

Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 21, 2021

Present Members: Chair Tim Lepore, Vice Chair Pauline Proch, Secretary Esmeralda Martinez, Laura Gallagher Byrne, and Anthony Fox. Also present was NPS representative Kathryn Kyomitmaitee and from the Studio, NCTV Representative Charlie Hoilman. This meeting is an in-person participation meeting in compliance with Governor Charles Baker's statement allowing public bodies the ability to hold a meeting at a physical location that is open to the public, without requiring to provide alternative means of remote access.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM, by Chair Timothy Lepore, in the Nantucket High School LGI. A motion was made by Pauline Proch to approve the agenda, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and approved unanimously.

Comments from the Public

Mrs. Page Martineau, co-president of the NTA, commented on the need to keep the mask mandate in place based on the success that the schools have had in keeping students and staff safe. Her recommendation to the Committee was to extend the policy implementation until at least the end of January. She shared that the beginning of the school year has been very successful with all of the children back in the buildings; the students are comfortable wearing their masks, and teachers do not want to lose the momentum they are gaining this year. Rocky Fox asked a question to Kathryn Kyomitmaitee around her opinion of how students were doing with masks. Kathryn shared that there are a select few who don't want to wear their masks. Dr. Hallett clarified that mask wearing is a School Committee policy, so students are required to comply.

Superintendent's Report

Mask Mandate

Dr. Hallett shared that the Nantucket Public Schools falls under Commissioner Riley's indoor mask mandate for all preK-12 schools until at least October 1, 2021, the indoor mask mandate from the Town of Nantucket, and under Policy EBCFA on Face Masks. However, there is no clear indication as to when the town mandate would be lifted or whether the Commissioner will extend the mask mandate beyond October 1. Considering the contagious nature of the Delta Variant and thinking back to last year's COVID spikes that occurred after Thanksgiving and December holiday breaks Dr. Hallett asked to open discussion about possibly extending the indoor mask mandate under Policy EBCFA for all Nantucket Public Schools students and staff until January 18, 2022 to then be revisited. Rocky Fox asked why the date of January 18 was chosen as the end date; Dr. Hallett explained that it gave plenty of time after the holiday break and the MLK Day long weekend for the schools to evaluate the health metrics after people have traveled off island. Kathryn Kyomitmaitee shared her sentiments around students who may not be happy about extending the mandate, but she felt that was the right thing to do; students feel safe in school. Laura Gallagher Byrne asked what other schools in the Commonwealth were doing. Dr. Hallett shared that many districts had adopted mask mandates for the entire year. She shared that only allowance of schools who have a 80% vaccination rate. Tim Lepore shared that he did not believe town's indoor mask policy would be ending soon. Pauline Proch supported the extension 100%. She also asked if there were plans to promote more social and emotional support for all students but also for staff. Dr. Hallett said that she would be happy to share that information in a future meeting. Tim Lepore asked about the need to change the policy; Dr. Hallett explained that it was not necessary, as we are still in the COVID pandemic and are covered by the policy without the need to change.

COVID Testing Program

Dr. Hallett shared that the district has been accepted into the state testing initiative for all public schools. Non-invasive rapid tests are given to any students or staff members who are showing symptoms or who have been deemed "close contacts", allowing them to stay in school rather than having to quarantine. Consent forms have been sent out to all staff, parents and families, and we have around 50% of the consents returned, so please send in consent forms as soon as possible so that we can test. Currently, the school nurses have issued 15 rapid tests at NES, 7 at NIS, 2 at CPS, and 4 at NHS. She thanked the school nurses for taking this on, especially Nancy Small, who has volunteered to be the test site coordinator. Esmeralda Martinez asked about the consent form and whether the forms were located on the website. Dr. Hallett shared that she would make sure they were posted there. Rocky Fox asked if the consent forms were included in the first day of school packet; Dr. Hallett explained that these were separate, not included in the packet.

Teacher and TA Substitute Pay Update

Dr. Hallett reported on discussion with the principals around a change in sub pay for our substitute teachers and TAs. They agree that sub teachers deserve a slight increase over sub-TAs based on the duties they must carry out; however, it was

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important to look carefully at the per diem rate of our TAs at the entry level to be sure that their per diem was not lower than a sub-TAs per diem rate. She proposed that the rates for sub teacher increase to \$150 per day and \$130 per day for TAs. Discussion ensued, with the Committee agreeing to increase the rates with none opposed.

Presentations and discussions of interest to the Committee
Campus Wide Master Plan Updates

Mr. Dick Webb from SMRT Architects began the presentation by introducing his team, which included Nick Vaughn, Senior Architect and Dr. Laura Green, Chemist and Toxicologist, and Diane O’Neil, Facilities Director. He shared the Master Plan, which has been a work in progress for over 8 years. He shared that the great advantage for NPS was the fact that all school buildings existed on one 45-acre campus rather than across the island. This meant that the planning and design for any changes must keep in mind the space limits for NPS. He outlined the project in 12 phases, with the initial phases having been completed, including the new Intermediate School. He shared specifics around Phase 9, which included improvements to the athletic fields, particularly adding two synthetic fields and a track around the football field, improving the grandstand structure, and moving the baseball field and adding five tennis courts to the Backus Lane field area. He shared that there had been attempts to bid the Backus Lane field improvements (tennis and baseball) with no success due to unusually high bids. Mr. Webb also explained future planning, including a location for a new school if needed, additional staff housing, and other improvements. He went over the needs for the athletic improvements based on high student participation causing wear and tear on the fields, a cinder track that is out of compliance for competition, and a grandstand also out of compliance. The new track will include 6 distance lanes and 8 sprint lanes around a track oval with a synthetic field inside the oval. Synthetic fields will allow for flexibility around different sports that can be played on the field. In addition, lighting for this synthetic field will be improved with less glare and spill with more targeted light on the field. The grandstand seating and press box will be built into the earth to avoid the need for an elevator or lift. The second field will also be synthetic turf and will be designated for lacrosse, field hockey and soccer.

Mr. Webb also explained the synthetic turf system which contains components that are organic to avoid the use of black SBR rubber. He addressed the concern around PFAS by stating that there is no use of PFAS in the turf system. NPS facilities and grounds employees will be trained how to maintain synthetic fields. Mr. Webb also showed the advantage of gaining two parking areas with 62 more parking spaces on campus. He also shared that the new baseball field will be a natural grass irrigated field, and the tennis courts will be constructed in the far south corner of the campus on Backus Lane. He added that synthetic turf fields and an updated track will give the NPS Athletic Program the flexibility it needs to accommodate a growing athletic program with multi-use fields that offer a consistent playing surface with the opportunity for extended play throughout each season. He also shared the total cost of the project is \$17.5 million, with the request to Capital Planning for \$16.4 million since the schools already have \$1.1 million procured previously for tennis and baseball that were not started. Finally, he shared the timeline of the project, including information sharing to the public, bidding, and construction. Dr. Lepore shared his support for the project, as did Travis Lombardi, Athletic Director. A member of the public asked whether the team building would be considered. Dick Webb explained that the team building was included in future phases, followed by Diane O’Neil adding that the priority was to get the fields done first, as they are the main priority. Laura Gallagher Byrne asked about the Martha’s Vineyard project, as she was under the impression that they had decided on all grass fields, not synthetic. Dick Webb shared that Martha’s Vineyard had decided on one synthetic field. Tim Lepore asked about the press box; Dick Webb explained that it consists of three sections, with two scout boxes at the end and a general area in the middle with a ladder that allows for access to a filming area.

Mr. Webb then introduced Dr. Laura Green, Chemist and Toxicologist, to share her insights around PFAS. She began by answering the question about Martha’s Vineyard, as she has been involved in that project: there is still discussion at the town level for approval for the athletic field improvement plan. She then provided her bio and explained her role in the NPS project regarding health of players and coaches along with protection of the drinking water aquifer. She shared that the laboratory tests done on the synthetic materials for the Martha’s Vineyard project revealed that they were cleaner and healthier than the actual “dirt” in a natural grass field, since topsoil accumulates many toxins over decades. She shared one ambiguity around the use of fluorine in the coating on the individual blades of synthetic grass. Although it is a fluorine polymer, it is not PFAS and is not the kind of fluorine that contaminates drinking water. The testing that has been done ensured that there is no leaching of the chemical into the environment. If ordinary dirt were tested for PFAS, it would be

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present since PFAS has been in circulation for many decades. Dr. Green added that when groundwater and drinking water is contaminated with PFAS, there are only three sources: firefighting foam, industrial discharges, and septic tanks. She shared that when people are worried about PFAS, it is important to recognize that synthetic turf fields are not a source of PFAS leaching into the groundwater. She also shared that during the Martha's Vineyard project hearings, former high school students shared that they are not used to playing on turf fields, so they are not getting playing time in college and an orthopedic surgeon shared about the numerous athletic injuries that occurred due to poor natural grass fields. When the actual topsoil was tested, results showed a myriad of heavy metals, including lead. Dr. Lepore asked whether there was a safe level of PFAS, to which Dr. Green responded that each state has a slightly different level of parts per trillion that are accepted, but there is no federal level.

Prior to moving to the following presentation, Dr. Hallett introduced Sherri Lewis, the new Coordinator of Student Support and SEL, to the School Committee, thanking her for her patience in waiting for the introduction. Ms. Lewis thanked the Committee for the warm welcome.

Summer School Programs

Blythe Purdin, Kindergarten teacher and Coordinator for the Title I Summer Program, began the presentation by thanking her coordinator colleagues for their support throughout the summer. She shared that there were three programs: Title I (Summer Scholars) around 85 students K-8 with 10 teachers, 2.5 TAs and one Coordinator. Samantha Kodak, ESL teacher at NES, coordinated the Title III for English Learners with 75 students who maintained 90% attendance with 6 teachers and one Coordinator. Andrea Maher, reading teacher at NES, prepared the ESY program with 79 students who averaged 85% attendance. There were 15 teachers, 19 TAs, and sharing a Coordinator position between pre-program planning and program implementation. She shared that the social worker program continued through the ESY program. Enrichment teachers (music and art) were shared across all three programs.

Blythe Purdin then outlined the Title I program with the preparation and planning looking a little different after the pandemic to allow for a meaningful learning experience in person after a challenging 18 months. She shared that the focus was interdisciplinary learning with the use of "History's Mysteries"; K-2 focused on the theme of Then and Now on Nantucket with field trips to the Oldest House, the Whaling Museum, and the Old Mill. Grades 3, 4, and 5 focused on mapping the shipwrecks of Nantucket with a field trip to the Shipwreck and Lifesaving Museum and the Whaling Museum. Blythe also shared the small group reading portion of the program where every child would read for 40 minutes every day. Dr. Jennifer Rabold, C&A Director for Humanities, shared information about the CPS Title I program, with the theme of Free Speech. Students did research on activists and made multimedia portraits of their activists as well as participating in math skills building. She shared that the data showed considerable improvement outcomes particularly for Grades K-5. In the middle school, the improvement was most prevalent in writing, particularly in volume, with most students increasing their writing stamina with longer writing passages. In addition, NPS offered a credit recovery program for high school students who failed classes during the year; 29 out of 34 classes were completed successfully. Jennifer Rabold also shared information around the enrichment opportunities in music and art and how important these opportunities were to offer after the pandemic. She also shared that positives and negatives of some of the changes to this year's summer programs; positives included addition of enrichment, offering snacks, small group reading. Negatives included the assessments and logistics of each program.

Andrea Maher shared information next about the Extended School Year program for K-12 students with disabilities. The focus of the program included reading and writing, math, life skills and executive function, and enrichment. She shared that much of the instruction was hands-on with opportunities to go outside. The decision around curriculum landed on the Lucy Calkins Teachers College Reading and Writing Program work specifically for summer school with virtual professional development included. The teachers were pleased to use different curriculum rather than re-teach units. Class sizes were very small, so teachers were able to adjust curriculum to the students in front of them. Overall it was a very successful program.

Samantha Kodak presented the Title III Summer Program for multilingual learners. She shared the 19-day program was assessed with pre- and post-assessment data in oracy (oral language skills) and literacy (reading and writing skills) for the 75 students who participated. All students improved by at least one level. Student rubrics measured word level, sentence level, and discourse level. She shared that the teachers did an incredible job moving student learning forward, especially for the students at the lowest English language proficiency levels. Samantha also stated that teacher learning was embedded in

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the program as well, with teachers growing in their use of strategies and levels of questioning teachers are using. Results showed strong teacher growth as well. She shared post-program survey information with quotes from teachers, which included information around success in both academic and social-emotional instruction. One area of need for future summer programs is food: “Students can’t learn if they are hungry”, one teacher shared. The snacks were helpful this year, but meals (breakfast and lunch) are essential for future programs. Samantha shared that the curriculum was well designed and focused on hands-on science with activities and experiments. K-2 classrooms focused on Force and Motion; Grades 2-3 worked on States of Matter and the Water Cycle; Grades 4-5 and 6-8 looked at biomimicry and engineering projects. Literacy skills were reinforced through connections to the hands-on science. Presentations were not possible during COVID, but there were class books and virtual presentations to show their work throughout the program. Music was an excellent addition as an enrichment activity with a trilingual music teacher. As mentioned before, students made considerable progress in all four domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Samantha concluded by asking for brainstorming partners to find opportunities for high school multilingual learners that support career exploration, resume writing, and/or interview practice.

Patti Aube, EL Director, also offered a very brief activity called “Pringle Ringle” to demonstrate design thinking. Unfortunately, the video did not work; she shared briefly what the students experienced in their classroom and handed out materials that the Committee could use to try the activity at home.

Rocky Fox asked if the options for high school ELs could be given for credit through School to Career. Samantha was not sure but was happy to explore. Bobby Planzer asked about why there was no food available for students from the schools; Samantha shared that it was impossible to keep food services staff during the summer to prepare breakfast and lunch, but that Linda Peterson and her staff were to be congratulated for her efforts in assisting with providing snacks for all students.

Transportation Update

Martin Anguelov, Chief Financial Officer, provided a brief update around school transportation. He began by sharing that things were quite difficult for transportation this year, and it was common across the state and nation, with the lack of bus drivers available. Last year, there were strict limitations on how many children could ride a bus due to COVID restrictions. Last year, 588 students were eligible to receive transportation as they live 1.5 miles or more from their school. However, only 136 students were transported using 4 buses. After April 6, limitations were lifted and drivers were vaccinated, so two additional drivers returned to allow for 6 buses to be in circulation until the end of the school year transporting a total of 270 students, 46% of eligible students. Much credit was given to Linda Barrett, who managed the routes and dispatching as well as driving a bus; she has since retired along with her husband, another bus driver, and their departure has caused a deficit in available drivers, with only 4 buses in circulation. This year, there are 131 confirmed students being transported. There is a waitlist shared between schools with 55 students on the list. Reasons why there are fewer buses, difficult routes, and challenges finding drivers are many; Cape Cod Collaborative has been struggling and has attempted to think creatively to offer incentives to potential drivers. SPED offers transportation to 30 students; families of 5 students from the private schools are being offered reimbursement for arranging for their own transportation due to the inability to fit them on the bus.

Jessica Douglas asked if people were required to go off island to get training for bus driving; Martin shared that there is still no way to offer training on island. Rocky Fox asked if NRTA drivers would be eligible to drive school buses; Martin responded that NRTA drivers operate under a different license, so no, they are not able to drive without a school bus license.

At this time, Dr. Lepore asked the Committee to consider tabling the final presentation on AP Results until the next meeting due to the late time.

Rocky Fox left the meeting at 8:12 pm.

A motion was brought to the table to amend the agenda to move the AP Results presentation to the following meeting on October 5 by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez; with no one opposed, the motion was approved.

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Committee discussion and votes to be taken

Vote to Approve September 7, 2021 Meeting Minutes: Pauline Proch made a motion to approve the minutes, Esmeralda Martinez seconded, with no one opposed the motion was approved.

Rocky Fox returned to the meeting at 8:13 pm.

Vote to Approve the Transfers & Invoices: Pauline Proch made a motion to approve, Esmeralda Martinez seconded, with no one opposed, the motion was approved.

Student Council Representative

Kathryn Kyomitmaitee reported that Student Council had been planning for Homecoming festivities between October 25-30, 2021 (Spirit Week). There will be hallway decorations by class, but there will also be door decorations by advisory. Floats will be decorated and paraded on Saturday, October 31. The library is now open, and students are able to eat lunch in the library again. In addition, students are permitted to eat in the Hall of the Whale. Sports are moving forward successfully, particularly volleyball, which is going very well. Drama club auditions for the play “Almost Maine”; this is exciting because there wasn’t a play last year. Rocky Fox asked if there was a newsletter that Student Council shared; Kathryn told him there was and she would be sure School Committee received it.

Subcommittee/Work Group Report - None

Horizon

The next meeting will be October 5 and will include AP Results, SRO Presentation, Enrollment, School Handbooks, and J Policies. Dr. Hallett also proposed a Retreat Date on Tuesday October 26 at 6:00 pm.

At 8:16 pm, the School Committee adjourned on a motion made by Pauline Proch, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Hallett, Superintendent of Schools