

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING**  
**High School Library, 241 High Street, Newburyport, MA 01950**

**Monday, February 3, 2025**

Present: Juliet Walker, Sarah Hall, Kathleen Shaw, Brian Callahan, Breanna Higgins, Andy Boger and Mayor Sean Reardon

**CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL**

Vice Chair Juliet Walker called the School Committee Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:30 PM. Roll call found all members present except Mayor Reardon (arrived at 7:30). All those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Public Comments:** none

**Warrant:**

**Motion:**

On a motion by Brian Callahan and seconded by Sarah Hall it was

**VOTED:** to approve the Warrant in the amount of \$153,511.02 as presented.

**Motion Passed**

**Mayor Reardon absent**

**Minutes**

**Motion:**

On a motion by Brian Callahan and seconded by Kathleen Shaw it was

**VOTED:** to adopt the minutes from the January 21, 2025 School Committee meeting as presented.

**Motion Passed**

**Mayor Reardon absent**

**2025-2026 High School Athletic Fees**

Members reviewed the athletic fee list, noting the fee list was actually for 2025-2026. James Antonelli explained the proposed increase for Boys and Girls Ski teams is to get away from fundraising.

**Motion:**

On a motion by Brian Callahan and seconded by Sarah Hall it was

**VOTED:** to approve a user fee increase in 2025-2026 to Boys and Girls Ski teams to \$300, and to approve the User Fee list for 2025-2026, subject to Policy JQ – Student Fees Fines and Charges.

**Motion Passed**

**Mayor Reardon Absent**

### **Student Representative Report**

Maddie Jackman presented the student report that included Kindness Month activities and Global Day of Play at the Bresnahan, Spirit Week at the Molin, Community Basketball fundraiser at the Nock, and congratulations to the Mock Trial Team, as well as various musicians at the high school.

### **Newburyport's Whittier School Committee Rep**

Brett Murphy reported that Whittier was closed today due to a water main break. He stated the Plant Operations Subcommittee will meet on February 4<sup>th</sup> to conduct interviews to select a project manager for the wastewater treatment plant study. Three bidders applied to the RFP.

Mary DeLai reported that Whittier has launched their budget process. The school committee will meet on February 26<sup>th</sup>, and the public hearing on the budget will be held on March 12. They are entering negotiations with the teacher's union. Mary also spoke of the admissions policy review and evening adult learner programs.

### **NHS Cell Phone Follow Up**

High School Principal Andy Wulf stated the high school has done a lot of work focused around engaging students on healthy behavior as it relates to smart devices. Principal Wulf explained the three main drivers at NHS: growth, readiness and voice. He provided a brief history of the high school's cell phone policies and strategies.

Principal Wulf described the student dialogues run by grade 11 and 12 English teachers as part of the summer reading program (Gr 11 read *Accountable* and Gr 12 read *Atomic Habits*). High school students Emerson Leahy and Tyler Chorebanian shared their personal strategies to self-regulate their cell phone use, which they recently shared at assemblies for grade 9 and 10 students. The Senior English classes will be involved in an upcoming student dialog topic, "*Why your attention matters*". Future activities may include a possible intergenerational dialogue involving parents, teachers and students, as well as working with the IT group to limit apps on iPads.

### **Proposed Business Manager Hiring Process**

Juliet Walker explained the details of the proposed advisory committee that would assist with the hiring process for a school business manager. Members interested in serving on the committee should contact Mayor Reardon.

### **Motion:**

On a motion by Sarah Hall and seconded by Andrew Boger it was

**VOTED:** to form an Advisory Subcommittee to the School Committee for up to one year or until position is filled as described in the packet in accordance with policy BDF – Advisory Committees to the School Committee.

### **Motion Passed**

## **SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

### **Finance Subcommittee**

Brian Callahan reported they will meet on Thursday, February 13th at 8:00AM.

### **Policy Subcommittee:**

Juliet Walker stated the next meeting will be held on February 10<sup>th</sup>.

### **Communications Subcommittee**

Sarah Hall reported they met on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. They set the meeting calendar for the remainder of the year (last Thursday of each month from 5-6pm, except May 1st due to school break). They also reviewed successes for 2024 and various action items for 2025. The next meeting will be held on February 27<sup>th</sup>.

### **Teaching & Learning Subcommittee**

Breanna Higgins stated they held the first meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup>. They went through an overview of mid-year assessments used by the district and also had a long conversation about the competency determination. Future meetings will be held on the fourth Monday of each month.

**Evaluation Subcommittee:** have not met

### **Review 2025-2026 School Calendar – DRAFT**

Members reviewed the proposed 2025-2026 calendar. This was the first reading of the 2025-2026 calendar; a second reading and possible vote will occur at the February 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Brian Callahan explained his version of the calendar. He moved many Early Release Days to a Friday prior to a vacation or holiday, which is beneficial to families.

In response to Brian Callahan's proposal, Superintendent Gallagher stated he is concerned about increased district-wide absences when an Early Release Day falls before a holiday/vacation. In addition, the April 3<sup>rd</sup> ERD cannot be moved due to the AFSCME contract. The Superintendent could move the March 27 ERD so if doesn't fall right before the April 3<sup>rd</sup> ERD.

Sarah Hall commented that early release days are longer work days for teachers, therefore if ERDs were moved, teachers would have to work until 4PM the day before holidays and/or vacation weeks rather than work their normal day.

Breanna Higgins asked if it would be beneficial to have fewer early release days, and condense them into full days. Also, what is rationale for later start / earlier finish for Pk-K in calendar year. The Superintendent will obtain more information from the Administration.

### **Superintendent's Report**

**AD Hiring Process Update:** Four candidates met with the high school team, made up of Principal Wulf, Lauren Gee, Mike Testa, Nick Markos, James Antonelli, and Marshall Simons. Principal Wulf will make his final hiring recommendation to the Superintendent this week.

FY26 Budget Update: Superintendent Sean Gallagher shared that the Governor’s proposed FY26 budget provides over \$6 million for Chapter 70 funding to Newburyport, which is a \$152K increase.

MASS Refugee Support Webinar: Superintendent Gallagher participated in a refugee support webinar sponsored by MASS, which provided helpful guidance and feedback to all school districts. The district has protocols and policies in place. The EL staff have been provided with information that can be supplied to any families they are working with if needed.

MASS Winter Conference: Superintendent Gallagher attended the winter conference with area superintendents. This year’s topics included a presentation and review of a Social Media Toolkit, strategies districts are using to deal with social media, student’s mental health and depression related to social media, and opportunities for Artificial Intelligence in schools.

**New Business**

- Kathleen Shaw thanked everyone for participating in the Community Talent show.
- Kathleen Shaw said SEPAC recently held a planning meeting. The next meeting will be in person on Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. They are working to establish dates for future meetings and topics.
- Mayor Reardon reminded everyone that the State of the City Address and the Community Awards will be at 7PM on Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at City Hall.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:**

On a motion by Juliet Walker and seconded by Brian Callahan it was

**VOTED:** to adjourn the Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 8:25PM and move to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing possible contract negotiations and/or legal matters, and will not reconvene in open session.

**Motion Passed**

**Roll Call Vote**

<b>School Committee Member</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Mayor Sean Reardon	Yes
Sarah Hall	Yes
Andrew Boger	Yes
Brian Callahan	Yes
Breanna Higgins	Yes
Kathleen Shaw	Yes
Juliet Walker	Yes

**Submitted by: Maddie Jackman**

**Location: NHS Library**

**Bresnahan News:**

**Kindness Month at the Bresnahan** - For the month of February, the Bresnahan is excited to celebrate **Kindness Month**. Teachers and counselors have collaborated to create a series of morning meeting videos and activities for all classrooms to participate in. These activities will help students explore the many ways to show kindness to one another.

Their goal is ambitious — to complete 1,000 acts of kindness! As a school, they will work together to achieve their goal by displaying 1,000 paper hearts around the building. When staff and students observe an act of kindness, they will fill out a heart and place it on their classroom door. It will be truly inspiring to walk the hallways and see kindness in action throughout their school community!

Their goal is to use this initiative to foster a strong sense of community and encourage kindness in every student. We hope that every child will be “caught” being kind and contribute to our school-wide mission.

**Global Day of Play** - We are excited to share that on February 7th, in honor of Global Day of Play, the Bresnahan is partnering with Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services to celebrate the power of play as an essential part of learning and development.

This will be a screen-free day where students are invited to bring in one play item to share with their peers. Teachers will take on the roles of facilitator, fellow player, and guide, ensuring a safe and inclusive environment while encouraging child-led play. This initiative allows students to explore creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving in a meaningful way.

Their goal is to highlight the critical role of play in cognitive, social, and emotional growth, while giving teachers the flexibility to tailor activities to their classroom dynamics.

**Molin News:**

4th graders are researching explorers and beginning their study of the regions of the United States.

5th graders are working on writing informational and persuasive writing pieces.

The Molin School will have a Spirit Week next week and celebrate the 100th day of school!

### **Nock News:**

There will be a Student Vrs Parent Basketball Fundraiser on March 26th at 6 PM at the NOCK to support 7th & 8th grade overnight trips! The night will feature two action-packed games—students will take on the parents, and the winner will face off against a team of Newburyport faculty members!

Admission is only \$5, and pizza, snacks, and drinks will be available for sale to keep everyone fueled throughout the games!

Parents may contact Principal Nick Markos if they are interested in playing. Come cheer, eat, and have a blast while supporting a great cause. Let's make this night a slam dunk!

### **High School News:**

**Bay Schumacher** has earned his spot in the Northeastern Jr. District band for his second consecutive year. On behalf of Mr. Wulf, Mr. Gallagher, his parents, Monica Duncan and David Schumacher, and his music teacher, Mr. Cohen, we are all extremely proud of Bay, and look forward to his performance in this elite band of 7th, 8th, and 9th grade students in March.

**NHS students Calli Taffel, Milla Baptiste, and Lucius Nelson** read original poetry at the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event held by the Human Rights Commission.

The **Mock Trial Team** won Region 20 and will be heading to the regionals and Fabulous 14 on March 2 at Clark University. This is the first time winning after starting the team three years ago.