC). A few years ago, that firm split into two, and the school currently maintains the relationship with all three, primarily working with Valerio, Dominello & Hillman. Mrs. O'Connor furthered, we have had no litigation or arbitration and maintain the successful use of preventative counseling, adding how responsive our legal counsel has been in every situation. Mr. Sortevik commented he feels we are overusing legal counsel and gave the example of the School Committee vacancy and that we should have relied on the TON advice.

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Presentations and discussions of interest to the Committee

Master Campus Plan – SMRT Architects Richard Webb, John McMeeking, Nicholas Vaughn

Richard Webb offered a PowerPoint presentation full of drawings and photographs. He referenced the planning having already started in 2019 for this current stage of the Campus-wide Master Plan, but it had been suspended due to the pandemic. Now reestablishing and reengaging this plan to move forward with this substantial project, Dick Webb wanted to update the School Committee on the progress to date. This presentation covered the Master Campus Planning History (a 10-year plan in mid-process), the need for athletic improvements, the description of project components, the benefits of athletic improvements, the proposed project schedule and costs, and future improvements and phases. Mr. Webb strongly advocated that for this plan to work, education always comes first. He focused on the building project footprint center of the site drawing. It was important to locate and identify a place for a school in the future, should a 4th learning facility be needed to accommodate enrollment. The Committee determined the envisioned space lies at the center of the master campus. He continued by reviewing the phasing history, which outlined strategies for the last 8-10 years and future planning/phases to efficiently and diligently, move forward. At this point in time, we have relocated play structures, swings and gardens, completed the central parking lot and connector drive, completed an addition at the Cyrus Peirce Middle School, built the Nantucket Intermediate School, completed the storage building and the NIS playground, finalized and built retaining walls and security fencing at the Backus fields, and completed NHS parking improvements. Currently being bid is the approved and capitolly funded varsity baseball field and tennis courts. The future phases include the building of the 400-meter track and two synthetic fields, the athletics team room and storage building, a support building, faculty housing, and potentially a new school if needed.

Mr. Webb broke down further details to support the need: NHS athletic participation numbers exceed the states, the cost of maintaining our overused fields and the downtime of non-use required for re-sod repair contributes to not accommodating the established needs. He shared that NHS is the last district in the state to have a cinder track and how it no longer conforms to national standards compliance and appropriate safety codes. In order to introduce running and track as an additional sport, the track will need to be redone. Additionally, the existing grandstand no longer meets current building codes and does not provide handicap accessibility options, a safety issue to take into consideration. The multi-sport fields will support football, soccer, field hockey and lacrosse and will increase opportunities of sport competition. Lighting improvements will provide safer conditions, longer playing time, reduced glare, better lighting free of “hot spots” and consideration of dark sky initiatives. He talked about parking and support facility needs; with construction comes better configuration and improvements, circulation is increased, and there will be a net gain of 62 additional parking spaces including accessible spaces. Utility work will be improved in all areas for electrical, water, and sewer, also including stormwater management gully systems.

He finished by focusing on the overall benefits of the whole plan in progress and the improvements which are important to increasing the student quality of life. He completed an overview of the project schedule and reviewed the project costs, taking into account construction cost differences between Nantucket and the mainland, adding in contingencies and escalation for COL increases. He asked if there was any discussion or questions from the School Committee. Dr. Lepore was impressed with the plan progress and was curious about seating structures for the opposite side of the field across from the proposed grandstand. Mr. Webb said there is an area dedicated for a 250-person seat structure, earmarked for future. Jennifer Iller was concerned about drop off and circulation of traffic and the need for better and safer pedestrian access. Mr. Webb responded that parking and sidewalks will be part of the plan. Mr. Sortevik asked if Phase 10 includes both synthetic fields to which Mr. Webb said yes, they will be constructed at the same time. Student Council representative Amanda Mack said this was exciting and the student athletes will be “psyched.” The Chair commended the work of the architects and the Master Campus Committee, acknowledging this has been a very conscientious plan from the start and they are excited to see the continued progress.

Facilities Update – Director of Facilities, Diane O’Neil

Director of Facilities Diane O’Neil presented the facilities update for this year. She began by commending and thanking her entire department and wanted to give a huge shoutout to her staff for their dedication and work overall, but especially this year with the pandemic. Mrs. O’Neil went quickly through her list by each school, of projects and cost expenditures. One of the largest endeavors has been the overall HVAC issues in multiple buildings, some fixing leak issues, some as upgrades. She talked about boiler replacement and receiving burners for the boilers at NES. The burners came from the hospital when

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they were removing and upgrading and what is especially nice about being able to utilize this “gift” from NCH is that these burners are dual fuel giving us the option of how we want to run the boilers. Mrs. O’Neil thanked Richard Webb for his help with guiding repair to the new gym floor in NIS. The floors were a problem in the new NIS building from the start and required being re-sanded and redone. Now they look “fantastic” and she is pleased with the finished project. She reminded the School Committee that projects were not funded last year due to COVID-19 and she is hoping the approvals happen for this year. Finally, Mrs. O’Neil gave a quick overview of the expenditures for COVID protocols, Federal CARES Act expenditures and safety equipment, totaling an amount of \$265,113.46. The School Committee is always appreciative of the work and all offered kudos for amazing number of projects completed. Mrs. Iller asked for an update for Green Communities funding. Mrs. O’Neil replied she was aware of a check from the Green Communities and Mr. Anguelov concurred there is a journal entry for \$1,700.00 of savings for the windmill. He added he will reach out to the Energy office to find out more information.

3rd Quarter Update – Director of Finance, Martin Anguelov

Mr. Anguelov said this year was challenging. Expenditures are where expected with expenses and payroll combined at \$615,947 equating to 67% of funding currently committed and which is essentially equal to last year. Payroll expenses are slightly increased at \$23,306, 62% versus 60% from the previous year, but the variances are considered well within an acceptable range. The Nantucket Community School has a decline of \$459,423 compared to last year but the Town of Nantucket appropriation was higher this year at \$550,000 and has helped as the year has progressed. While both expenses and encumbrances have decreased, this is substantially due to the pandemic. Making any meaningful financial performance comparison between this year and last year is unfair and we are committed to helping NCS weather the crisis to maintain essential programming and services for our community. Mr. Anguelov reiterated how thankful NCS is for the continued support from outside private donors. Food Services operated at a deficit of \$220,648 versus last year at \$52,337. The challenges continue even while hoping the deficit decreases as the whole district is back in school. Linda Peterson has done an amazing job in adverse conditions to serve 37,000 meals to date from the food truck. However, these numbers are obviously lower due to less students in school during the week and only a small number of remote students taking advantage of the Food Services offerings. The deficit skew exists because even with reimbursement from the state, the participation has been precipitously low in comparison to previous years, but the overhead of Chartwells remains constant. The School Committee thanked the Finance Director. The Chair wanted to impress how important the Community School is to Nantucket and hopes we can support the group to carry them through. Mrs. Proch took this opportunity to talk about the Public Relations Sub-Committee and it was her opinion we do not as a district, promote ourselves like we should. She would like to activate this Sub Committee to promote publicly how we are faring as a district and asked for suggestions from the School Committee as to a way to do this successfully.

Committee discussion and votes to be taken

Vote to Approve Donation to NHS from Andrew Malcolm for the NHS English Department, \$5,00.00 Steve Sortevik made a motion to approve, Tim Lepore seconded, the motion was approved.

Vote to Approve April 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes Steve Sortevik asked for corrections and/or discussion regarding the minutes, specifically concerning words that “struck him” under the School Committee Vacancy presentation and asked for them to be stricken from the record. He requested the word *emphatically* be removed and the word *lectured* be replaced with *iterated*. Based upon the amendments to the minutes. Jennifer Iller made a motion to approve the minutes, Steve Sortevik seconded, with no one opposed, the motion was approved.

Vote to Approve the Transfers & Invoices Tim Lepore made a motion to approve, Jennifer Iller seconded, the motion was approved.

Sub-Committee/Work Group

None

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Student Council Representative

Miss Mack reported the Kindness Matters happening throughout school – teachers are giving out raffle tickets to students caught being kind. This is spearheaded by Seanda Bartlett. She also mentioned AP Exams are underway and so is the 20 day countdown for Seniors. She stated students are excited about returning to in person learning at NHS on May 5.

Horizon

The next meeting will be May 20 at 6:30pm and will include Superintendent Entry Plan Findings, School Counselor Presentation, Special Education Update, Teaching Assistant Collective Bargaining Agreement 2021-2024.

Chair Proch made a shoutout out to all staff, not just teachers, with appreciation of all efforts this year, as we are coming into Teacher Appreciation week. She also wanted to make an acknowledgement to remind students and parents mourning the loss of a recent graduate and that mental health professionals and counselors are available should you need them.

Mr. Sortevik asked to have an update to college acceptances. Pauline Proch asked the Superintendent to check in with the NHS Principal and Guidance Department to find out about other next year opportunities for the Seniors , not just college acceptances.

Mrs. Proch asked the School Committee to determine if they wish to have Interviews for the Vacancy on June 3 so the date can be secured by the TON. It was agreed they will hold the Interviews on that date at 5:00pm.

At 7:38pm the School Committee adjourned on a motion made by Jennifer Iller, seconded by Steve Sortevik and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Logan O'Connor, School Committee Clerk