

**NEW BOSTON SCHOOL DISTRICT
New Boston, New Hampshire 03070**

**NEW BOSTON SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, September 25, 2019 - 6:30 PM**

**New Boston Central School Library
15 Central School Road, New Boston, NH 03070**

PRESENT

SCHOOL BOARD

Wendy Lambert
Kary Jencks
Fred Hayes
Bill Schmidt (6:41)
Rob Witt

ADMINISTRATORS

Brian Balke, Superintendent
MaryClaire Barry, Assistant Superintendent
Tori Underwood, Principal
Scott Gross, Business Administrator

OPENING

CALL TO ORDER

Kary Jencks called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2019 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Wendy Lambert moved to approve the September 11, 2019 School Board meeting minutes as written. Rob Witt seconded the motion. The Board then reviewed the September 11, 2019 School Board meeting minutes and made the following changes:

Page 3, third bullet from the top, change “Any” to “An”

Page 3, under Unreserved Fund Balance, fourth line, change “decreased New Boston student enrollment” to “proportion/ratio change between Goffstown and New Boston students”

Page 4, under Non-Public, change “for” to “ad”

Wendy Lambert moved to approve the August 28, 2019 School Board meeting minutes as amended. Fred Hayes seconded the motion. The motion carried. (4-0 Bill Schmidt absent)

CORRESPONDENCE

None.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kary noted the Board always welcomes public comment and feedback. There are two opportunities for public comment, one at the beginning of the meeting and then another at the end. Anyone with a comment is asked to state their name and address for the record and that comments be respectful and thoughtful. The Board will listen but public comment is typically not a back and forth.

Nancy Biederman of Byam Road presented concerns that she and other community parents have to the Goffstown School Board but received no response so she is now coming to the New Boston School Board. She feels the concerns were not heard at the Goffstown School Board because these parents are not Goffstown residents. Nancy explained the GHS Summer Reading procedure changed this year, instead of students choosing their own book and obtaining it as was done in prior years. The purpose of Summer Reading also changed. This year, books were assigned by grade level and purchased with taxpayer money by the School District. The procedure of how the book would be used also changed. The book is now used as a source material in the classroom. The Book for GHS Juniors and Seniors is ‘American Like Me’ with thirty-one stories of America Ferrera’s friends. Some have appropriate subject matter, the majority have concerning poor subject matter. The parents are concerned that this will not just be a Summer Reading book with a quick discussion that was done in prior years,

but that under the new procedure the book will be in classrooms as a source material and the teachers will integrate it into the curriculum where they see fit. It will be used differently in different classrooms, with different narratives and materials chosen. Nancy requested lesson plans on how to use this book. Nancy protected her child who is not going to use the book as a source material in the classroom. Nancy's largest concern is that parents who have always trusted the School District to provide appropriate material are not aware what is in the book. When Nancy brings it up to parents, they are surprised and have a lot of questions. When she presented to the Goffstown School Board, the two administrators who presented this did not read the book. That was a concern to her. Upon watching the May 20 Goffstown School Board meeting, she heard reasons that this book was chosen and directed to be done by the Superintendent for equality in the classroom material and to represent all students. When she had a meeting with an Administrator and a teacher, she felt this book was chosen because it might entice students to read because the writers are celebrities and there are narratives, which they liked. She did not feel the content was verified or vetted. She said the content is scary and one-sided. She never received an answer to her question of who recommended the book; she was just told it was a committee. She never got a rubric or criteria of why this book was chosen over any other narratives available. The cost to taxpayers was approximately \$10,000-15,000. The book was sent home with students and a letter was sent to all parents explaining that the District is using this one book theory of teaching such as college campuses do. That was not the reason given at the Goffstown School Board meeting where the Board stated that there was an incident of a racial meme distributed around the student body, so what was sent home to parents and what actually precipitated this was not conveyed to parents. Narrative writers were reviewed. The writing is poor and she would not hold this book up as good writing. The writers are entertainers, comedians, magicians, liberal activists. There are four very specific liberal activists, three professional sports players, two actual authors and one congressman. There is not one doctor, lawyer, engineer, teacher, mechanic or police officer. They are one-sided narratives with a specific very slanted view with many stereotypes that felt very anti-American. A lot of material presented includes gender roles are good for women and if America had gender roles life would be easier. There is bragging about family members who do illegal activities but because they recite the Koran the activities are forgiven and they are held up as a source of family pride. Nancy discussed with a teacher that good family values are not presented in this book. The second story talks about the five steps of how to scam people out of money and how families are passing this skill down through generations. The whole undertone is biased and there is no opposite point presented to the ideas included in the book, it is all one-sided. Nancy suggested the Board establish a policy that requires the Superintendent to establish a committee to review when there is a complaint about any book. Nancy and other parents contacted the Superintendent and Administrators as soon as the book came home. They met with them but no progress was made because no one else had read it yet. Nancy contacted the Goffstown School Board and asked them to stop the use of this book until it was further investigated but they clearly didn't. There needs to be a rubric and criteria set up to establish choosing this one book now that the District is mandating that this is the only choice students have for summer reading. Nancy asked the Board to ask the Goffstown School District to remove the book as a source material until it is properly vetted and criteria set up for proper guidance for students and teachers as there is no way to know what teachers are going to use it for and some of the content is questionable. By having the book in the classroom and requiring students to read the book, the District has said there is a lot of value in this book, said the book contains valuable information and has your stamp of approval and the District believes the same things as the narrative authors. She doesn't want to ban this book, just wants to have criteria set up for material being presented in the classroom that is appropriate. She feels anyone can read any book they want but when students are mandated to read it the book is elevated to a different level. There is a Supreme Court case about banning books: the Board can act solely upon the educational suitability of the book in question or solely because the books were vulgar and such actions would not be unconstitutional, so the Board has the right to question the material and should be questioning any material that is presented in the classroom. There have been four different Supreme Court cases about viewpoint discrimination. In this book, there is one viewpoint. There was no way the District was going to present the opposing viewpoint from what was presented in this book unless she brought it up. It concerns her that the District is only presenting one side.

Kristin Freeman of Riverdale Road was present and noted she started reading the book yesterday and was disturbed by a sexual reference by Linda Sarsour near page 78 that is being distributed to young and impressionable students for two entire grades. She wondered if that is acceptable in a book assigned to an entire grade. She noted Linda Sarsour has three chapters in the book and is made to seem like a wonderful person but has been forced to step down as one of the leaders of the Women's March over her connection to anti-Semitism

and hatemongers such as Louis Farrakhan, despite his history of Jew hatred. Also caucasians always referred to as “the white person” or “the bad person” that is offensive and her child has to sit through that.

Nancy noted there is a lot of topics and sexual content in the book that would be difficult for a teacher to present in a classroom and she doesn’t think teachers should be discussing it or having conversations about it with students. She suggested another book be considered.

Brandy Castellano of Wright Drive was present and noted she also has concerns about the content in the book. She contacted the Superintendent and Administrators who were all very cooperative in discussing her concerns about the content and definite political slant. She read the book the first week it came home. It was purchased with taxpayer money and seems inappropriate for reasons including the content and mention of non-profit organizations that receive support through the purchase of this book and political agendas that could be illegal, and supports other organizations that could be influencing students. She agrees with being concerned with the content and how it is going to be used in the school because there really isn’t a plan and wants to make sure the Board understands her concern that taxpayer dollars were used to purchase a book like this and the organizations the purchase donates to.

Nancy noted a non-profit organization that District teachers are getting workshops and instruction from is “Teaching Tolerance” who she doesn’t agree with. It was founded by the Southern Poverty Law Center that used to be a wonderful organization but has now turned to calling out “hate groups” and most of those “hate groups” are conservative organizations that they deem are “hate groups.” The Southern Poverty Law Center is now under investigation for sexual harassment and racism claims. She researched the lessons on the Teaching Tolerance website and found one for early grades, kindergarten through third grade, with “white anti-racist biographies for early grades, young white students, fair and unfair, just and unjust, can go a long way to advancing anti-racist white identity with purposeful use of literature and basic study of white anti-racists are among the key ways educators can advance including four short biographies for early grade classrooms with activity ideas” and many more lessons just like that.

The Board thanked Nancy, Kristin and Brandy for bringing this concern forward. Kary noted she read the book and it is available for other Board members to review and discuss after which Kary will follow up with Nancy. Wendy noted she is sorry Nancy felt the Goffstown School Board did not listen to her because she is a New Boston parent. Wendy feels the Goffstown School Board is very inclusive. Nancy noted she was given extra time to speak at the Goffstown School Board but was not able to say everything she wanted to so wrote to every Board member and received one response that the Board member would add her to a meeting agenda but she never heard back. She is here tonight asking to be added to the New Boston School Board agenda to discuss this slippery slope the District could be heading down and request more oversight.

Lorraine Miller of Chestnut Hill afterschool program was present to collaborate with the Board on the bus problem caused by students traveling from NBCS to Chestnut Hill afterschool program. She noted she received a call from the bus company and the Superintendent and then found out the Board had already been discussing the problem at meetings. She wants to work together with the School District to come up with a method to provide transportation to students needing afterschool care. The bus to Chestnut Hill afterschool program is very full. She thanked the Superintendent for lifting the assigned seat requirement for Chestnut Hill afterschool program students as enrollment changes daily. The average is 25 NBCS students at Chestnut Hill afterschool program each day with many more registered. Not all registered children are using the bus everyday; Lorraine doesn’t want to use more than thirty seats. She gave the bus driver a list of thirty-seven potential Chestnut Hill afterschool program students. This caused the bus driver to fear the bus would be overcapacity as there are forty-three students that could use this bus as their home bus everyday. A compromise was worked out with the bus company and School District. Lorraine asked if there is room on the bus if more than thirty Chestnut Hill afterschool students need a bus ride. She asked how many students use this bus as their home bus. She sent a letter to afterschool program parents asking them to help find a solution. They want to help and a few changes were made. This problem also happened last year. She uses a computer program with afterschool program parents where they sign up on the day they plan their child to attend so she knows how many sign up for the bus by 11:30am/noon each day. All involved with Chestnut Hill afterschool program are worried about this problem and need to know how the District plans to handle it for security. Chestnut Hill is providing the afterschool

program as a needed service and have to turn families away because of the bus issue. The program could take more children as families are in dire need of afterschool care but the bus doesn't have the capacity.

Kary noted the Board knows how important the Chestnut Hill and Recreation Department afterschool programs are to the community and NBCS students.

Brian noted the District tried to find a compromise by maxing the bus capacity for Chestnut Hill afterschool students at thirty with forty-seven seats for students traveling home. The bus capacity is seventy-seven students. Ten seats with three students each are scattered throughout the bus in age appropriate areas for students traveling to Chestnut Hill afterschool program. The assigned seating in those seats is flexible. Chestnut Hill afterschool program's numbers allow the compromise that is already worked out. The School Board has oversight of the District budget and policy. The Superintendent's obligation is to assign bus routes based on home address. He read aloud the applicable policy that says students are only to ride the bus they are assigned. The only obligation is to bring students home and there is no obligation to bus any students to the Chestnut Hill afterschool program. He understands this is a hardship and important to families figuring out how to get their children to afterschool care. The current compromise seems sufficient and the relationship will continue as long as it works. There is no room for additional Chestnut Hill afterschool students on the bus. If the Board wants to consider an alternative it will have to be costed out or bus routes could be reconfigured to allow more students to be transported to Chestnut Hill afterschool program. New Boston is changing, NBCS enrollment is at 570 students, more families could move in and bus routes could change. Brian noted it is hard to find and retain bus drivers and the District hopes that problem never impacts its ability to staff that run.

Kary suggested Chestnut Hill afterschool program and parents might want to work with a bus company such as Caring Hands and share the cost to get more students to afterschool care. Fred asked Chestnut Hill afterschool program to provide transportation to families after thirty seats are signed up for on the computer program on a given day.

Recreation Director Mike Sindoni was present and noted there are three local afterschool programs available to New Boston families and all are getting calls for availability everyday, as there is not enough availability for afterschool care in New Boston.

Many present noted their families and those they know love and appreciate these afterschool programs.

Jen O'Brien of Foxberry Drive was present to discuss the new no parent inside the school rule during drop-off that began Monday. She is a parent of a preschooler and noted there is a lot to do when preschool students arrive that parents assist with in the classroom. She proposed allowing preschool families to enter through the side door with preschool staff present to make sure parents don't enter NBCS further. She noted she understands the safety reasons causing the change but the rollout of the new procedure maybe could have gone better. She noted a couple encounters with staff when she and another family member walked into the building on different days this first week of the new procedure, not knowing the new procedure, and encounter with school staff could have been friendlier. She also noted the new procedure is hard for some young students when parents are not allowed to walk them past the line of middle schoolers standing in the hallway waiting to get on the bus to MVMS.

The Board and Administrators thanked Jen for coming to them and apologized as there may be some issues with the new procedure, but it is new and necessary for student and staff safety. It is a cultural shift for NBCS. Accommodations can be considered.

Tori noted she received Jen's e-mail and then spoke with the preschool teachers who said it is easier for them to enter through the lobby due to staff also getting students arriving on the bus at the front door. Parents can wait inside the lobby with their children. Administrators and staff are stationed around the building to meet students arriving from several doors, buses and drop-off.

Jen noted she also contacted and spoke to the preschool teacher who encouraged independence, etc. Jen doesn't feel her child needs much independence at three years old, she enjoys spending time with her child in the classroom getting ready for the school day, and some preschool parents have babies and carriers that take up a lot of room while they are waiting in the crowded lobby.

Tori noted she has not received many complaints about the new procedure. The process is expected to even out over time. The new procedure allows the classroom routine to begin sooner and staff have noticed older siblings caring for younger siblings entering the school.

Bill noted he is surprised this has already been implemented as the Board never discussed changing the policy and the minutes from the last meeting say Tori was considering the new procedure and sending a letter announcing it in October. That is also his recollection from that discussion.

Tori noted a letter was sent to parents with the Thursday Notice last week and the new procedure was implemented this week. Another letter will go out.

Bill and Jen noted warnings of the new procedure were received at back to school night and while previously dropping their children off in the morning.

Seeing no further public comment, Kary closed the first session of public comment.

PRESENTATION

MIKE SINDONI

Brian reported Tori noticed NBCS water pressure was low. It was diagnosed as a leak under the pavement between NBCS and the white building, was studied further and was replaced two weeks ago. The water was shut off at the white building, impacting the Recreation and other programs held at the white building. The total cost is estimated at \$20,000. Per the School District's contract with the Recreation Commission, it is the Recreation Commission's responsibility to pay the cost and Recreation Director Mike Sindoni agrees. Mike was present to request cost sharing as this cost has had an impact on the Recreation Revolving Account. The Recreation Department has covered/shared other NBCS items such as the basketball winches, outside basketball court and white building facility projects including a leach field. The Recreation Department is happy to cooperate with the School District and plans to continue. Fred noted he read the lease and doesn't agree the Recreation Commission is responsible for the repair. Wendy considered reviewing the lease to confirm before making a decision. ***Fred Hayes moved to share the cost of the repair 50/50. Bill Schmidt seconded the motion. The motion carried. (5-0)*** Wendy noted the Board and Administrators appreciate all the Recreation Department does and the relationship between the Department and the School District. The Board will make a motion for the amount and where in the budget it will come from once the exact amount is known.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS/FINANCIALS

MANIFEST AND VOUCHERS

Scott reported he met with Board members prior to the meeting to review the manifest summary sheet e-mailed to the Board earlier this week. The Board reviewed the September 25, 2019 Manifest Summary Review sheet. ***Fred Hayes moved to approve the September 25, 2019 manifest in the amount of \$522,029.18. Rob Witt seconded the motion. The motion carried. (5-0)*** The Board signed the manifest.

BUDGET TRANSFERS

None.

REPORTS

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

Tori Underwood reported the following:

- New student drop-off procedure began as discussed above.
- Joe's English Board confirmed with Mr. Mudrick and Mrs. Howe advising.
- Student Council campaigns have begun.
- Teachers are working together developing professional goals.

- Formal staff observations will begin soon.
- Monday is picture day.
- Next Thursday is the evacuation drill with the Fire Department. Letters will be sent home to parents.
- An internet safety workshop with Gail Beaudoin is scheduled for October 15 for staff with a student presentation during the school day October 17 and a parent presentation that night.
- NBCS had a great start to the school year.
- Bus evacuation drills are scheduled.
- Bus seating charts are all received.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Brian Balke gave the Superintendent's report:

- Brian contacted Planner Mark Fougere to discuss analyzing town growth since he last met with the Board. Mark is interested in the October 1 enrollment numbers. Mark calculated NBCS enrollment has increased eight percent since 2015. There is a slight decrease in New Boston middle and high school student enrollment.
- NBCS and MVMS were randomly selected for school approval facility review this year. The Department of Education will perform the review on November 12. Administrators are preparing.
- The heating control design was reviewed. It is very detailed. No issues were noted unless the detail involved causes increased costs. Contractors are expected to note this in their bids. Bids will be presented to the Board for review. ***Rob Witt moved to release the RFP for bidders. Bill Schmidt seconded the motion. The motion carried. (5-0)***
- Teachers, parent volunteers and the Fire Department did a great job yesterday handling an unfortunate situation when the NBCS hiking club encountered an underground yellow jacket nest at Betsy Dodge Conservation Area where all present were stung many times.
- Three federal grants are now offered for hazard mitigation. Money is available for municipalities and school districts. New Boston could consider a replacement generator at NBCS, its emergency shelter. Brian will contact Fire Chief Dan MacDonald to discuss this possibility.

GOFFSTOWN SCHOOL BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

GOFFSTOWN POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE (10-28-19 @ 5:30 PM @ SAU CENTRAL OFFICE)

Fred reported many requested finance policies were reviewed and sent to the Goffstown School Board. The media release form was also discussed after parents brought the issue to the New Boston School Board in June. This will be added to the next Board meeting agenda.

GOFFSTOWN C&E COMMITTEE REPORT (11-25-19 @ 7:00 PM @ SAU CENTRAL OFFICE)

September meeting cancelled.

NEW BOSTON POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE (10-30-19 @ 5:00 PM @ NBCS)

Fred reported the committee reviewed the media release form. Suggestions were made to add a third choice. The change has to be in line with the Goffstown policy. The Facility Use policy was revised and will be brought to the Board.

SAU #19 PRC COMMITTEE MEETING (TBA)

SAU BOARD MEETING (10-10-19 @ 6:00 PM @ SAU CENTRAL OFFICE)

NBSD BUDGET PRESENTATION TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE (12-12-19 @ 6:30 PM @ TOWN HALL)

NEW BOSTON SELECTMEN (10-7-19 @ 6:00 PM @ TOWN HALL)

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

20/20 DELEGATE ASSEMBLY/CALL FOR RESOLUTIONS

The 2020 session is scheduled and new resolution topics are requested. If the Board needs any further information, contact the SAU.

STAFFING

Notification(s):

Staff Change: Paraeducator Meghan MacDonald went from uncertified to certified.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE MEETING

- Scott reported the change in NH regarding the federal Medicaid To Schools program discussed at the September 11 meeting caused the Business Office to decrease the MS-24 as decreased revenues are expected in all NH School Districts.
- Scott spoke to Senator D'Allesandro today about the budget bill. Nothing is confirmed but the New Boston and Goffstown School Districts are expected to receive some additional money from the state in the form of Adequacy Aid. The amount is unknown at this time but expected to be available at the next Board meeting. There is some consensus in state government that the amount of education funding needs to increase.
- Fred noted the September 11 minutes note discussion of the unreserved fund balance "Overall, the primary driver of the FY19 \$818,000 unreserved fund balance was tuition expenditures to Goffstown that were \$600,000 lower than expected" but the chart provided to the Board sums to \$700,000. This is due to another \$100,000 of savings from other budget lines related to New Boston students attending MVMS and GHS. Town Administrator Peter Flynn asked a Board member or Administrator to attend the October 7 Selectmen's meeting to discuss the unreserved fund balance. Brian, Scott and Fred plan to attend and review the chart at the meeting.
- ***Bill Schmidt moved to overrule the Administrators' current drop-off walk in policy. Rob Witt seconded the motion.*** Discussion: It is a cultural shift for NBCS. He does not recall the Board being consulted. He asked about the potential change at the September 11 meeting and was led to believe it was under consideration and the minutes reflect that. Administrators shouldn't unilaterally make the change without Board support.

Wendy noted her recollection is it was discussed at the last meeting and the Board asked Tori to consider changes to the pickup procedure as well. The change was made for important safety reasons but perhaps accommodations could be made for specific students, such as for the preschool.

Bill is concerned this is trading liberty for security. There were no issues occurred previously. The change was made and problems are already occurring. It doesn't affect Bill's family but it affects the community and school support.

Wendy noted parents are encouraged to attend Community Meetings and volunteer.

Fred noted when his children attending he was surprised he had to sign in later in the day but at drop-off people could roam freely.

Bill noted the Board did not make a resolution.

Rob noted he also thought it would be discussed further and presented to parents, students and staff.

Kary noted she thought it was a done deal and asked Tori to consider changing the afternoon pickup procedure as well to make sure students are going home with who they should be that day. The Board could have been notified that the procedure was being implemented to be able to field any public complaints.

All are in agreement don't want to change again then change it back. Next year in the first one or two weeks it is expected that parents will be allowed to walk their children to classrooms. If so, this procedure should be planned in advance.

Bill noted this topic could be added to the next meeting agenda just to update how it is going.

Tori noted the new procedure was considered and implemented after the safety committee brought up the concern.

There has been some discussion on Facebook but the Board and Administrators have not engaged. Safety of all students and staff is a daily concern. The Board and Administrators will communicate the timeline and implementation of changes better and clearer in the future. ***The motion failed. (2-3)***

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION RSA 91-A: 311(c)

Kary Jencks made a motion to go into nonpublic session at 8:23pm under RSA 91-A:3II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. Wendy Lambert seconded the motion. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote: 5-0-0 – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Kary Jencks moved to come out of non-public session at 8:28 pm, seconded by Wendy Lambert. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote 4-0-0 (Fred Hayes absent) – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Kary Jencks moved to seal the non-public minutes for one year. Bill Schmidt seconded the motion. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote 4-0-0 – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Kary Jencks made a motion to go into nonpublic session at 8:29pm under RSA 91-A:3II(c) Matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. Wendy Lambert seconded the motion. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote: 5-0-0 – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Wendy Lambert moved to come out of non-public session at 8:53 pm, seconded by Fred Hayes. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote 5-0-0 – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

Fred Hayes moved to seal the non-public minutes ad infinitum. Rob Witt seconded the motion. The Chair took an individual voice poll from all board members. Vote 5-0-0 – All in Favor – Motion Passes.

ADJOURNMENT

Fred Hayes moved to adjourn the public meeting at 8:54 pm. Rob Witt seconded the motion. The motion carried. (5-0) Meeting Adjourned.

All back-up material to this meeting is held in the Principal's Office.

Respectfully submitted,
Maralyn Segien