

**Newton PTO Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, March 26, 2019 @ 7:30pm**  
**Newton Ed Center, Room 210**

**Attendees**

Christine Dutt (PTOC Co-President), Karen Hite (PTOC Co-President), Lauren McMinn (Lincoln-Eliot), Leslie Ziarko Valera (Mason-Rice), Maureen Oates (PTOC Elementary Rep), Angie Abend (Williams), Teri Ginsburg (Brown/SEL Rep), Adam Howes (Countryside), Victoria Cornish (NECP), Jacob Eidsmoe (NECP), Bill Kenneally (Ward), Crista Martinez Padua (Memorial Spaulding), Michelle Spitzkoff (Memorial Spaulding), Erika Guerra Downey (Memorial Spaulding), Maura Morse (Franklin), Nicky Chapman (Cabot), Lisa Weinman (Bowen), Michelle Tsai (Bowen), Anne-Marie Gravel (Underwood), Shana Maldonado (Angier), Liz Hiser (PTOC Secretary), Gabriella Kroszynski (Ward), Jennifer Bekarian (Peirce), Valerie Davisson (Peirce PTO Treasurer), Andrea Steenstrup (Equity Working Group), Jen Abbott (Equity Rep), Lindsay Pike (PTOC Treasurer), Lisa DePalma (SEPAC Rep), Jenn Martin (Zervas), Maggie Schmidt (Zervas), Shion Walsh (Countryside), Zlatena Simeonova (Ward PTO Treasurer), Valerie Pontiff (NNHS), Sally Brickell (NNHS), Will Adams (Mason-Rice), Jas Rai (Mason-Rice).

Christine Dutt called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Attendees introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion to approve the minutes from the February 5, 2019 PTOC meeting. Seconded and approved with 1 abstention.

**Presentation from NPS Director of Information Technology & Library Services**

*Steven Rattendi*

1. Overview of department – 2 main areas
  - Instructional & Coaching – Librarians, Instructional Tech Specialists
  - Tech Solutions & Services – tech support, network, database management
2. Libraries
  - Budget: Staff, Curriculum + Professional Development, some online resources, no books
3. IT Budget at a Glance
  - FY19 (current year) Highlights:
    - Equipment \$579,290
    - Repair/Maintenance \$431,000
    - SIS (Aspen) \$166,000
    - Instructional Software \$82,000
  - District surplus in any year often goes to IT to replace equipment, add/upgrade wireless access points, upgrade phone systems (some examples from FY18 actuals).
  - Already this year there is extra to support Horace-Mann move (\$130K), Williams VoIP upgrade (\$30K), network infrastructure upgrades (\$30K).
  - FY20 Highlights (proposed, to be voted on by SC in April):
    - \$200K Chromebooks at high schools to support 1:1
    - \$16K Teacher leader stipends to lead 1:1 implementation
4. Major Technology Initiatives & Projects
  - *1:1 Device Program at the High Schools*
    - This year: 10<sup>th</sup> graders issued Chromebooks – 1,000 devices/\$300K along with faculty training. Taking MCAS online is driver. Plan is for another \$300K expenditure to issue to this year's 9<sup>th</sup> graders as they will participate in a Science Next Gen MCAS pilot of next year's test later this year.
    - Next steps: Fall 2019 distribute Chromebooks to new 9<sup>th</sup> graders (current 8<sup>th</sup>), spend on teacher training and refine the work with families (e.g., managing devices at home, repairs, insurance).
  - *VoIP ("Voice over Internet Protocol" aka phone systems)*
    - #1 budget priority for surpluses this year, to replace older phone systems. More reliable and less costly to maintain. Critical for communications, especially in emergencies.

- *Building Projects*
  - Cabot renovation – set up all equipment and supervise vendors (network, a/v & student devices)
  - Horace Mann move to Nevada Street. \$130K in equipment to be added, mostly laptops; classroom spaces also need to be reconfigured after having been used as swing space.
- *Registration Portal*
  - Implement a portal to register students new to the district by Feb 2020 and expand it to take Back to School paperwork online by Fall 2020 also.
- *Technology Equipment Standards*
  - Why standards?
    - Equity of access across district
    - Ability to plan out budgets
    - Benchmark for what classrooms need for teaching and learning
  - Status of standards right now: Elementary – they are clear, simply need to tweak; Middle Schools – need to finalize them; High Schools – need to create them (one example: may close computer labs given 1:1 initiative)
  - Budget priority: Bring all schools up to standard and develop a long-term plan for equipment replacement.
- *Equity Policy for Technology*
  - Why have a policy?
    - Address issues of differences in access to technology due to the differing ability of each school community to supplement tech funding from the district.
    - Technology is now a strong component of the curriculum. Should it even be part of the Equity Policy, shouldn't the district fund it? This is a goal. 100% of technology to standards funded by district, not PTOs. Not there yet.
  - What is the policy?
    - Proposed a cap at elementary level
    - Revised recommendations:
      - Cap PTO spending at \$20 per student or the cost of a Chromebook cart
      - Option to carry over portion of the cap not spent in a given year
    - Library spending is part of the overall \$80 equity cap, not technology
  - How does it work in practice?
    - Letter each spring to elementary Principals with the state of their school-based tech
      - Indicates equipment that *could be* purchased by the PTO based on standards and the age of equipment (5 year mark is a trigger)
    - Schools know the equipment best. Not all 5yo equipment will need replacing
    - Most NPS purchase decisions will be made in next few months based on same inventory analysis used to generate the determination letters

Q's Steve got in advance of the meeting:

Q: What is the district's last 4 years non-PTO spend on technology?

A: Steve will get us that #.

Q: What about microphones at South? This is not in IT budget, they are a facilities item. Principals advocate for building budget.

Q: Re: technology asset tracking system, will you cost out the info in the determination letter?

A: Yes

Q: Do we have prior years' letters?

A: Principals do. Dollar amounts included last year, but not prior years (according to some PTO Presidents in attendance – this was under Steve's predecessors).

Q: Will letters this year match the \$ from report to School Committee in Jan 2019?

A: That is the intent. FileMaker database used to track inventory – every piece in district. Need to get better at when equipment leaves each building.

Q: What is the cost of a Chromebook cart?

A: \$7K for 25 devices (Mac Air cart = \$25K)

Q: What does the district do with the aged technology that is replaced?

A: We replace only devices that can't be managed well anymore. Teacher devices sometimes are reused, put into the loaner pool or in classrooms. Anything beyond that is surplus, City takes them – possibly sells them.

Q: What is the timeframe for NPS technology purchasing decisions?

A: Elementary will be in time to do the letters this spring (need to finish inventory). MS & HS inventories will be done later, likely summer.

Q: Since there are 25 laptops in a cart, how do you handle the classrooms with 26-27 students?

A: 5 packs supplement the 25-device carts.

Q: Will the district transition completely to Chromebooks? If so, what happens if we are fully loaded w Mac Airls? Are Chromebooks the standard?

A: Yes. Chromebooks are more economical, moving to them. However, there is a benefit to a mixed environment (Macs can run specialized software like Garage Band, iMovie). Steve doesn't see Mac Airls disappearing.

Q: MCAS compatible w both Chromebooks & Mac Airls?

A: Yes

Q: Will the letters include a commitment about what NPS will fund?

A: That is the goal.

Q: How will district handle the gap between what NPS can cover and what PTOs are allowed to spend?

A: New cap goes into effect in July. Currently 1 school is below 2 carts, need to get that back up. Issue is getting more accurate about aging equipment, need to get a handle on it. No PTO should expect to have to replace everything. Cap is there to emphasize that it shouldn't be PTO's responsibility. Transition to Chromebooks will help with costs.

Q: Short-throw projectors: Can district cover these?

A: That issue will still be out there and, for example, a projector on a cart will be on the inventory letters as an option. We know teachers don't prefer them, this will depend on the overall budget.

Q: Parental controls for devices @ home. Do you see a Middle School 1:1 in the future and is there a need at the school level to issue recommendations for screen time at home? Hopes that is the perspective.

A: We should be in partnership with families to figure out what any recommendations look like. Educators aren't experts on this either. Parents already are dealing with this. This can be a PTO-School partnership.

Q: 1:1 – and especially if it moves to middle school—there will be lots of broken screens. Who pays for the insurance? What if family can't afford?

A: Families will be asked to cover insurance. It's like a text book. Same deal as now if lost text book, families must replace it. There are already systems in place (via Deans in the high schools) to help families who can't manage cost of replacing a text book, same for laptop insurance.

Q: Aspen: Will there be capacity to access older records in the future?

A: Yes. Not there yet. Follett contract pending to get our old records transferred.

## Superintendent's Remarks

*Dr. David Fleishman*

David Fleishman walked Council through the Superintendent's FY20 Budget presentation. Copy is available on Newton Public Schools website or here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tZ4CGZiRyo7l\\_wBdNasZN4U7VpX-ahXp/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tZ4CGZiRyo7l_wBdNasZN4U7VpX-ahXp/view)

Also highlighted the April 10<sup>th</sup> School Committee meeting (7pm, Ed Center). Demographic Analysis Report by a professional hired by the City, given shifts in enrollment patterns and significant residential development. Enhancement to the usual inputs of our 5-year enrollment projections. One example – Millennials having fewer children, this is an issue nationally in long run. In the short run, not a bad thing.

Other note: Increased FTE for clinical substance counselor at high schools – paid for by Medical Marijuana licensing fees.

Q: Do you look at spending data from surrounding communities when developing the budget?

A: Comparing dollars is like apples/oranges. For example, some districts have healthcare included in the school budget, some don't (Brookline's is in the Town budget, e.g.) What he does compare: Class size averages; Program breadth (reads HS course catalogs) with special attention to art & music electives, drama; In-district SPED programming vs out-of-district; Condition of school buildings. Interesting comparative example: Newton has a lower budget for Administration as % of total.

Q: Where do we go from here? Tight budget this year, what to anticipate following year?

A: The additions to our program over past several years have made a big difference. Added Literacy Specialists, Math Coaches, Assistant Principals. Is concerned and trying to be as efficient as we can.

Q: What are the outstanding building challenges?

A: Some upgrades/renovations can be funded with current bonding (e.g., Jackson Road – former Rashi School). Mayor may need to look at Debt Exclusion overrides. Buildings need some work, some need to be knocked down. Right now we have enough physical space and we are only dealing with the issue of condition. That is an improvement. We are aware of building issues – they are not modern, don't accommodate break out spaces, small group instruction.

Q: What is the status of any MSBA funding?

A: Newton was lucky to have Angier and Cabot in the MSBA system at same time, however the condition of those buildings was really bad (statewide comparison) and we had our act together. Now districts understand how to approach the MSBA application and Boston is in the mix. We have a Statement of Interest in right now.

Q: Who owns the school buildings?

A: City of Newton. However, the school budget needs to cover many things related to buildings. Charter maintenance comes out of the NPS budget, for example. This is not a typical situation for many municipalities.

Q: Do the enrollment projections include planned development in Newton?

A: They incorporate only what is permitted. Enrollment is not necessarily correlated with housing development. City hired a demographer to look at historic info and future trends. Projections don't account for **where** people will live.

Q: Will full Day K affect enrollment?

A: The only district that did what we did was Wellesley – changed from a hybrid model – they did not see an increase in K students. Our bump has been happening in 1<sup>st</sup> grade.

Superintendent also highlighted the community-wide Educational Forum at NSHS w Maura Healey on Vaping – presentation and panel – April 2nd. NewTV will record.

### **PTOC Communications & Guidelines**

*Karen Hite & Christine Dutt*

- Karen noted that the PTO Council roster wasn't distributed at beginning of the year, this will happen in the near future to assure that all members know who is on our group email distribution list.
- What is the Council's email list for?
  - Information sharing
  - Asking questions
  - Finding support as members lead their school's PTO
- Karen reviewed expectations for communications. Reminder to respect opinions in order to maintain the fabric of our community.

### **Equity Policy Update**

*Christine Dutt and Jen Abbott*

#### Equity Committee

- Presented update last night at School Committee. Read the [memo](#).
- Tweaks recommended to Guidelines that were voted in June 2018: \$20 per student tech cap (from \$15) or Chromebooks cart and ability to carry unspent \$ in tech cap over to following year. Need to clarify whether it's continuous or one year only.
- Timeline: these updated recs will be voted on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Public comment then also.
- Continue to emphasize the reason for the cap: Step down PTO responsibility for funding technology, NPS step up.
- Equity Committee has visited PTO meetings at 10 schools to date. Feedback from parents universally – agree that NPS should fund all technology.

#### Working Group

- Focus groups completed, used to formulate surveys for Treasurers and PTO Board members.
- Treasurers and PTO Board member surveys are out, returns have been good.
- Next: Community survey to go to all NPS elementary families directly (discussing district-wide) – won't be finalized until Treasurer & Board surveys returned, so community can react to ideas suggested by PTO leaders.
- Next update to School Committee on April 24. Recommendation will not happen at that time.
- Please send reminders to your Boards to complete the surveys!!! Still missing 4 Treasurers. Clarify that deadline to return them is not tonight (this was mentioned at SC meeting).
- One Co-President experienced a tech issue – she notes that you should assure your responses have been recorded.
- Working on a Q&A for parents, will send to PTOC email list when ready. Will help them differentiate Equity Committee vs Working Group output and impact.

Q: How to prepare our community members for the timing of the big survey?

A: Timeline is not clear, would not want to promise anything. More to come.

Q: What is WG's policy on responding to emails of input?

A: Trying to acknowledge all back with a thank you. May not have done for every email. Email forwarding from NPS email is happening in batches.

Q: How will we budget for next school year not knowing about WG recommendations?

A: If a central fund is created, it won't happen for the 2019-20 school year.

Q: What is date that technology purchasing needs to be made by for this year, prior to cap going into effect? If PTO FYs end in August or September vs. June 30<sup>th</sup> how to account for that?

A: Equity Committee will discuss individually with the affected PTOs.