

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 21, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice-Chair Laura Gallagher-Byrne, Esmeralda Martinez, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Vincent Murphy, and Student Council Representative Cecilia Wendelken

The January 21, 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Chair Timothy Lepore. A motion was made by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez. The amended agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Brock Beamish, a junior at Nantucket High School and an athlete in the football, hockey, and baseball programs, spoke about his experience with coaching. He clarified that while hard coaching is sometimes misunderstood, he is receptive to it when done respectfully, as demonstrated by the coaches in the hockey and baseball programs. However, he felt that the treatment during the football season was inappropriate, with constant belittling and negative comments. Mr. Beamish shared that he sustained a season-ending injury during football practice, which has prevented him from competing in hockey or baseball this year. He emphasized the high number of injuries during football practices and expressed concern for his teammates who are afraid to speak out. He requested that the school committee consider hosting a workshop or public forum to address the physical and mental well-being of student-athletes.

Jeff Beamish, JV head coach of football for the past three years, shared concerns about the coaching staff no longer representing Nantucket football due to issues with the head coach's hard coaching style. He explained that the JV staff had supported each other, but their efforts were frowned upon, leading to their removal from the coach's communications and the Huddle program used for team operations. Mr. Beamish suggested that the hiring process for head coaches should focus on candidates with more experience. He also highlighted issues with how coaches were paid, noting that the head coach had control over payments and misrepresented positions. Mr. Beamish expressed frustration that his emails have gone unanswered and wanted to bring these issues to public attention.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Hallett reported the high school enrollment decreased slightly from 605 students in December to 600 this month. A potential increase in enrollment is expected in February, as students from the southern hemisphere may join. She also highlighted celebrations for Black History Month, including activities and events in all schools. Copies of the Eunice Ross diploma from the Class of 2024 graduation were given to the Nantucket Historical Association and the African Meeting House for display. Superintendent Hallett mentioned the ongoing ACCESS testing for English learners, which helps assess students' proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Testing will be completed by February 7th. Regarding transportation, a public forum on proposed staggered start times for schools will be held on February 18th at 6 p.m. The goal is to ease transportation challenges caused by a shortage of bus drivers. In addition, 7D vans are expected to be available in the spring, and information will be shared about how to obtain a 7D license. She also updated the committee on the efforts of the Cape Cod Collaborative to find additional drivers and ensure students are transported to and from school. Lastly, Superintendent Hallett congratulated the students and faculty involved in the successful Winter Tide Festival, showcasing student artwork, musical performances, and other creative pieces at Nantucket High School.

Ms. Martinez inquired about Kindergarten registration numbers. Dr. Hallett deferred to Ms. Kubisch, who reported that the numbers are currently around 89. She noted that factors such as the weather and illness may have affected some families' ability to attend the registration nights.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

2025-2026 NPS Instructional Vision - Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett, Dr. Mandy Bardsley, Mellisa Devitt

Superintendent Hallett began by emphasizing the importance of making data-driven decisions, particularly when planning the district's budget. She reviewed the MCAS results, noting the need for significant changes based on

these outcomes. She then outlined the five priority focus areas and how they align with the teacher evaluation rubric, which will inform the budget discussions.

She highlighted the critical role of data in guiding priorities for both the budget and instructional decisions. Specifically, she addressed the district's performance on MCAS, pointing out that while there have been gains, the results for grades 3 through 8 still fall below state averages in ELA and math, which is a concern. Although high school scores have shown improvement, the gap for younger students is widening, especially in ELA and math. The science results show a smaller gap but are still an area of focus.

Superintendent Hallett emphasized that these data points underscore the need for significant changes in the curriculum and instruction. She also mentioned that some changes are already in progress, with more planned for the near future. Additionally, she referenced the revised District standards and indicators, which provide a blueprint for school district effectiveness and serve as a basis for state audits. This document outlines the roles and responsibilities of key leadership bodies, including the school committee.

Dr. Mandy Bardsley, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, discussed how the NPS instructional vision guides the district's priorities. She emphasized the importance of visualizing relationships in the instructional process. At the center is the instructional vision, which informs classroom strategies and school structures, with the budget supporting these elements. She outlined several key areas: instructional strategies, structures, high-quality instructional materials, and the budget process. For instructional strategies, the district has been implementing professional development (PD) on full and half PD days, focusing on professional learning communities (PLCs) and feedback during the evaluation process. In terms of creating a safe learning environment, the district has been using the responsive classroom approach for K-5 for 15 years and introduced it in middle school last year. Restorative practices have been a focus at the high school for the past two years, with an ongoing district-wide focus on ensuring students feel a sense of belonging and are encouraged to take academic risks.

For instructional planning, Dr. Badsley explained the importance of objectives, checks for understanding, and criteria for success in developing powerful classroom instruction. The district is focusing on ensuring lessons are aligned with standards, monitoring student understanding, and supporting students who need additional help or extension. She also discussed the district's efforts in PLCs, which were refined this year. Each school is working to ensure all students master grade-level learning outcomes. The K-5 teams focus on essential learning outcomes for ELA and math, collecting data on those standards throughout the year. The middle school is doing the same with grade-level teams, adapting the structure to fit each school's needs.

Ms. Devitt focused on refining structures to maximize instructional time and support teaching. She discussed aligned master schedules, which are key to effectively utilizing staff and space across the district. By aligning schedules, the district hopes to improve collaboration, create smoother transitions between schools, and provide opportunities for students to support each other across grade levels. She also addressed the implementation of high-quality instructional materials, which is a priority for the district. Current materials in use include Reveal Math (K-12), Social Studies for 6th and 7th grades, Investigating History for 8th grade, and Smithsonian Science for elementary and middle schools. The district is also piloting a new literacy program and expanding social studies offerings. These materials are supported by professional development, mainly through the One8 Foundation, to ensure teachers are well-prepared. For the budget process, Ms. Devitt highlighted the need to address gaps in student success and draw inspiration from successful schools. Key areas for improvement include expanding intervention programs and instructional coaching. Currently, the district has limited math and reading interventionists, with plans to increase staff at NES, CPS, and NHS. Instructional coaches are also needed to provide non-evaluative support for teachers, particularly in Humanities and STEM subjects. Finally, Ms. Devitt discussed the need to expand PreK programs. Currently, 30% of students enter kindergarten without PreK experience, which creates academic and social-emotional disparities. The district plans to survey the community, form a steering committee, and develop a plan to expand PreK by September 2026. Ms. Devitt shared that the district plans to work within the current budget, focusing on making the most of existing resources and structures. The aim is to align master schedules, adjust staffing as needed based on priorities, and use attrition to replace staff effectively. The staffing allocation for fiscal year 2026 will remain the same, with adjustments made through collaboration to ensure alignment with the district's instructional vision.

Mr. Murphy asked about reallocating staff and whether they would be willing to move roles. Ms. Devitt emphasized not moving staff unwillingly but noted potential growth opportunities for those interested.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy inquired about the second year of the Responsive Classroom at CPS. Principal Horton shared that January focuses on "green month," teaching through modeling and redirecting language, but the morning meeting component is still missing.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked about PreK structure and scheduling. Dr. Hallett discussed the transition from half-day to full-day programs, and Ms. Devitt explained the difference between daycare and PreK. Ms. Gallagher-Byrne also asked about the master schedule timeline. Ms. Devitt said feedback is being gathered, and a simplified schedule should be ready by September. Dr. Bardsley noted that scheduling aligns through collaboration starting with principals.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne raised concerns about staggered start times affecting the master schedule. Dr. Hallett hoped start times would stay consistent with the CBA but noted discussions are ongoing. Dr. Lepore asked if this involves collective bargaining, and Dr. Hallett confirmed any changes would be communicated.

Superintendent Hallett stated school budgets remain unchanged and invited questions from committee members for principals and directors.

High School Competency Determination - Superintendent Hallett

Superintendent Hallett presented updates to Policy IKF, explaining the changes and their urgency. Due to the recent elimination of MCAS as a competency determination for graduation, immediate policy adjustments are required to support high school students, particularly the Class of 2025, starting semester two. These changes were developed in collaboration with high school administration, the student support coordinator, and other superintendents. Key updates include clarifications to graduation requirements, such as specifying required courses in English, math (including algebra and geometry), science (adding biology and introduction to physics), and social studies (updated from "social science" and adjusted to include two years of world history and a semester of personal finance). Physical education has been rebranded as "Wellness," with specific yearly requirements and elective options. For early graduation, decision-making authority now lies with the high school principal, with final approval from the superintendent, streamlining the process in alignment with other districts.

The most significant updates involve the competency determination process. For the Classes of 2025 and 2026, students who did not pass MCAS before December 5, 2024, must demonstrate mastery through coursework or associated mastery exams in English, math, and science. For the Class of 2027 and beyond, MCAS will no longer be used, and coursework and mastery exams will fully determine competency. Provisions were added for credit recovery, transcript reviews for transfer students, and adherence to the Interstate Compact for military families.

These updates ensure alignment with state laws and curriculum frameworks while addressing students' needs following the legislative change.

Ms. Wendelken inquired about the role of mastery exams. Dr. Hallett clarified that the exams are optional, as indicated by the use of "or."

Mr. Murphy noted that the first year of implementation seems to allow flexibility and asked if guidance counselors could assist students who are close to meeting requirements. Dr. Hallett confirmed that there is flexibility, explaining that the Department of Education was unprepared for the law change, leaving decisions to schools and superintendents. Ms. Bloise-Murphy emphasized the importance of voting on the policy tonight to ensure students can graduate this year.

NET Housing Project - Hadley Dutra, Nantucket Education Trust

Hadley Dutra, President of the Nantucket Education Trust (NET), shared an update about a proposed article for the upcoming town meeting aimed at addressing teacher housing. The NET, a nonprofit managing 12 housing units at Cowpond Lane for over 20 years, plans to replicate this successful model to create additional housing for Nantucket Public Schools (NPS). The proposal seeks approval for a long-term lease of a portion of 48 Sparks Avenue, near the school campus, where the buses are currently parked.

The plan involves repurposing approximately 40,000 square feet of land to build 6-10 housing units, though the exact number is yet to be determined. NET will work under the same arrangement as Cow Pond Lane, with a lease from the town of Nantucket for up to 99 years at a cost of \$1. Ms. Dutra emphasized the collaborative effort behind the article, highlighting contributions from NET members, school leadership, and the town, particularly Treasurer John Riccio and other key supporters. Then welcomed questions and expressed enthusiasm for the project's potential to alleviate the housing shortage for NPS staff.

Mr. Murphy asked if zoning has been looked at to see if it can be maximized. Ms. Dutra noted that it was brought to their attention that zoning opportunities may allow for denser development, potentially increasing the number of housing units for educators and staff. The conversation then moved to surveys on the property.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to support the ATM Warrant (Real Estate Disposition: Long-term Lease Authorization of Portion of 48 Sparks Avenue). *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the changes to Policy IKF to include Competency Determination. *Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the CPS overnight field trip for Project 351 to Boston January 24-25, 2025. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the HS overnight field trip to the Sr. District Music Festival in New Bedford, MA - January 10-12, 2025. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the donation to the Nantucket Community School Learn to Swim for \$500.00 from Mr. and Mrs. Brown through the Will Brown Fund. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the donation to the Nantucket Community School for Senior Sports and Wellness for \$1000.00 from the Landmark House. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the December 3, 2024 Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the December 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Transfers & Invoices. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Student Council Representative - Cecilia Wendelken

Ms. Wendelken reported on several recent and upcoming school events. The winter art show on January 16th was a great success, featuring works from all art classes, including pottery, photography, and woodshop, as well as performances by the rock band and the Accidentals and Naturals. The evening also included the Poetry Out Loud competition, which had eight participants and the highest attendance seen so far. Danielle Lewis won and will represent the school at the state competition, with Markus Vitanov as first runner-up and Jacob Heneke receiving honorable mention. She highlighted that a half-day is scheduled this week for student-led conferences for freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, allowing students to showcase their growth and learning to their advisers and families. On Thursday, there will be a band and chorus concert at 6 p.m. in the auditorium. Ms. Wendelken also noted that the semester and second quarter are ending soon, with students checking their grades. Additionally, she mentioned that some chorus members and a few band students will attend the Cape and Islands Music Festival at Barnstable High School on January 31st and February 1st, a regional event similar to senior districts. Lastly, Ms. Wendelken brought up concerns from students about the quality and portion sizes of school lunches, emphasizing that portions are often too small, which is challenging for hungry teenagers and for some students who rely on school lunch as a primary meal. She acknowledged that this has been a recurring issue and was asked by peers to raise it during the meeting.

Dr. Lepore suggested reconvening the Food Services Committee following Ms. Proch's retirement. Dr. Hallett noted that Chartwells follows regulations on portion sizes. Ms. Bloise-Murphy inquired about the food contract, and Mr. Anguelov clarified it is a five-year contract, with Chartwells being the only bidder in the last two cycles. Mr. Anguelov emphasized the importance of the Wellness Committee in evaluating food services and welcomed student feedback as a key way to assess Chartwells' performance. He also explained that the Food Service Director, Linda Peterson, has been on medical leave since Christmas, and a temporary director has been traveling to support the district, creating an adjustment period.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

ESP negotiations are ongoing

Agenda for the next meeting, February 4, 2025 - 5:30 PM NPS Budget Hearing, 6:00 PM Enrollment, MASS/NSDC Senior Awards, Bullying Update, 2nd Quarter Budget Update, DIP Midyear Update

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:35 PM by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Vince Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk