

**NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING  
Monday, September 21, 2020  
Senior/Community Center**

**Meeting Convened at 6:30 PM**

**Mayor Donna Holaday / Bruce Menin Presided**

**Present: Sean Reardon, David Hochheiser, Mayor Donna Holaday, Bruce Menin, Steve Cole, Brian Callahan, Sheila Spalding**

**CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**Mayor Donna Holaday** called the Business Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:30 PM. Roll Call found all members present. All those present stood for the pledge of allegiance to the Flag.

At this point Vice-Chairman **Bruce Menin** assumed chairmanship of the Business Meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

**Laurie Brynes, 11th 6th Street, Newburyport** She thanked Special Education Beth Flynn and stated she was happy with the support she received. She complained about the time she received a meeting with the Special Education Teacher.

**Carol Sanchez, Plum Island** She thanked teachers, staff and administration - she stated her son has flourished. She took an informal poll - "Do you want to be back in school?" - all said yes. Get everyone back.

**Gene Novack, 161 Northern Blvd., Plum Island** He thanked everyone. He urged everyone to get immunized. Students need to be back in school.

**Matthew Kane** He said people need the metrics to get kids back in school. Do better.

**Mr. Cooper** He supports all of the above. He is 100% in favor of getting kids back in school. He stated a teacher didn't show today for his son's class.

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

**Warrants:**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Mayor Holaday** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.  
**\$68.45**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the following warrant.  
**\$1,817.60**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Sean Reardon** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment  
The following warrant.  
**\$2,257.11**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor to make payment  
and deduct the funds from the school's account.  
**\$28,299.34**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

On a motion by **Steve Cole** and seconded by **Brian Callahan** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and forward to the City Auditor for payment the  
following warrant.  
**\$357,376.60**

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Minutes:**

On a motion by \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by **Sheila Spalding** it was

**VOTED:** To approve, receive and file the School Committee  
Business Meeting minutes of Monday, September 2, 2020 as amended.

**Motion Passed**

**Sean Reardon abstained**

**Motion:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **David Hochheiser** it was

**VOTED:** To adjourn to Executive Session at 7:00 PM for the purpose of discussing  
negotiations, possible litigation and legal matters. The Committee  
will return to regular session.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

<b>Steve Cole</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Sean Reardon</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Brian Callahan</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Sheila Spalding</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>David Hochheiser</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mayor Holaday</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Bruce Menin</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**Mayor Holaday** called the Business Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee back to  
Open Session at 8:17 PM upon return from the Executive Session.

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH NEWBURYPORT INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS**

**ASSOCIATION:**

**Motion:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **Sean Reardon** it was

**VOTED:** To approve the Memorandum of Agreement with Newburyport Instructional Assistants Association as presented.

**Roll Call Vote:**

<b>Brian Callahan</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Mayor Holaday</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>David Hochheiser</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Steve Cole</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Bruce Menin</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Sheila Spalding</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Sean Reardon</b>	<b>Yes</b>

**Motion Passed Unanimously**

**OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT:**

**Mayor Holaday** stated that they have scheduled an Open Meeting to continue our conversation and we will come back into Open Session should we be able to reach a decision at that point.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION LEARNING MODELS UPDATE:**

**Superintendent Gallagher** introduced Nancy Koch who gave an update on all three learning models that we have out there, and how we are addressing some of our Special Education issues.

Ms. Koch stated we are all back in school. We have three models - the hybrid model in which students are coming in two days a week and receiving services face to face - then the other three days they are receiving services synchronously and asynchronously. The remote academy students are receiving services solely remotely. Then cohort C which of these students that have been identified as high needs are coming in four days a week and that varies in buildings but again they are getting face-to-face instruction those days. The fifth day they are receiving their services asynchronously. Parents are being contacted to develop the learning plans, whether it be the individualized remote learning plans or the learning plans for the hybrid model and then those plans will be going out the end of this week or early next week. The purpose of those plans is to identify how the services on those IEP's will be delivered differently than they would be if we were in a normal educational setting at this point.

**Mayor Holaday** asked "Do you have legal challenges from parents regarding the schedule and what's happening at this juncture."

Ms. Koch said there have not been any yet, but she thinks they are working diligently to avoid that. We will be meeting with parents. We are getting legal counsel in terms of what we're calling COVID impact in terms of services, and we'll be discussing how we're going to address that with students.

**Mayor Holaday** said they heard two parents tonight who spoke and spoke very highly of the work, and they want more.

Ms. Koch said most parents want more and we understand, but due to the pandemic and due to the space, we needed to prioritize who would be coming back into the buildings.

**Mayor Holaday** asked our students, who are out of district placement, are they all going to those programs.

Ms. Koch said it depends upon the placements; they're all going to the placements. Some are in session five days a week and some are doing a hybrid model, and bringing them back gradually. Some have two cohorts in which they come in the morning and then another cohort like they would come every morning. One cohort comes every morning for a week and then the other cohort is home in the afternoon and they get remote lessons and then they switch the following week. It's a variety, and if the school is small enough, and there are a few, and they have the space they're all back and attending every day all day, but it depends upon the school and the space and the numbers.

**Mayor Holaday** thanked Ms. Koch.

**Sheila Spalding** said she has heard from some parents who are a little apprehensive about the attendance. They seemed unclear. They have challenges getting them in front of the screen and she wondered if Ms. Koch could just clarify what they should do if their student is not willing to participate that day.

Ms. Koch said she thought what we are seeing is something that we are addressing on an individual basis, and talking about what we could do to accommodate that and go asynchronously. When a family has chosen an alternative on a given day other than the public school, that will be an absence, but we are working with families to accommodate that because we realize there are going to be days that it's going to be very, very difficult and we recognize that.

**Bruce Menin** asked when Ms. Koch talked about contacting parents what's the process. Who is actually doing the contacting?

Ms. Koch said their Special Need liaison, a case manager, is reaching out to the parents of their children discussing the services on the IEP, talking about what services will be synchronous and what services will be asynchronous. What's going to be different in terms of how they are going to be delivered, how accommodations may be different and then when would the parent like to be contacted, how often would the parent want to be contacted. All of that is being discussed. There are six questions and then there is the schedule - the child's schedule is also on that learning plan, whether it be the individualized remote learning plan on the learning plan. All service providers contact information is their name and their email and what their role is if it's a speech and language pathologist occupational therapist. This is so a parent doesn't have to scramble to figure things out.

**Bruce Menin** said Ms. Koch mentioned that as some of these issues are presenting you're looking at them on a case by case basis so parents should be encouraged to raise these concerns during those meetings or with you.

Ms. Koch said yes, and she thought the most frequent is that everyone would like to have their children 4 days a week, and we do have criteria to address what is considered high needs. That is what was laid out in the plan for reopening schools.

**David Hochheiser** asked are our liaisons grade level of grade span based?

Ms. Koch said for the most part they're grade based, but not always.

**David Hochheiser** asked do they at times get to travel so the families come in like first grade and stay with somebody for a couple of years, or are they meeting new people this year.

Ms. Koch said it depends upon the programming, so if it's online it varies based on the program and the school.

**David Hochheiser** to piggyback on the mayor's question from earlier, you said offering asynchronous services.

Ms. Koch said it would be so for instance, a preschooler cannot tolerate sitting in front of a screen for a whole lot of time, so an occupational therapist may develop a lesson, a game, an activity that is recorded and then the materials are sent home and then that can be done asynchronously with a parent or sibling, so that the child is not required to be sitting in front of the screen the entire time.

**David Hochheiser** said that made sense and thanked Ms. Koch.

**Bruce Menin** thanked Ms. Koch for her input.

### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:**

**Superintendent Gallagher** reported on the following:

- He thanked Nancy Koch and the Special Ed Department for all the work that they've been doing throughout the summer. He said we continue to tweak those plans and do the best that we can to meet the needs of all students.

- Opening of School

Last week we had a very successful first week. Every year it's always challenging, even when you have your planning for three months and the environment is constant. There's always a lot of work that goes into planning of reopening. Obviously this year was very challenging with reopening in a pandemic. He thanked the teachers. Right now a lot of the problem solving is happening with teachers and parents. As for the students at home with the Remote Learning, what's really nice about this year in this concept is having the students in, so during a lot of the training we're doing for the safety protocols and health protocols we're also working with students on Google suites and Google classroom in the technology at all grade levels, so the students are part of the class in the hybrid model. It's been very helpful for the students and the parents at home - the planning that we did has paid off. In that first week there's always going to be hiccups with any type of reopening - this year coming into this school year, the model that we have with students that are in person in the hybrid and also at the remote and then also out remote academy has seemed for overall been going pretty well. Our idea is for our students, especially the remote students, to continue to work with the teachers and really we're working with our students and having them not to panic as there are glitches that may happen. The other benefit this year is having our tech department on board and we have a ticket system so that a student who is struggling with technology for whatever reason at home or a parent that's struggling at home with the technology can submit a ticket and our tech support has dealt with those usually within that class period immediately so in the last few days we're getting less and less of those tickets being submitted and our tech department has done a nice job responding to some of the technology issues when they occur. Overall the health and safety protocols we're in

good shape, as after our finance committee meeting, we did have some students touring last week and some of the school community members that came to that meeting in the morning saw some of the classrooms. It's vastly different. He spoke of the training that the nursing staff and teachers have done with students wearing masks, social distancing and the hygiene and hand washing. Students are getting into that system. We've had a couple of cases at the High School with COVID, but those health protocols and safety protocols that we've established seem to be pretty effective, so that's been a positive with the health protocols.

Arrival and dismissal times, especially in the beginning takes a lot of time - one of the silver linings in this is we are maximizing all of the doors in all of the schools. We cohort the students around the buildings so our arrival and dismissal times have been a lot less chaotic than we were anticipating. When we are back to normal and fully in person down the road, we will probably utilize some of those procedures because they've been pretty effective. We will continue to tweak and make things even better.

Our lunches are a lot different as we are utilizing the six-foot distance and during the last few days more students have been bringing in lunches from home. We are working with the Principals and district leaders to develop surveys for students and parents along with staff, so we can get input on things that are going very well and some that we can continue to modify - it's really important to gather feedback throughout the process.

That's overall the cohort B was for two days. Cohort A started today and cohort A will be back tomorrow. There were some questions with synchronous and asynchronous and attendance. The State is requiring attendance and participation and requiring time on learning while at home and also in person so we're modifying our remote and hybrid model as we move forward. There's going to be flexibility with asynchronous, especially at the younger levels. We're working on the students and the work they're doing at home. The State is requiring half of the day in front - for the older kids half a day in front of technology with the synchronous - the live instruction. The younger levels, grades 1, 2, and 3 having students in front of the computers at home is not a great model for us, so we're utilizing common sense here in Newburyport and we're monitoring attendance not only with the synchronous and the morning check ins, but also with work submitted with Google Hangout with the projects that the students are doing. We're monitoring that participation that way for the students that are at home - for the parents - there is going to be flexibility with the schedules and gathering input from parents, students and staff in those tweaks down the line.

There was concern with students turning on the video - from a lot of the staff surveys that went out to parents re: some of the things that went well with the Spring remote and some of them that we could improve on. One of them was having the cameras on while the students were at home. Some students were not showing their picture and weren't in the class. We're working individually with students who have a little anxiety. We have our adjustment counselors, our principals and teachers working with those students making accommodations. Right now with a lot of the synchronous, the video is on the teacher for the most part. Eventually with collaboration that we're looking to utilize through Google classroom, students are going to have their videos on so they can participate with the class. We're easing that in. What if students are afraid or anxious

about having their video turned on. There are strategies that we're utilizing and we are working with those families.

- Transportation

We sent out our transportation in June not knowing what our models were going to look like. We're going to continue to monitor what the hybrid model is right now - how often we're bringing students back or how often people are using the transportation. If it stays that way for the next six months we'd be reimbursing families and charging them for the days that they're utilizing the bus services with our teachers and the schedules. Similar to what we utilized last year for the Kindergarten reimbursement once the State said we're going full remote for the rest of the year, we reimbursed families those two to three months.

The word hybrid remote academy, four or five weeks ago, was just starting to come about - they weren't part of dialogue in the educational world here. Getting information on how many families were going to utilize full remote, developing our staff, utilizing our leave teachers to assist with that - right now the product we have for students that are staying home for various is going very well. We're happy with utilizing our teachers and not sending off our students to some outside program in some other outside company that would be educating them. Thanks to the teachers and people who pulled that off in a short period of time.

- The metrics

We're still going to utilize our public health metrics and the school buildings, to look at those metrics that are staying the same. We have metrics that would lead us to full remote and we have metrics that are keeping us where we are at, and then metrics that would bring more students back. We're looking at and working with Cathy Riccio and everybody. Our goal would be that things stay the way they are with low cases to utilize that remote Wednesday, because we really wanted health and safety as our number one priority about bringing kids back. We utilize that Wednesday right now for cleaning and allowing our custodians and Steve Bergholm and his crew to thoroughly clean the buildings. They've been doing a great job, even at night and in the morning before school - we feel we can get that cleaning done and the cases stay the way they're at. We'll be utilizing that Wednesday, that's a full day, for another in-person day so grades one to eight would be going cohort A one week would go three days a week cohort B would go two and then the following cohort A would go 2 days a week and cohort B would do three. That's if everything is going well and our systems are in place and we're very comfortable. The idea right now is at the High School we're at 25%, but we'd be looking to increase that to 50% capacity. Once again following the metrics that we've laid out within our public health document and the date we're looking at for that would be November 2nd. We would increase more in person contact with students. There's a lot of details that we would need to work out, but in general that's our thought process. We're also looking at working with some of the health professionals we feel is a good time - November 2nd - because it is before the Thanksgiving break and if you have students that are in college many of the colleges are shutting down around Thanksgiving and extending the winter break, so we'll be having many college students back living with their families. That would be a good time to re-evaluate where we're at around

Thanksgiving time - that's our goal. There's been a lot of work that has gone in, by faculty and staff and everybody in our system. Working with all the unions in June our goal and the union's goal was to be back in person or having students back. They looked at that as very important to this district. We need to do it as safely as possible and have accomplished that.

He got to visit all the classes and was pretty sure most of the students were smiling under their masks.

**Brian Callahan** said he thought more students coming back is a good plan - but is there an actual number. Is there a number or is it let's wait and see local cases and what number they are versus State.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said you add a lot of the metrics and the State is using the 4%, but then we also monitor some of the other criteria that's in our health and safety protocols and then work with our local health professionals. We're very fortunate where we have some people that can really let us know we're in a good place - right now if we maintain our numbers then that November 2nd date would look pretty good.

**David Hochheiser** said if we're going to be able to bring kids back to three and two, but flip it and use Wednesdays to utilize, can parents expect that right now if their kids are a Monday, Tuesday kid, that they could stay a Monday, Tuesday kid and then just alternate the Wednesdays every other week. Instead of going every two days, people have to come - I'm thinking about people who might have job plans or jobs, or that sort of set up so that they could know it's an A B an A block now who goes Monday, Tuesday could still be a Monday, Tuesday, but every other week they also get Wednesday. I'm asking to try to keep family schedules as consistent as possible.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said our thought process was if you're cohort A then this week you'd have the Wednesdays - you would let people know so you're going to go on this Wednesday. Cohort B - they would take the next Wednesday so cohort A would go Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and cohort B would go Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

**David Hochheiser** said so they're really looking at that one that's what I'm talking about, so the families would still be on the same days.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said correct.

**David Hochheiser** said okay, that's great. His next question is about the web site and how that's looking. He noticed the Nock Middle School has a pretty amazing side website.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said yes. We took that idea - he is working with Committee member **Brian Callahan**. The web site that has been geared is clunky and it's hard to explore. We took that same idea on our website similar to what Nock did. We uploaded a district reopening. It's right out there, so when you click on it, it brings you to a whole new site with a lot of our information. Hopefully people will be able to click on that tonight and see the difference - right now we're updating a lot of those - we have the health and safety - we have district communication that has gone out - we also have the school schedules on there and our cultural diversity. We have that piece because there's been a lot of communication around race and racism, so that's one way of getting around fighting with the web site - down the road as a district that's something that we're going to take a strong look at on upgrading the web site.



**Bruce Menin** said to follow up on Mr. Hochheiser's question about the Wednesday and being able to help parents plan, do you have a sense of when that's going to happen or when a decision is going to be made about going with the Wednesday.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said yes, for us we just started and there's still a lot of work in the sense of the protocols - the cleaning protocols - for us it's really going through a couple of cycles and then feeling pretty good and then also we have to work out a lot more details, but we'll be able to notify parents on what's going to look like - our target date is the Monday, the 2nd of November.

**David Hochheiser** said so starting that week, your target date, if all health metrics are correct, we would start having more kids.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said yes.

**Bruce Menin** said he appreciated all the work that you and your staff have been doing, the faculty and support staff have been doing. He said he knew they have been in touch and the Superintendent has spent a lot of time on the phone with parents as well. We will continue to do what we can to support them.

**Superintendent Gallagher** said he covered a lot - for all of us as educators the easiest thing for all of us to do is to have all students back, because that's our wheelhouse. This modification is difficult, but he wants to say to parents that having the students back, our energy as a district on that Thursday went up to 100% just because they were back. Our teachers and IAs were amazing, because as I visited all the classrooms you could see them back in their wheelhouse. A lot of this work was planning and not knowing what it's going to look like, but having the kids back the last few days has been really motivating for this faculty. He related visiting the preschool and seeing the children wearing their tiny little two inch masks - the cutest little thing he has seen. We're going to stay together - keep working together and dealing with these issues as they come about.

**Bruce Menin** said after the finance committee he and Mr. Cole walked around and met some of the teachers. The enthusiasm was tremendous and the amount of preparation was terrific, particularly at the Nock in terms of creating that easing-in transitional curriculum for the first couple of weeks. Teachers were enthusiastic and one teacher told us how enthusiastic he was about the model that had been developed. He appreciated all of it.

**Steve Cole** said it was really nice to see that a lot of work has gone into keeping the rooms especially clean and clear. It was nice to see everybody with a box of supplies, a workstation separate at each desk. It seemed very, very well thought out and the teachers explained things that were evident that they're very organized around us. He appreciated all the planning that went into setting that up. He was sure it really helped the kids ease into it, because when the students first came into those classrooms they were a little stunned to see everything spread apart, so the fact that things were organized in such a way he was sure mitigated against a lot of that trauma and they settled in right away. The teachers' enthusiasm only served to complement.

### **SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **Joint Ed:**

**Sean Reardon** said they met today. Questions were addressed about back to school.

**Superintendent Gallagher** explained.

**Finance:**

**Steve Cole** said they met last week. Discussed were:

- End of year fund balances that have been able to provide a little more than a million dollars to help with the FY21 budget, which is a good thing. A lot of those savings are from being closed for part of the FY20 year.
- Staffing - An update was presented - where we were with hires. There are only a few positions left - 3 of them are one year leaves. He wasn't sure if those had been filled.
- Grant Application - he assumed was the Esser Grant, the COVID Grant, somewhere between \$800 and \$900 thousand dollars. It was good news on that side that we have some resources to put into FY21.

**Policy:**

**David Hochheiser** said they have not met. He said they need to set up a date - things feel a little more settled down now. The last time they had a conversation it was about fundraising. They had talked about politics.

**Superintendent's Evaluation:**

**Bruce Menin** said they have not met. The Mayor and he did agree that because things were just too crazy this summer and ending out the school year last school year. They had submitted a letter to the Superintendent based on our vote that we were renewing his contract for three years, and that after school opened which it did last week, that we would begin putting together an evaluation. He asked **Superintendent Gallagher** if he would reach out to other Superintendents to find out if they were using that same thing - they are

**Superintendent Gallagher** commented on air purifiers. Steve Bergholm ordered 95 air purifiers and they arrived last week. We're putting them as extra precautions in all those interior rooms and offices throughout the district. A lot of schools that ordered air purifiers are on backorder - we were ahead of that. Mr. Bergholm has been distributing them.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

On a motion by **Mayor Holaday** and seconded by **Sean Reardon** it was

**VOTED:** To adjourn the Business Meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 9:40 PM.

**Motion Passed Unanimously**