



Northbridge Public Schools

Northbridge School Committee

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Northbridge Public Schools School Committee Meeting Agenda Tuesday, October 15, 2024 - 7:00PM

- I. Call to Order (7:00PM)
 - II. Pledge of Allegiance
 - III. Attendance
- | | |
|----------------|---------|
| Heather Alden | Absent |
| Jill Leonard | Present |
| Carl Cowen | Present |
| Shannon Canoy | Present |
| Jonathan Canoy | Present |

Also in attendance were Superintendent Amy McKinstry and Director of Business and Finance Melissa Walker

- IV. Statement of Audio and Video Recording
- V. Statement of Mission

Northbridge Public Schools is a proud community focused on the education and wellbeing of all students. We recognize each student as an individual, and we provide creative and innovative learning opportunities that encourage them to use their unique voices and personal strengths to achieve success both academically and personally.

- VI. Student Representative Report

Congrats to the students of the Month. Last week was picture day. The HOSA club has begun its yearly fundraising initiatives. Robotics team is looking for LEGO donations. Friday will be homecoming Pep rally at NHS, followed by Dance that evening. Dance will be afterschool. Homecoming will take place on Saturday. Student Survey has been finalized

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and will be sent out soon. Went around today spot surveying teachers and students about problems in the schools. Teachers: Student Attendance, Student Engagement, Technology Restrictions, lack of Empathy. Students: Issues and conflicts are not being handled the best, Drug abuse, hallway congestion, bullying, late teacher grading, frustration over backpack policy, understanding individual student needs, attendance and tardies. One student suggested that if you have over a 90 in all classes, you should be exempt from the YONDR pouch. Will share all of the results when they come back. Looking at the new Strategic Plan, and was happy to see Student attendance as a main focus, also happy to see a focus on Staff Retention rates. Survey will reach all of the students and faculty, as it will be sent as a Google Form.

Jill Leonard asked if the committee felt comfortable letting Caleb present all of the data at a future School Committee meeting, and they agreed.

VII. Superintendent's Report (7:05)

Annual NES Boosterthon started Oct 9th. Earned 40% of goal and have earned a Pajama Day. Ends on Friday, which will be a Spirit Day and Fun Run from 9AM till about 1PM. Conducting Vision screenings on Thursday, and the mobile dentist is here next week for three days. Halloween, NES will have a "Dress as your favorite book character" day.

NMS Parent Meeting Wednesday Oct 16. Celebrating some of the MCAS scores on Oct 21. Will be sharing the MCAS information with the Committee, but there was a problem with DESE and they did not send the 10th grade results. Did not want to publicly share the information until the families received their information first. Jill Healy has called the Department of Ed and should the get the results next week. Community Closet is up and running. It is well organized and have had a lot of business so far. Open from 2:15 to 4:15 on days they are open.

Still looking for Grades 3-5 AP. Interviewed a few people, but still looking for a good candidate. Might change the role for the rest of this year to widen the net. Filled Nurse Leader Position. Filled in 4th Grade SPED teacher. New IT director, John Grimaldi, started today.

As result of being designated by DESE as a district needing intervention and technical assistance for our Special Education. District leaders and Admin are at a two day training

for this on root cause analysis and how we can improve this. Information will be shared at upcoming School Committee meeting.

District Safety Team has had 2 meetings so far. They are reviewing our protocols and procedures. All participated in a Webinar and participated in a Homeland Security learning module with a test. Had Homeland Security evaluation at High School on Oct 3rd. Will be receiving a comprehensive report. Will be coming back to do NES on Oct 22nd and NMS Oct 23. Participated in a 3rd Webinar on Tuesday. Provided information about grants and federal funding possibilities to help pay for any updates needed.

District Review will take place week of December 9th. Ms. Healy and Ms. McKinstry have been uploading all the documents needed and will have introductory conference call on Monday Oct 21. Will learn what the process is and have questions answered prior to the visit itself.

VIII. Presentation

A. SWCL to CMAC - Jim Lagos, A.D. and Scott Connery, HS Principal
Inviting Athletic Director and High School Principal to talk about new Sports League Transition. SWCL will be dissolving at the end of this year. Has been in the works for many years. Over the last year they have worked with other leagues to make the dissolution happen. New league is Central Massachusetts Athletic Conference. Established Committee September of Last year. Financially driven as it is expensive to bus the students for competitions. Schools are looking for ways to mitigate it. Some Schools are joining others leagues. State has redone how they are doing playoffs. It is not just how well you did in your conference. There are now power rankings: Example given if Northbridge played Grafton in Boys Basketball, and Grafton won by 100 points, Northbridge would go up in the rankings and Grafton down in the rankings, because of the power ranking. This change is aligning with the state qualifications.

They have not decided who is signing and how All Stars work. Most of the teams in the current league will move over to CMAC. 35 districts have been invited to join. Not all are wanting to join, most for distance reasons. Northbridge needs to make a decision about if they will join CMAC. Looking for a vote on November 1st to join CMAC or go Independent. No automatic schedules, would have to find other teams willing to come to play us, might have to be long travel to find teams to play against. Broke the teams down by

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overall standing in sports by averaging out all the scores. The district will be competitive in the new league. Will play against a lot of the same teams, but some new ones will be added. Divisions in the new league will be remade every couple of years. This may mean that we don't have the same schedule between the different teams, but will help make closer contests and better games. We can still schedule against other teams to fill out schedules. Now, with the power rankings, there is incentive to only beat teams by a little, but to make the game a blowout. New league trying to fill positions on their board.

Benefits for the schools will increase competitive balance, simplify scheduling, a larger league, Modernization, some inclusions of non-traditional sports, increased participation, increased development opportunities. Bringing back Honor Bowl.

Benefits for coaches: better chances when playing.

Timeline: No precedent for the vote, can only release a school from the SWCL contract by 2/3 vote. They are voting to release everyone on the same day. Build the new league and league guidelines according to the MIA guidelines.

It will start next year. Proposal is doing it for Lacross this year.

State does their own power rankings, the CMAC rankings will make sure teams of closer equivalent ranking play each other.

There are at least 29 that will accept the CMAC league, 30 including Northbridge. 2 of the 35 have said no since they are so far away. Scott is leaning towards accepting joining the CMAC. Going independent would be far harder and more expensive. Overall, the price is going up for sports, but joining will be less expensive.

Coaches are in favor of this. Some teams are having a hard time fielding teams, and this new league will help keep things fair. It helps the student athletes, and that is the main factor.

B. School Improvement Plans - NES, NMS, NHS

Condensed the plans to the main highlights and goals to show the Committee. They align with the District Strategic Plan. First slides were reminders of DSP around Intentional Leadership (training staff around the new Portrait of a graduate and educator, RAMS expectations across all schools, leadership programs), Voice and Choice (PD around student centered learning strategies, differentiated instruction, project based learning, standardized ways to elicit feedback from students, talk about potential new courses and learning preferences, Creating a resource bank around student centered learning), and Belonging and

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Connections (Ensure every student had an adult or older peer they could connect to every day, designing mentorship programs and peer support groups, collaborative leadership council to Implement career days.) That is district wide for year 1.

NES:

Intentional Leadership: Each Month, mapped out the themes. Last month: Respect. This month: Self-Control. Next Month: Gratitude. Go to each of the grade levels to teach about the theme. Student of the month is chosen around that theme. As the students learn these themes, they will work to make an NES Pledge. Literacy Leadership team is continuing to work on this as well. Implemented Tier 2 curriculum for literacy. Making sure that everyone is following the same general format for Literacy.

Voice and Choice: Providing daily opportunities for students to facilitate activities. For upper grades, will have a student advisory to give them a voice to bring their concerns to the admin and to school committee. Provide enrichment opportunities and schedule options. They need to do more enhancement for the very high achieving students.

Connections: Having teachers and SACs interview all of the students to ask them who their person they feel comfortable with is. Next step is to go through the data. Each quarter, teachers will work to bridge one grade level to another by having cross grade activities. Team Leaders started working on cross grade level transitions (ex. K to 1st, bathroom is no longer in the classroom and they have to walk down the hall to get to the bathroom). Bringing back parent activities.

Jill Leonard thinks it is a good idea to be explicit with all the changes between grades. Shannon Canoy how much participation are they anticipating for parent involvement. Currently, a lot of parents come in to volunteer, but hoping that giving more opportunities will get more people to come in. The hardest part is the parking situation. One Friday a month, they are doing book buddies. No parents allowed, but other family members can come in to help.

NMS:

Intentional Leadership: Starting a learning walks program. Teachers going to each other's classrooms to learn from other teachers through direct observation for Student centered classrooms. Also having the expert teachers share during staff meetings rather than just the administrators. Each of the classes are sharing the information at the parent

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meetings. Bringing the PBIS into the Student of the Month. Using the new RAMS for Student of the Month as well.

Voice and Choice: Trying to go forward with what the students are looking for in the classroom. Changed schedule up this year to offer additional students. Some high school teachers are coming down to teach the 8th graders, mainly around the language classes. Activity options during the RAMS blocks. Giving them a choice in the academic piece and not just the related arts as well. In the process of setting up a student advisory committee. Revising curriculum with all of the departments to give students a lot more choice and collaboration.

Belonging and Connection: trying to make sure everyone has someone to relate to in the school to build connections. Teachers have been pulling students during the RAMS blocks to help academically and social/emotionally. Ms. Gogolinski has gotten grants to do some STEM based enrichment activities with students. Two of the enrichments are the Maker's Space: Student led, facilitating all types of creation from engineering, to robotics, to needlepoint. Career Day, started one last year with a Math Career day. Did not have enough interest last year because of how fast it was put together. Looking forward to putting a better one together this year. Started with Parent partners for each grade this year, both with fundraising and getting them into the school to help. PBIS Store is open with the stamps they earn. Looking to bring back Family Fun night. Wants to run a Spring Boosterthon for the Middle School.

NHS: Put a lot of these in place within the first two weeks of the school year.

Intentional Leadership: Juniors and Seniors are receiving copies of "Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens" to be read and worked on during Advisory. Have lesson plans around them. DC and Dept Chairs are reviewing the lesson plans before rolling them out. Establishing a Student Advisory Council that will meet quarterly. Focusing on the Pathways program. Mostly the pathways is on Paper, but the school is going to be making it more actual. Robotics pathways has come in, manufacturing, internships, and English department is taking on a capstone course. Has 4 RAMS block a week, rather than the 2 from last year. Has already seen a benefit from the increased RAMS blocks.

Voice and Choice: SCORE is a new program Guidance brought in this year. It helps navigate applying for college, but it also has assessment surveys to determine what the

students are missing to help adjust it moving forwards. Helps the school know what the students are taking away from the lessons and where they need to bolster the classes to make up the missing parts. Student interest surveys for the 11th-12th grade English departments. Moving away from the year long classes for the higher classes and moving to semester long classes that are more focused (Examples given were “Film and Literature” and “Literature of the 1900s”) in the same way as college courses. Surveying students to find out what those offerings should be so they can be introduced in the 2025-2026 school year. Working to get a robust career fair. 60 students a day out in the community in internships. Wants to grow the program. Doing Learning Walks starting in November.

Belonging and Connections: DESE put a document out in 2013-2014 called “Individual Student Learning Plans” was very popular when it came out. With COVID, it went away. Every student gets to sit down and fill out information about themselves, and follows them through the years. Allows them to track their growth, and their interests. This asks the students to ask themselves “What challenges are in their way and what do they need to do to overcome that?” It is fairly unique for a plan to ask that to a student. Makes the students honestly think about their opportunities. Creating anonymous surveys. Quarterly opportunities for families to be part of the community. Give the parents something interesting to be here for and to get involved with.

Jill Leonard happy to see that this is stuff they have already started and are hitting the ground running.

Shannon Canoy expressed excitement for the Pathways to help students make up their minds earlier. A whole new document has been made for the Pathways program, and is now 30 pages. Wants to make sure the pathways programs are still relevant and appropriate. The students will also be able to choose on their pathways.

Caleb stated that a lot of the students don’t know that the Pathways exist. The new college software is very comprehensive. A lot of teachers do trivia near the end of classes, and everyone always jumps in, so it is a good idea to bring families in. He has a suggestion for RAMS block, have a way the students can request who they go to see during the RAMS block might help. Mr. Connery stated that will start second quarter.

IX. Consent Agenda (7:10)

A. School Committee Minutes 9-24-2024

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B. Warrant 25-13 September 26, 2024 \$123,006.39

C. Warrant 25-14 October 3, 2024 \$361,739.25

A motion was made by Carl Cowen to Approve. It was seconded by Jonathan Canoy.

Heather Alden Absent

Jill Leonard Yes

Carl Cowen Yes

Shannon Canoy Yes

Jonathan Canoy Yes

It was passed with a vote of 4-0

X. Discussion (7:15 PM)

A. School Improvement Plans - NES, NMS, NHS

Repeat, already done.

B. Add Policy JFAA – Residency

Met with Subcommittee to talk about the fact that there is not a Residency policy in the Policy Manual. The district has been having issues, this year particularly, with residency. At NES particularly, where students were attending, claiming to be Northbridge Residents, and were living out of state or out of the district. There is the School Choice Process, but a lot of them are not going through the process. This is important because of the additional funding we receive for it. Some claim to live in district when applying and signing up, and others are moving out and not telling. The Elementary school calls nearly once a week about this. Spoke with District Counsel about setting up this Policy. Would require parents/guardians to provide certain documents to prove residency in Northbridge: At least one document from three different sectors: One residency, one Occupancy, and one proving they are the legal parent/guardian. This establishes a series of documents for each of those areas. Created documents they need to sign and notarize as well. The district wants to the students to come, but wants to make sure everything is done correctly. Hoping this will solve the problem.

C. Update Policy JFBB - School Choice

Updating the policy because there have been issues of people applying for school choice well into the school year. A lot of people are applying far after the fact and either do not have seats at all, or will apply before they move to secure the seat before other people.

Updating the policy to encourage people to apply early and get people in as early as possible

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to cause as little disruption as possible. Part 6 is for students who move out after the start of the school year but want to stay here.

If a student is leaving a grade that is closed due to being full, they technically should be going to their new district. If there are openings, and the district has already gone through the waiting list, the district can keep the students. People are automatically assuming that if the student is coming out of that seat, that seat is open, and their child can immediately stay in it. While most of the people on the waiting list during the school year have already enrolled their children elsewhere, there is no guarantee that is being assumed that the leaving student will get the empty seat. Does create some animosity between the family and the district. Also included more language on the discrimination policy at the end.

D. FY2024 Budget Recap

First page is a summary. The rest are the line items in the budget. Page 36 holds the budget recap. Fiscal 24 Budget was just over \$32Mil. Fiscal 24 actual was \$30,468,428. Was about \$1.5Mil or about 5% under budget. Revenue sources, original appropriation was \$25.8Mil. Mid Year, appropriation was still \$25.8Mil, there was no change. Grants, anticipated \$2.088Mil, Utilized \$2.4Mil in grant funds, due to carry over FY23 and FY24 SPED grants. Used all of them, and do not have carry over for next year. Went towards offsetting existing budget expenses. Revolver Funds: \$4.1Mil was budgeted. Mid-year dropped to \$3.2Mil knowing it was going to go lower. \$2.1Mil was the total in Revolver funds that were spent by the end of the year. Used additional ESSER funds to pay for school year expenses. DESE gave out additional grants for summer programs, so the ESSER funds set aside for the Summer Programs were able to be used during the school year.

Second page shows change in expense recap. Explaining why budget came in less in Salary than planned. Some positions were not filled or were filled with someone who had a lower salary. Had some unpaid leave and lane changes when budget was built. \$1.1Mil was not spent. Transportation came \$24,000 under budget. Out of District Tuition came in \$15,000 over budget. Utilities had a lot of savings. Heat and electric made up majority of the decrease, as we mainly used less therms and kWh. Gas account did get Middle School price locked in because of the new Boiler. Also have some credits for Solar Farms nearby, and those credits came in higher. Increased revenue and decreased expenses increased the balances by \$1.25Mil.

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Original FY25 Budget is \$32.3Mil, at this point in time, expenses projecting total \$31.9Mil, about \$350K or 1% under budget. Appropriations, Starting at \$26.3Mil. It may change at Town Meeting, which would make it \$109K higher than initially expected. Grants are at \$1.1(Close to 1.2)Mil, partly ESSER funds, which went through Sept 30th of this year. Were able to use September payrolls from ESSER. Anticipated to use around \$561K less from revolvers. When the budget was set up, it was anticipated that \$4.8Mil was to be used from Revolvers, right now, it is looking to be closer to \$4.2Mil.

Initially had \$3.4Mil balance, \$2.9Mil revenue, \$4.85Mil expense, ending with \$913K when making the budget. Starting balance is now \$4.7Mil. If everything else is the same, the ending balance is \$2.1Mil. Updated with what has happened so far, the ending balance is possibly getting up \$2.7Mil.

Revenue is fairly level with small increases in School Choice and PreK. Expenses have been about \$132K under budgeted. Vacancies that have not been filled or are being filled now. Lane Changes for some teachers. Custodial and Secretary contract changes happened after the budget was passed. Had to hire out through a service for SLP and SLPA services. Utilities water price had not come in, went back to Eversource for gas. Out of District Transportation will be slightly over budget if things continue until the end of the year. For the Out of district Tuition, if nothing changes it will be slightly under budget, and they will offset.

The vacancies only through October have been adjusted, as the district still intends to fill them, the district is still budgeting as if the positions will be filled.

X. Public Comment (8:38)

Joe Strazzulla, 170 Rebecca Rd. Thanking Admin and School Committee. Has 3 kids enrolled. Shouting out James Lagos. Wants to talk about investment in the community. Wants to start looking at a 3 point plan for the budget season and to think about what comes next. Have to look at the fact that Northbridge will need an override and embrace that fact. In the last decade, a lot has been lost. Has a 6th grader who swims at the Community Center, but has no future with swimming (athletic competition) in Northbridge. About the Career Pathways, the district does not have a Culinary Arts Program anymore. Kids cannot take Spanish in the Middle School. The Committee and Administration have to look at what has been lost, look at the programming, and look at investing in the Community. Have to

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present: “Here is Option A: without” and “Here is Option B: with” in regards to an Override. Have to look at Facilities and Maintenance. He has been sitting for 2 hours, looking at the ceiling, seeing paint peeling because of a leaking roof. He Coaches track and the indoor track needs to be replaced because water comes up through the floors. Had to cancel a few events last winter because of repairs needed. The grounds are a mess at the new Elementary School. This cannot be sustained at the current levels of funding and staffing that the district has.

Capital Planning. Most important. What is the district doing with the Revolver? That money should be used to invest in the facilities. It is time to look ahead in the Capital Planning because the Revolvers should not be used to pay the budget shortfalls.

3 point plan that he wants to support as part of the override is: 1: Returning some programming and Staff that is desperately needed to return Northbridge to being a competitive and respectable community. 2: Address Facilities and Maintenance as they need to be with more funding and staffing. 3: Capital Planning to look ahead.

Believes that the community is behind the schools, and he is, if the school is investing in the community and will help get people to vote yes for an Override if that is what is needed.

XI. Action (8:45)

XII. Adjournment (8:45)

Superintendent McKinsty thanked Caleb for his presence and increased role in the School Committee meetings.

A motion was made by Carl Cowen to Adjourn. It was seconded by Jonathan Canoy.

Heather Alden	Absent
Jill Leonard	Yes
Carl Cowen	Yes
Shannon Canoy	Yes
Jonathan Canoy	Yes

It was passed with a vote of 4-0

Note: The listing of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Also, the timeframe for each topic is a general guideline and may not be strictly adhered to.

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