



NORTH MIDDLESEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
Ashby – Pepperell – Townsend, Massachusetts

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**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES – February 8, 2024**  
Room #120 at NMRHS & Virtual via Zoom

**PRESENT**

Chairperson	Craig Hansen	Member, Pepperell
Vice-Chairperson	June McNeil	Member, Ashby
	Lisa Martin	Member, At Large
	Randee Rusch	Member, At Large
	Thomas Casey	Member, Pepperell
	David Carney	Member, Pepperell ~ Joined at 8:00 p.m.
	Jessica Funaiole	Member, Townsend ~ Absent
	Lisa Bloom	Member, At Large

**ALSO PRESENT**

Brad Morgan	Superintendent of Schools
Gary Burboa-Reese	Asst. Superintendent of Schools
Robin Eibye	Recording Secretary

**6:00 OPEN PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE FY 2024-2025 SCHOOL CHOICE**

1. Chairperson Craig Hansen opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m., and announced the meeting would be recorded.
2. Mr. Hansen said North Middlesex Regional School Committee's next meeting would be Thursday, March 14, 2024.

Roll Call:			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

At 6:08 p.m., June McNeil motioned, and Randee Rusch seconded to vote and open the public hearing on school choice for the year 2024-2025, according to Chapter 76, Section 12b of the Massachusetts General Laws. All interested persons shall be given the opportunity to voice their concerns.

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**OUR MISSION:** At NM, we are committed to creating a diverse learning environment where students are provided a meaningful education through academic, social, and emotional learning experiences. Together with parents, caregivers, and the community, students are encouraged to ignite and embrace their individual potential to find success within NM and beyond.

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

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Superintendent Morgan recommended that the district opt out of participation in the School Choice program and not enroll students for the 2024-2025 school year due to budget restraints and space availability.

*Following discussion, June McNeil motioned, and Randee Rusch seconded the district opt out of participation in the School Choice program and not enroll school choice students for the 2024-2025 school year due to budget restraints and space availability.*

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

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At 6:14 p.m., Lisa Martin motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote and close the public hearing on School Choice for the year 2024-2025.

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

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**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE FY 2025 PROPOSED BUDGET**

*At 6:15 p.m. Lisa Martin motioned, and Randee Rusch seconded to open the Public Hearing for the FY 2024-2025 Proposed Budget.*

<b>Roll Call Vote:</b>			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

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Superintendent Morgan and Business Manager Nancy Haines presented an overview of the Superintendent's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Recommendation for the North Middlesex Regional School District. See attached presentation.

Mr. Morgan said the goal was to present a transparent and responsible budget that would meet the needs of the students and staff of NMRSD. Mr. Morgan said they accomplished this through a series of budget summits between district and town leadership. Mr. Morgan and Business Manager, Nancy Haines said the district held budget meetings with Town Administration in August, October, November and December. Governor's Budget proposal released with Minimum Local Contribution and Foundation Enrollment January 24, 2024. School Committee Budget Adoption was scheduled for March 14, 2024.

Mr. Morgan talked about potential budget adjustments, regular transportation, active employee health insurance, retiree health insurance, collective bargaining, salaries, positions, enrollments, special education tuition, property and workers' compensation insurances, elementary school enrollments levels, legislature and revenue changes (chapter 70 and other funding).

Mr. Morgan and Ms. Haines talked about causes for increases such as new students, state mandates, influx of PreK students are special education eligible, increase in special education population, and social-emotional students' needs, ESSER grand ending and district class size policies.

A discussion about per pupil cost ensued and it was confirmed the 2022 per pupil cost for NMRSD was \$18,599, which was below the state average.

Mr. Morgan said the FY2025 budget represents a 6.79% increase over FY2024. An increase of \$4,304,818 to \$67,717,155.

Mr. Morgan provided a breakdown of the 6.79% increase and talked about staffing, historical enrollment projections, revenue, Governor's budget, Town operating assessment calculations, Town transportation and debt assessment calculations, Chapter 70 State Aid.

A discussion ensued about reductions required without approval of a 2.5 Proposition Override.

The FY2025 Budget Hearing Presentation is attached for reference.

## **PUBLIC DISCUSSION**

Mark Vasapolli, Town of Pepperell Finance Committee member asked why the District would not be allowed to join the GIC to help with insurance costs. Mr. Morgan said by the time the district had been notified, it was too late to enroll.

Chuck Walkovich, Town of Pepperell Select Board, said the proposed budget would be difficult to fund and would require an override.

John Ladik, Town of Pepperell Finance Committee Chairman, said the override would be a tough sell to the tax payers.

A discussion ensued about the impact of going out of compliance and mandated positions.

David Nadeau, Town of Ashby Select Board Chairman, said Ashby would need to make dramatic cuts to make budget. A discussion ensued about COLA.

Jessica Kallin, Town of Ashby Select Board, said the increase is a big ask and would pull from limited services in Ashby.

Randee Rusch, NMRSD School Committee, said the proposed increase was not unique to North Middlesex and it happening across the state.

Robin Rose-Buxton talked about going to the state for funding.

John Cronin, Ashby resident asked about contractual obligations, salaries, healthcare, and transportation.

Patrick McPhee, Ashby resident said the Superintendent had done a great job of keeping the NM community informed. Mr. McPhee encouraged the towns to find ways to cut costs to support the schools.

At 7:41 p.m., Lisa Martin motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote to close the Public Hearing for the FY 2024-2025 Proposed Budget.

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.

### APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Tom Casey motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote and approve the consent agenda as presented.

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.

### PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

➤ None

### REPORTS/INFORMATION ITEMS – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN

1. Chairperson’s Report – C. Hansen
  - Craig Hansen reminded the Committee that agenda items should be received one week before scheduled meetings and meeting materials should be received a minimum of four days before a meeting.
2. Superintendent’s Report – B. Morgan
  - None

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. [2024-2025 School District Calendar](#)

➤ *Following discussion, Lisa Martin motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote to approve the 2024-2025 School District Calendar as amended.*

Roll Call Vote:			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Lisa Martin	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. School Lunch Availability – C. Hansen

Lisa Martin and Nancy Haines talked about their recent meeting with FreshPicks, recent food audit, and concerns. Ms. Martin said FreshPicks would address concerns, food availability and variety. Ms. Haines said as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, FreshPicks would offer a third choice at the elementary level.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN**

1. Accelerated Repair – L. Martin
  - None
2. AES Building Committee – J. McNeil
  - Ms. McNeil said the AESBC approved \$15,000 to conduct a feasibility study on heating system.
3. Communications – C. Hansen
  - None
4. Finance – L. Martin
  - None
5. Negotiation & Personnel – L. Martin & D. Carney
  - Ms. Martin said the Teachers ratified their contract.
6. Policy – R. Rusch
  1. EFE Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs
  2. HB Negotiations Legal Status
  3. HF School Committee Negotiating Agents

➤ *Randee Rusch motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote the School Committee adopt policy EFE Civil Rights Complaint Policy for Child Nutrition Programs, HB Negotiations Legal Status, HF School Committee Negotiating Agents, CBD Superintendent's Contract as presented.*

Vote:			
Craig Hansen	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	-		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 6/0/0.*

1. Liaisons to District Town Selectboards Update

- o Ashby: June McNeil said there were no updates to report
- o Pepperell: Dave Carney said there were no updates to report
- o Townsend: Jessica Funaiole said there were no updates to report

**OTHER BUSINESS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF MEETING – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN**

**OPEN SESSION – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN**

- *At 8:02 p.m., Randee Rusch motioned and June McNeil seconded to vote to meet in executive session pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, sec. 21(a) for the following purpose:*
  - Purpose (2): To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel (Superintendent of Schools).*
  - Purpose (3): to discuss strategy with respect to and in preparation for collective bargaining with the North Middlesex Regional School District Teachers’, Secretarial, Custodial, Educational Support Professionals, and Nurses’ Association/Unit because an open discussion may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee.*
  - Purpose (7): To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.*
    - *Approval of Executive Session Minutes dated:*
      - o *January 18, 2024*
      - o *December 18, 2023 – Negotiation Sub-Committee*

*The Committee would reconvene in an open session.*

**OPEN SESSION**

At 8:30 p.m., the Committee reconvened in Open Session.

Tom Casey motioned, and June McNeil seconded to vote to adjourn.

<b>Roll Call:</b>
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Craig Hansen	Yes	Randee Rusch	Yes
June McNeil	Yes	Lisa Bloom	Yes
Jessica Funaiole	-	Lisa Martin	Yes
Thomas Casey	Yes		
David Carney	Yes		

*Vote: The motion unanimously passed 7/0/0.*

Documents Reviewed / Referred To

- 2024-02-08-SCAgenda
- 2024-01-18-Minutes

Respectfully submitted,  
Robin Eibye, Secretary

**APPROVED:** February 20, 2024