

**Sudbury Public Schools  
Sudbury, Massachusetts  
School Committee Regular Meeting  
Wednesday December 5, 2012  
Peter Noyes School**

**Present:** Dr. Rich Robison, Lisa Gutch, Ellen Winer Joachim (8:25 p.m.), Bob Armour, Lucie St. George

**Also Present:** Dr. Anne Wilson, Superintendent; Dr. Todd Curtis, Assistant Superintendent; Mary Will, Director of Business and Finance; Lynn Connor, SEA

**Open Session**

Rich Robison called the Open Session to order at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was taped for public access broadcast.

**1. Budget Hearing**

Dr. Robison described the budget hearing as an opportunity for members of the public to share comments and concerns as the District begins deliberations on the FY14 budget. Dr. Robison reported that Governor Patrick invoked 9C reductions that are expected to result in a \$500 Million shortfall over the year. The Governor also requested limiting municipal sharing and circuit breaker. Dr. Robison noted that budget development begins when very little is known at the state level. It involves continuous refinement as information becomes available.

Superintendent Wilson added that the District is prepared to make changes and will welcome comments as the process develops.

**Public Comment**

Jodi Sparks, Thunder Road, noted that she is speaking on behalf of herself, as well as Haynes families who could not attend due to a conflicting commitment with Haynes' Family Fun Night. She plans to encourage others to contribute in writing. Ms. Sparks, who is the parent of a second grader and a half-day kindergartener, is concerned with class sizes that are above guideline. She commented that three grade levels at Haynes are in jeopardy of being above guideline for the coming school year. Her concern is the effect larger class size has on the ability of our excellent teachers to provide a quality classroom experience for our children. She referred to a previous discussion at which it was stated that class size only makes a difference at 15 students or fewer. Ms. Sparks stated that her second-grader's class of 19 students will become a third-grade class of 26 students, assuming the historical pattern of populating classrooms holds. In her view, this change will result in a real and dramatic difference. Ms. Sparks is appreciative of the opportunity to engage in ongoing discussions with school leaders, the administration, and the Committee.

Lisa Valensi, Noyes PTO Co-chair, echoed Ms. Sparks' concerns, stating that Noyes always has a classroom over guideline. She remarked that some parents might say that class size is more important than having the latest technology, which might not be maximally utilized in larger classes.

Chairman Robison expressed appreciation for both comments. He noted that the guidelines have been in place for a number of years, emphasizing that they are self-imposed and not a hard and fast rule. The District attempts to stay below guideline, but experiences challenges in resources, space, and the budget.

Lisa Gutch clarified that the number of sections for each grade level are not standardized; rather, it changes as a function of the number of students in a particular grade in a particular year.

The Open Session resumed at 7:31 p.m. after a short break.

**2. Noyes PTO Welcome (Colleen Keelan and Lisa Valensi)**

PTO Co-chairs Colleen Keelan and Lisa Valensi welcomed the Committee. Both are new to their roles this year and acknowledged they had reservations about the level of support, given the challenges experienced by Noyes since last spring. Colleen Keelan remarked that the Noyes community has successfully used those challenges to restore itself. She stated that Noyes offers an amazing education in a warm and welcoming environment.

Lisa Valensi cited the three main initiatives of the PTO: to promote the education and general welfare of all Noyes children; provide opportunities for educational enrichment through fundraising and school-wide events; and grass-roots campaigning for PTO involvement and communication. Ms. Valensi noted that more than half the PTO budget goes toward educational enrichment programs, including both school-wide and grade-level programs, and supplementing technology.

Ms. Keelan reported that the PTO is proud to announce that it is \$2,000 ahead of its budget projections. She characterized Back to School Night as ‘phenomenal’ and noted that she personally greeted each individual upon arrival. Ms. Keelan stated that a new line of branded clothing was introduced this fall, as well as a phone application for the school directory, both of which were well received. Other activities this fall included a school-wide carnival in October, and a Noyes Pride event at Lotus Blossom. Upcoming events include a Worcester Sharks event co-sponsored by the Loring PTO, Bingo Night, and the annual book fair and auction.

With respect to grass-roots campaigning for PTO involvement and communication, Ms. Keelan remarked that feedback has been positive with respect to efforts to restore the sense of community. She stated that the community appreciated the chance to host the Administration at PTO meetings. The PTO will soon launch a monthly newsletter as another mechanism to enhance communication.

The Committee thanked the PTO for its support of the Noyes community.

**3. Noyes State of the School (Annette Doyle, Principal; Kristn Moffat, Assistant Principal)**

Noyes Principal Annette Doyle acknowledged the presence of a number of teachers, who attended to show their support for Noyes. Ms. Doyle described the work of the Professional Learning Communities, which Noyes implemented three years ago for math. Noyes plans to create PLC’s in other subject areas. The PLC’s are a primary feature of data-driven instruction. Ms. Doyle attributes recent successes in MCAS gap closure to both the PLC’s and SMART goals, the latter of which, all grade levels have adopted.

Many of the faculty and staff participated in a five-week book group to discuss Carol Dweck’s *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. A parent group is also anticipated. Dweck’s work speaks to a growth, vs. fixed, mindset concerning intelligence and success. Ms. Doyle emphasized how school culture contributes to student success. She summarized staff survey data that show a high percentage enjoy working at Noyes and agree that it is a positive environment. A parent survey showed a similar percentage believes Noyes is a positive environment for their children. Principal Doyle emphasized that the Noyes community is still healing from the incidents of last spring, but that it is important to know that the community is moving forward. Student connectedness remains high and continues to be a priority.

Questions from the Committee

Bob Armour commented on being impressed with the spirit and dedication of the Noyes community. Lisa Gutch concurred. Ms. Gutch also asked for an explanation of the job of a data coach. Principal Doyle noted that she and a colleague recently presented at a national conference on PLC’s and data coaches. Noyes utilizes teachers as data coaches, who are responsible for

setting the agenda, distributing information, and following up as necessary. Lynn Connor noted that meetings occur monthly and that one strength is having coaches who are also team members and relate to what goes on in the classroom. Todd Curtis added that the PLC is about more than just data; it is a ‘habit of the mind’ involving the exchange of instructional practices.

Mr. Armour asked about any difficulty in gleaned insights from the data. Principal Doyle noted that it is still a very labor intensive process, especially with the focus on effective modification of instructional practices.

Lucie St. George asked how the Math Coaches are being utilized. Ms. Doyle reported that they are going through the process of acting as data coaches, but that all concerned consider it important to have data coaches who are colleagues.

Superintendent Wilson noted that she sees the results of collective efforts of Noyes staff during her tours of the classrooms.

Rich Robison asked Ms. Doyle what helps her sleep. Ms. Doyle replied that she knows staff are excited about what they do and she is honored to be a part of it. Dr. Robison expressed appreciation to the Noyes staff for their many contributions.

The Open Session resumed at 8:40 p.m. after a short break.

#### **4. Demography and Enrollment Projections (Don Kennedy, NESDEC)**

Donald Kennedy, of the New England School Development Council (NESDEC), presented an overview of demography and enrollment projections. The District commissions such a study every ten or so years and fine-tunes its annual projections based on real-time data. Dr. Kennedy noted that the 2008 economic downturn highlights the need to keep track of trends on a year-to-year basis.

Ten-year data show enrollment at its highest in 2006 and projected to decline until 2017, level for a few years, then increase through 2021. Dr. Kennedy stated that a major real estate turnover, as well as increase in births, would be necessary to experience an upsurge. Trends at each of the five schools also show a decline in enrollment between 2008 and the present. He noted that since 2000, Sudbury’s population has turned over by 50%.

The median age of Sudbury’s population has increased over the last twenty years; its under 18 population during that period ranges from 27–32% and is expected to decrease. Taken together, the numbers indicate fewer families in the child-bearing age range in town; hence, fewer births predicted. Data over the past 41 years supports the projected decline in enrollment: net move-ins were greater than 100 in only six years. Given the decline in birth rate, until there is a significant turnover in real estate, the pool of students will continue to decline due to both factors. Data also support the idea that town-wide, it is unlikely that a pocket of real-estate turnovers or births will occur.

With respect to new and proposed construction, numbers of children from such developments were not specifically factored in. Dr. Kennedy outlined a “student yield” from the 56-unit Johnson Farm Ch. 40B development approved by the ZBA for Landham Road; although, the decision is currently under legal appeal. He showed data that suggest that the number of children per unit depends on such factors as bedroom count, design, and neighborhood. He suggested that the student yield from Johnson Farm would be in the mid-range, at 0.3children/unit or 17 children total. Dr. Kennedy also noted that market-rate multi-unit properties yield fewer children than do affordable properties of the same size.

Questions from the Committee

Bob Armour asked if there were any circumstances that might change the downward enrollment trend. Dr. Kennedy noted that the rate of downsizing of seniors in town is unknown, as is the

recovery time in the market for very large homes. He does not foresee either factor picking up in the next four to five years.

**5. MSBA Funding Agreement for the Nixon Roof Project**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Ellen Joachim, to authorize the Sudbury Public Schools to enter into and be bound by the Project Funding Agreement between the Town and the Massachusetts School Building Authority pursuant to Article 1, Roof Replacement and Repair, Nixon Elementary School, voted at the Special Town Meeting held on September 24, 2012, with respect to all provisions under the authority of the Sudbury Public Schools; and further to authorize the Superintendent of the Sudbury Public Schools to execute said document and to sign all documents relative thereto. The vote was 5–0 in favor.

**7. School Committee Report**

None.

**8. Open Forum**

No Comments.

**9. Superintendent's Report**

(a) Report and Recognitions

On behalf of SPS, Superintendent Wilson extended condolences to the Pellegrino family for the loss of husband and father Anthony. Erica Pellegrino is an eighth grader at Curtis. Her brother AJ is a junior at LS and mother Lynne is a substitute nurse.

Dr. Wilson also commended the Curtis math team, coached by teachers Susan Richman and Nancy Casey, for their performance in a math meet against other area schools. Thirty-nine students participated, with one team placing second and sixth grader Liane Xu garnering the highest score of all sixth graders. Dr. Wilson also praised the 114 parent volunteers who assisted at the meet.

Superintendent Wilson announced that Loring Assistant Principal Steven Wiltshire was selected to serve as the Loring Principal, effective August 2013. She thanked those involved in the hiring process. She also reported that both Eula Walsh and Joni Jay, the Nixon administrative team, are out on medical leave. A welcome coffee was held this morning for the administrative team that is filling in.

Dr. Wilson circulated a copy of the capital plan, to which was added an upgrade in the wireless capacity at Curtis. The improvement is estimated at \$30,000.

(b) Bill Schedule

A Bill Schedule was presented.

(c) Personnel Actions

None.

**10. Minutes**

**VOTED:** On a motion by Ellen, seconded by Lucie, to approve the minutes of the November 7, 14 2012 Regular Session. The vote was 5–0 in favor. Bob Armour abstained.

**11. Members' Forum**

Todd Curtis reported moderating at the Curtis Geography Bee today. He noted the supportive atmosphere surrounding the competition. The finalist will take a written test that will be submitted to the state. That competition feeds into a national round.

Dr. Curtis reported on the second full PD day, which focused on informing instruction through use of data. Five staff members told stories of how they had made best use of data to inform instruction, which Dr. Curtis considered a highlight of the day.

Ellen Joachim reported that a meeting conflict will prevent Craig Blake, who is overseeing the joint meetings of the Sewer and Citizen's Advisory Committees, from attending next week's School Committee meeting.

Lisa Gutch thanked the community for supporting the Nixon roof vote. She also noted that she will meet with the FinCom liaisons tomorrow in preparation for upcoming budget hearings.

Rich Robison reported that Governor Patrick announced \$500 M in changes to the budget, only some of which can be funded through the rainy day budget. Although revenues were up in November, overall projections are down, mainly due to a decrease in withholding taxes. The circuit breaker, which funds special education, is also expected to be down by \$8.5 M.

Anne Wilson reminded the Committee that the December 19 meeting was rescheduled for December 12 at Fairbank.

Bob Armour commented on how rewarding it was to be part of the Loring principal search. He also reported that the Fairbank task force held a kick-off meeting last week, at which the needs of current stakeholders were reviewed.

Lucie St. George appreciated the presence of teachers and staff as a show of support for the Noyes community.

Sheila Cusolito noted her work with the Sudbury Housing Authority and one of its recent endeavors, the Sudbury Duplexes, a 10-home project. She stated that SHA data showed the greatest demand for affordable rental homes was for smaller units. In response, the SHA demolished several 4/5 bedroom homes that were deteriorating and replaced them with 2-bedroom duplexes. She also noted that for housing, the definition of 'family' does not necessarily mean there are dependent children.

## 12. Adjourn

**VOTED:** On a motion by Lisa Gutch, seconded by Lucie St. George, to adjourn the Regular Session. The vote was 5-0 in favor. The time was 10:07 p.m.

Yes Rich Robison  
Yes Lisa Gutch  
Yes Ellen Winer Joachim  
Yes Bob Armour  
Yes Lucie St. George

Submitted by Sheila Cusolito