

***MENDON-UPTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT***

School Committee Meeting

Nipmuc High School, Professional Development Room

Monday, December 6, 2021

Committee Present:

Sean Nicholson, Dorothy Scally, Erick Brown, Dorothy Scally, Kerry Laurence

Administration Present:

Maureen Cohen, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Cheryl Kirkpatrick, Interim Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Jay Byer, Business/Finance

John Clements, Co-Principal, Nipmuc Regional High School

Chris Schmidt, Athletic Director

Ken Choiniere, Director of Facilities

Jennifer Mannion, Principal, Miscoe Hill Middle School

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Kerry Laurence.

Pledge of Alliance was recited

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Approval of the Agenda

MOTION: On a motion of Dorothy Scally, seconded by Vikki Ludwigson, to approve the agenda.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

Approval of the Open Session Minutes from November 15, 2021

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve Open Session minutes from November 15, 2021

VOTED: Unanimously approved

**II. CHAIRPERSON COMMENTS - NA**

**III. COMMUNITY COMMENTS - NA**

**IV. STUDENT'S COMMENTS**

Diya discussed this week is wellness week where students can concentration on their mental and physical well-being and take the time to reflect on themselves. Many activities are offered such as walking, puzzles, reading and a school favorite are the therapy dogs.

Diya also discussed the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Nipmuc Justice Coalition. There was an open discussion on critical race theory. Program was successful and looking for more meetings.

Michel discussed the dates of the band and vocal winter concerts will be happening this week. He also discussed the new class for sophomores called "Impact and Activism" – introduced in the fall. Students got to work with 'Next Level' podcast about their craft and are looking for collaborative in the future to discuss diversity and social justice.

## **V. INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS**

### *Interim Superintendent Goals-Informational*

Dr. Cohen shared draft goals with the committee. The subcommittee meeting will be rescheduled to meet to review the goals. She is hoping a meeting in January will allow her to share with the full committee

### *District News and Recognitions*

Dr. Cohen stated the district has been recognized by Everfi. District has been using this program for 5 years. District is now an “Empowered District” Seal, recognizing our commitment to whole-child education through our use of the Everfi platform with students. This seal is issued to only 6% of Everfi districts. Some of the criteria for selection is the use of 11 evidence-informed programs to teach critical life skills in financial education, STEM and Career Readiness, Social Emotional Learning, and Health and Wellness, as well as use of the program across two schools. The programming has positively impacted 532 students at the middle and high school. Dr. Cohen thanked Britt Kahler, Beth Gervais, Sara Higgins, and Julie Ahmed-Jussaume who are some of the teachers who have taken advantage of EVERfi in the last few years.

Also Dr. Cohen invited staff members who have been recently recognized. The first recognition is for Nipmuc English Teacher, Courtney Henry. She has been recognized by the MASS Insight Education as a recipient of the 2022 Partners in Excellence Teacher Award for her exemplary work in the AP Language and Composition Course. The Partners in Excellence Awards annually recognizes the best AP teachers in Mi’s AP STEM & English program. Teachers who receive a PIE award have demonstrated extraordinary success in helping their students achieve qualifying scores on the AP exam through fully participating in Mi’s program of professional development and student support. During these challenging times for students and teachers, Mass Insight is proud to be able to recognize teachers who are making a difference in their classrooms and communities day in and day out.

A second recognition is Nipmuc Athletic Director, Chris Schmidt. He received the Professional Development Award from the Massachusetts Secondary School Athletic Directors Association. The Massachusetts Secondary School Athletic Directors Association's (MSSADA), Professional Development Award was established to honor an individual who possesses commitment and dedication to the vision of professional development at both the state and local levels. This is the second time MSSADA has recognized Chris for his work. In 2018 he received the Ted Damko Award for "exemplifying the highest standards of the profession and making significant contributions to his school and community.

Both staff members were present and recognized by the School Committee.

## **VI. ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS**

### *Teaching and Learning Update, Dr. Cheryl Kirkpatrick*

Dr. Kirkpatrick provided a Professional Development update. The purpose of professional development is to help staff to access the skills needed to assist the students. The district has a Professional Development Committee who meet to share information to best meet these needs. The next PD is this Friday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. 3 buildings in the district will host PD in understanding and engaging our students as well as diversity and inclusion. There will also be a book study for staff to read a book and discuss. Dr. Kirkpatrick views PD as an investment and likes how the district handles the PD.

### *Athletic Budget Presentation*

Chris Schmidt, Athletic Director presented the athletic budget to the School Committee. Highlights of the presentation follows:

The **GOALS** of the Nipmuc Regional Athletic Department are to:

1. Engage as many students within the NRHS community as possible and help them thrive in a sport(s) of their choosing.
2. Represent the NRHS community with class and humility
3. Support Nipmuc's Portrait of a Learner through developing skillful collaborators, solution seekers, and effective communicators.
4. Support the district's mission to empower all students to thrive by promoting leadership, teamwork, decision-making, and perseverance.

Highlights:

1. Maintained pre-covid participation rates amongst our student-athletes (even in light of increased fees to offset budget reductions)
  - a. 2019/20: 246 fall athletes, 128 winter athletes
  - b. 2021/22: 252 fall athletes, 140 winter athletes
2. Increased programmatic offerings
  - a. 2019 Added Unified Basketball
    - a. 2021 Added ESports
    - b. 2019 Added Girls Ice Hockey co-op
  3. Teams have thrived at the local and state level.
    - a. Five of six teams qualified for state tournament as top 32 seeds.
    - b. Two won the Division 2 Central Massachusetts tournament championship
    - c. Girls Cross Country qualified for All-state meet for 1st time in school history
    - d. Fall Cheerleading won Division 2 Central Sectional title, 1st time in school history
4. Excellence in the classroom: 144 student-athletes were recognized as High Honors/Honors Quarter 1

Pixellot Camera: Fully automated camera in the gymnasium that will stream any event in the gymnasium through the NFHS network. During the 20-21 school year, spectators were not permitted in the gymnasium. The Pixellot camera filmed all our athletic events in the gymnasium and allowed family and fans to view all events.

The creation of the Unified Basketball and E-sports programs have allowed us to expand to offerings to students who did not participate previously. Unified Basketball just completed its third season and we saw participation grow from 12 athletes in year one to 28 athletes in year three. ESports is finishing its first season and we have fifteen participants this fall. We anticipate growing the program during the spring season with the hopes of being able to increase offerings and participating in-house versus remote. In order to best support the health and well-being of our student-athletes our athletic trainers' hours have been increased in the fall and spring seasons. Here is the data collected from this fall. Our trainer addressed over 400 injuries during the fall season.

- Summer Sports clinics (volleyball and basketball) are run during the summer and supplement the stipend of our strength and conditioning coach. Coaches of those clinics have taken their clinic stipends and put it towards uniforms for their programs. (Girls' volleyball uniforms, reversible practice jerseys for boys basketball)
- Volunteer coaches: Ten coaches volunteer their time in the fall and winter seasons
- New washer and dryer in the training room will allow us to clean uniforms in house which were previously sent out for cleaning. (\$1200-\$1500 savings)
- Utilized in-house resources in order to provide coaches and student-athletes with educational opportunities
  - We held a fall leaders conference here at Nipmuc (over 90 athletes attended) using our coaches and myself as clinicians

- Nipmuc coaches are able to attend the Fundamentals of Coaching course free of charge as I am an instructor.
- The Warriors Club and Gridiron Club co-funded a speaker, Mark Leinweaver, this fall. Mark spoke to parents and students about the recruitment process as well as the duties and responsibilities of being a student-athlete
- We have partnered with Nichols College and the Sports Management department to conduct a “College Recruitment 101” night here at Nipmuc Regional. Students from Nicholls College will walk through the ins and outs of NCAA recruitment with our students and families.
- Share buses to away competitions with other local high schools in order to save money in transportation budget
- Parent/student drivers (no cost) when transportation limitations
- Local high schools have donated time and resources to allowing our teams to play/practice (turf fields)
- Field maintenance:
  - We only seed fertilize our fields 1-2 times a year. (A field should be fertilized 4-5 times a year)
  - We do not slice seed, we over seed
  - We do not have a functional irrigation system for our practice, softball, and baseball fields
  - The Athletic Director is responsible for lining the fields and setting up baseball and softball fields
- Youth sports donate supplies and money in exchange for using our facilities
- Coaches actively seek donations of equipment to supplement lack of resources
  - Our Boys Lacrosse coach utilized his connections at the NCAA level and acquired over 20 lacrosse helmets (\$225 cost per helmet)
- Outdoor classroom at the high school was donated by Next Step Sports Academy for teams and classes to gather outside.

Mr. Schmidt briefly discussed the SWOT analysis of the athletic program.

Strengths:

- Teams continually perform at a high level, winning league championships (3 teams this fall), qualifying for the state tournament (7 of 8 teams in the fall). Our teams are also recognized for their sportsmanship. We have been on the MIAA Sportsmanship honor roll for the last seven years and our basketball teams were recognized by the MIAA (girls) and local officials board (boys) as sportsmanship award recipients.
- Students continuing athletics at postsecondary (averaged six student athletes participating at the NCAA over the last three years)
- We work to support our athletes in the areas of health, safety and wellness
  - We raise money to have a part time, certified strength and conditioning coach who works with athletes both during the season as well as in the offseason.
  - While not mandated, we provide concussion baseline and post-injury testing for all our athletes
  - We have created a partnership with Milford Regional Sports Medicine to aid our athletes who are injured and help them return to participation in an expedited process
- Student-Athlete opinion about Nipmuc Athletics At a recent leadership conference, leaders of student-athletes were asked to brainstorm words they wanted others to say about Nipmuc athletics. This demonstrates the passion that our athletes have for their craft.
- We value the student-athlete voice: Students have a voice in the hiring of our coaches. Student-athletes have been members of our hiring committees of our coaches. Student-athletes have the opportunity to provide feedback during the

finalist phase of our hiring process as all finalists conduct a practice with our athletes. The athletes then provide feedback to the athletic director.

- Student-athletes are given a survey at the end of their season asking them to provide feedback about their experiences in order to help guide reflection and planning moving forward.
- Number of athletic offerings: We offer 22 different athletic teams, 5 co-op sports through neighboring schools (Boys and Girls Ice Hockey and Boys and Girls Swimming, Girls Tennis) and an ESports program
- Through the use of programs such as Family ID, Impact, Arbiter, Vidswap, and Game Changer we work to take a professional approach to high school athletics. A bi-weekly newsletter is sent out to the Nipmuc community highlighting the most recent events and accomplishments.
- The creation of a strong inter-departmental approach through our work with the nurse's office enabling us to provide a continuity of care for our athletes. We have also worked to strengthen ties with our music department allowing us to grow the pep band which provides an exciting atmosphere at home games.
- In 2019, we created the Nipmuc Regional Athletic Hall of Fame. The purpose of the Nipmuc Regional High School (NRHS) Athletic Hall of Fame is to select, recognize, and honor former student-athletes, teams, coaches, and supporters who have brought distinction to themselves and Nipmuc Regional High School through their achievement, commitment, leadership, and sportsmanship in athletics in order to connect the Mendon-Upton community and NRHS alumni with the high school's rich athletic history.

#### Weaknesses:

- Over 30% of our budget is provided through fees and revenue. This creates uncertainty when attempting to balance the budget because fluctuation in the number of athletes will have an adverse impact on revenue.
- Transportation limitations through our bus company create scheduling and logistical issues. Our only current solution around busing issues is self-transportation.
- Fields, Facilities, and Equipment
  - Turf Fields: Northbridge, Millbury, Uxbridge, Grafton, Westboro, Bellingham, Milford (every town that borders us with the exception of Hopedale/BMR, BVT)
    - Renting facilities due to inclement weather conditions drives up our budget
    - Lost chance to bring in revenue if we have our own turf fields
    - No lighting negates any ability to have night home games which bring in much higher revenue
  - No track facility
  - Aged dugouts on softball and baseball fields
  - Baseball infield in need of being skimmed
  - Cheer mats are old and in need of replacement.
  - Fitness center - The majority of equipment in the fitness center has been used and donated, or purchased 2nd hand. Much of the equipment is in need of replacement.

Lack of vertical alignment between middle school and high school programming  
Limited capital improvement/investment plan

#### Opportunities:

- Development of a community service component within athletics
- Increased collaboration with community athletic organizations (Athletic Boosters, Hall of Fame, and Youth Sports)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mandated Training for participants, coaches, admin, etc.
- Focus on health and wellness practices and partnerships

#### Threats:

- Loss of student-athletes to other schools/athletic programs - students who see Nipmuc as a second choice
  - Private school numbers
  - BVT (fee, facilities)
- Enrollment (2012 = 2568; 2021 = 2141)
  - Fewer sub varsity teams, fewer sports offered, become more reliant on co-op offerings, fewer coaching applicants, lack of success in the program, lack of pride in the program
- Funding Challenges: Continual increase in fees to offset budget shortage will assuredly lead to a decline in participation numbers/ multi-sport athletes.
- Out-of-school commitments, opportunities, and activities
  - Club sports, service opportunities
- Area schools' investment in athletic facilities could promote students to school choice or attend other schools.
- Lack of community involvement: The last four years we have seen a steep decline in volunteerism from parents. Both booster clubs have decreased from double digit active members to six or less. The athletic department will struggle to support student athletes without parent volunteers. Without the ability to support permanent workers and game administrators beyond what we currently have, it will be difficult to run football games or support teams. Programs in smaller schools, such as our own, thrive in part, through the willingness of parents to volunteer.

Budgetary Needs:

- Full time Athletic Trainer (\$10,000 addition to current stipend)
- Yearly resurfacing of gymnasium floor (\$3,000)
- Uniform line item in the budget (\$4500)
- Replace Cheerleading mats (\$8,000)
- Yearly Maintenance of fields (Double current budget)
- Upgrades to fitness room (\$2000)

Mr. Schmidt showed pictures of the equipment for School Committee members to see the conditions.

Long Term Investments: Capital Improvement Plan

- Work with stakeholders to develop a short- and long-term plan for facility upgrades (Indoor/Outdoor)
- Major Needs (Long term 5-year plan)
  - Outdoor Facilities at Nipmuc
  - Track Facility at Miscoe
- Short Term (1–3-year plan)
  - Fitness Area (“Athletic Wing”)
  - Gymnasium (Scoreboards)

Pictures shown of what surrounding communities’ facilities look like compare to District. However, the program does make the best of what we have.

Yearly maintenance of fields is about \$30,000. \$20k goes to the actual fields.

SN – uniforms are important and need to be resolved.

Number of students participating in sports is 40-50% of the student body and the percentage has been steady.

Turf field is an investment in the sports program and the community. It was noted fees were increased but it was to maintain our current program.

*Facilities Budget Presentation*

Jay Byer and Ken Choiniere presented a departmental overview. Highlights from presentation follows:

Staffing includes:

- 6 FTE Custodians (Nipmuc)
- 6.5 FTE Custodians (Miscoe)
- 3 FTE Custodians (Clough)
- 4 FTE Custodians (Memorial)
- .5 FTE district floater
- .3 FTE district interoffice delivery and (Clough)

### **Departmental Overview-Schedule**

- All schools have two custodians on duty during the school day (6:00 am - 2:00 pm)
- Night Shift staffing to clean the school varies depending on the size of each school.  
(2:00 pm - 10:00 pm or 3:00 pm - 11:00 pm)
- Additional time for weekend events.

### **Day in the Life**

**Open 6:00 am** - Inspect for: All Lights, Heat/AC, Water, Bathrooms, Boiler Rooms, Kitchen Equipment, Circulation Pumps, Hot Water

**Day Responsibilities** - Check work requests, shipping/receiving, lock doors once students are inside, cafeteria duty, outdoor work, be available for work requests, coordinate contractors work

**Night Responsibilities** - Check night functions, clean schools, empty trash, lock doors/windows, maintenance as needed

### **Preventive Maintenance**

- Inspections: Boilers, Fire Alarms, Elevators, HVAC, Door/Building Security
- Outdoor maintenance equipment
- Monthly Water Testing, Sewer Ejector System
- Ensure all Mechanical Systems are functioning properly
- Summer work

### **Highlights:**

Investment in Facility Upgrades in the last ten years have totaled over \$1.5 Million, funded through use of operational funds and a mix of local and state sources.

Both Mendon & Upton have supported facility upgrades with existing Trust and CPC Funds.

Maintaining our facilities is imperative in supporting teaching and learning.

### **Facility Upgrade Highlights**

Fields & Grounds – Outdoor	\$576,640
HVAC/AC/Water/Classrooms – Indoor	\$571,441
Building Security	\$118,256

- Investment in LED lighting in all four schools resulted in a reduction in kWh usage of 25%.
- Contracts for Solar Net Metering supplies the district with over 90% of electricity saving the district over \$100,000 annually.
- Negotiated utility supply agreements to lock in costs at better rates.

#### Strengths

- The custodial staff and the Director of Buildings & Grounds are the backbone of our facility maintenance.

#### Opportunities

- A Capital Bond in the near future will require the support of both towns and MSBA to upgrade the facilities.

#### Weaknesses

- There continue to be daily and weekly facility issues requiring repair, as well as annual major repairs that require funding from limited available funds.

#### Threats

- Due to the age of Miscoe Hill, and the cost to maintain old mechanicals may eventually force the district to look to either replace or renovate the school. Long range planning for a capital bond needs to be done.

#### Proposed FY2023 Budget for Maintenance Department

FY2023 budget proposal of level-funding with the following exceptions:

- Cost of heating oil and natural gas are increasing nationally
- Water Treatment required for public water supply (Clough & Miscoe) will need additional funds. It was noted the water cannot be used at these two schools and bottled water is being used. A plan for treatment is before the DEP and waiting for approval.

Long Term Needs – Staffing not included in the FY2023 budget:

- Need to develop an Assistant Director of Buildings & Grounds to prepare for the future
- Need additional custodians, so that all buildings are fully staffed when current staff is out.

## **VII. SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES**

### *Budget Subcommittee*

Sean Nicholson stated there was a meeting was 2 weeks ago today. Grant funding was reviewed as well as revolving accounts. Initial estimates were reviewed and how to communicate this information. Progress is being made.

### *Policy Subcommittee*

Vikki Ludwigson discussed the subcommittee met this evening at 6. Reviewed 4 policies and approved updated language:

AC-Nondiscrimination

ACA-Nondiscrimination on the basis of sex

ACAB-Sexual Harassment

ACG-Discrimination Complaint Procedures

The policies were updated with minor language changes and contacts were updated.

### Approval of Waiving the Reading of the Policy Changes

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to waive the reading of the policy changes

**VOTED:** Unanimously approved

### Approval of the Policies AC-Nondiscrimination, ACA-Nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, ACAB-Sexual Harassment, ACG-Discrimination Complaint Procedures

**MOTION:** On a motion of Sean Nicholson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the policies AC-Nondiscrimination, ACA-Nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, ACAB-Sexual Harassment, ACG-Discrimination Complaint Procedures

**VOTED:** Unanimously approved



Vikki Ludwigson also stated there were 2 other polices JFAB-Homeless Students: Enrollment Rights and Services and Commemoration/Memorial Policy with more substantial changes. These will be presented for a 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. Commemoration/Memorial policy have John Clements's and Mary Ann Moran's input.

#### *Superintendent Search Subcommittee*

Vikki Ludwigson stated the Screening Committee has met 2x and hoping to have the finalists next week. She expressed appreciation to the committee for their work.

### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

#### *Miscoe Hill School Improvement Plans*

Jennifer Mannion presented the Miscoe Hill School Improvement Plan. It was noted teacher Brendon Rosenau, teacher, assisted with the plan.

Discussed the past 2 years progressed was discussed. This is Year 3 looking at data from MCAS and classroom assessments to determine what to provide. Looking at POL competency and implemented bridge program.

Phases of a first-year teacher – from the pandemic  
Anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection and anticipation

Looking at equitable special education program  
Re-establish the handbook committee  
Looking at data like iReady to see the whole student  
Looking at physical space of the building  
Teachers are trained in project-based learning

Met with school advisory to determine 4 goals and asked the 4 driving questions:  
What do we want students to know and be able to do it?  
How will we know if they learn it?  
How will we respond when students do not learn it?  
How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Goal #1: Ensure equitable access to meaningful, grade-appropriate social emotional learning through increasing staff understanding of inclusive practices, application of tiered supports, and effective use of student data to monitor progress and inform instruction. Action steps were discussed

Goal #2: Develop and improve multi-tiered systems of support to ensure equitable access to meaningful, grade-appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessment through increasing staff understanding of inclusive practices, application of tiered supports, and effective use of student data to monitor progress and inform instruction. Action steps were discussed

Goal #3: Improve collaboration and positive engagement with Mendon-Upton families and community members through frequent, proactive, consistent, and culturally responsive communication. Action steps were discussed

Goal #4: Revise and redesign units of instruction to include real-world connections, deep inquiry and transferable skills. Action steps were discussed

How will we get there: Through the collaborative efforts of our incredible staff, students, families and community members.

Are we there yet? Measuring the progress where each of the goals contain metrics where the progress is validated.

Asked about threats: Staff is feeling overwhelmed where everyone has different needs. Everyone wants what is best for the students and need assist the staff with everything on their plates and being mindful of their workload.

Data from iReady – will have comparison data in January and will have a better idea of next steps.

Question regarding ‘tracking’? data is showing no impact with maybe a slight increase. However, more data collection is needed to determine actual impact of doing away with ‘tracking’.

SEL goal – conflict resolution and how to engage where it is productive. Seeing more physical interactions at this point and working on how to change this response.

Approval of Miscoe Hill School Improvement Plans

MOTION: On a motion of Vikki Ludwigson, seconded by Dorothy Scally, to approve the Clough and Memorial School Improvement Plans.

VOTED: Unanimously approved

**IX. Other Matters Not Anticipated by The Committee Within 48 Hours of the Posted Meeting**

**X. CORRESPONDENCE**

**XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Departmental Budget Presentations
- MUEF Presentation--January 10

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: On motion of Kerry Laurence, seconded by Sean Nicholson to adjourn to Executive Session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, section 21(a), exemption #2. to conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel (The Committee will not return to open session.)

VOTED:

Sean Nicholson, yes  
Erick Martin, yes  
Vikki Ludwigson, yes  
Kerry Laurence, yes  
Phil DeZutter, yes  
Dorothy Scally, yes

Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.  
Minutes by Kelly McElreath