

**PTO Council Meeting  
April 3, 2017**

**7:30 pm - regular meeting**

**Education Center, Room 210**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Attendees:**

**PTOC Executive Board**

Betsy Blagdon, Co-President  
Emily Prenner, Co-President  
Lisa Hansen, Secretary  
Maureen Oats, Elementary Rep.  
Caroline Wilson, Website  
Jen Abbot, Equity Chair/ Co-Pres. Cabot  
Teri Ginsberg, PTOC Board/Co-Pres. Countryside

**PTO Presidents by School**

Will Adams, Mason Rice  
Cathy Amos, Underwood  
Helen Haley, NSHS  
Christine Dutt, Burr  
Matthew Miller, Oak Hill  
Rebika Shaw, Memorial Spaulding  
Diana Cohen, Ward  
Kerry Prasad, Countryside  
April Stein, Peirce  
Lindsay Pike, Day  
Karen Hite, Lincoln-Eliot  
Hagit Abraham, Williams  
Elizabeth Navisky, Angier

Sarah Buckley, Angier  
Nora Horick, Franklin

## **Other Attendees:**

David Fleishman, Superintendent

## **Next Meeting Date**

May 16, 2017

## **Introductions ~ All**

### **Budget Overview and Hearing Information**

Financial Report provided. No changes since Feb. 2017.

Motion to approve the Feb 7th minutes with revisions. Motion is seconded - all in favor, none opposed.

Metco 50th anniversary - Betsy will send out a note about this to all PTOs. Individual PTOs may do anything in particular that they would like to do to honor the event.

Green Newton - Reminder - program to benefit families who get solar in their home. Emily will send an email about the program for those who wish to participate.

Emily provided a Budget Overview which was sent out by e-mail. Explanation of the Budget Gap will put main items into appropriate context. Review of presentation, including slides.

MA does its own funding on a state level for education.

1993 School Budget Reform - Goal was to determine the cost to educate each child in MA. Foundation budget was not really accurate, but the accurate amount would be too high to compensate. Chapter 70 is the money per district, and they are earmarked funds.

Other sources of funds include reimbursement of METCO, compensation for out of district placement - this is circuit breaker money. 70% reimbursement. Newton does get some federal funds for Title 1, for lower income populations, and IDEA which is Disabilities Act funds. In prior

years, during cuts, there would be a budget gap, sometimes worse than present day. Gov. releases his budget which has chap 70 funds in Feb., which is a nice level of funding. Then house releases its budget, then the Senate. Conference committee releases its budget, the hopefully by 7/1 we have a budget for fiscal year '18.

Q: How does this change? Based on eligibility? Title 1 funding could change. Review of funding provided from prior years.

2017 - Schools are 55 percent of the City budget. Appropriated in 2017 - 211 million. Mayor proposes the budget in April, in time for July 1. City only dictates amount the amount for school district, not how it's spent.

Process- July talks begin, including budget guidelines which outline the highest priority. Superintendent uses those guidelines to come up with budget. Budget Guidelines are public, and get voted on in Nov. March deliberations, and SC votes on budget (April)

Breakdown - 70 percent salary. 16% benefits, 14% maintenance.

NPS budget increases \*ave) 4%, enrollment grown in 10 years, 1100 students. Refer to presentation.

NPS Budget Balancing Act - same effort vs. actual amount we can spend. City committed to 3.7 increase. This year, 3.9 percent and that's where the gap is.

Impt. items- class size, etc.

Mandated - IEPs, Contractual obligations (bus, vendor, health insurance)

School - specific - funding: Per pupil allocation - paper, books, gym items, etc. Has decreased in past years to balance the budget.

Roles of PTO: Equity items. Advocate: Public hearings. Parents voices are critical. Public hearing on budget at 6pm 4/4.

Q: Non-instructional curriculum based? We can't buy books, but we can fund CAS.

Q: Neutral PTOC position, what does that mean? A: We'd like to avoid PTOC having a role in budget decisions (one school against another). Some specialists may be nervous about voicing at particular schools, because we don't want to take away from other schools. Comments: We just want to avoid parents arguing for one thing vs. another.

Comment: Cuts seem to be benign, vs. what might be done if we don't agree to them. If we fight to keep things like chorus, will something else get cut instead?

Comment: What to do about staff asking for parent support re: their jobs? This parent noted the staff should go to the budget meeting. This is a good example of being a factual conduit.

Q: PTO can share the doc with our families? Yes, absolutely. You can review the budget book.

Comment: This is a conundrum, if we argue one cut, will they cut something else? A: Midyear cuts did impact this year, so no carry over. Burr lead mitigation. Bus contracts. Parents can advocate to the Mayor's office re: appropriation cuts.

Comment: How to rectify new building benefits vs. old schools responsibility. Are parents of the older buildings paying for these new buildings? SAWG is working to assign kids to new buildings to make it even.

Comment: How to communicate to parents district rational? Would be great if Superintendent and SC returned for evening meetings possibly?

Q: Why are the budget hearings expedited? Set up as a hearing - 3 min. per person max time.

Comment: New schools - money in in separate buckets, so community/city not on hook for that. Q: How does 55 percent of city budget go to schools? Debt service. Capital improvement plan.

Q: Retirement budget in city budget?

### 3) Superintendent's Budget Presentation/Q&A

#### Budget Questions-

Challenges - momentum built last 5 years. How to preserve.

Principal is part of every decision. Had deficits in 2017, made 2018 tougher. 3.9 percent increase in school costs. Due to override we were able to add staff.

Fixed costs -details on presentation. Health ins., rising enrollment, bus, student services are examples.

Preservation? Details - low class size. small group literacy. 4th and 5th gr inst music. Library class for all students. Mental health and social emotional. Improvement? Flex-behavioral support.

Cuts: Asst principals, lib. staffing, 4th chorus, 4th and 5th class size 19 or below. Current number of aides.

Elem. Summary of cuts. Middle School - team size, going up slightly. Latin will be cut. details on slide. Library cuts, but libraries will always have coverages.

HS - 56 new students at South, 18 at North. Summary of student preservation, cuts. Cuts to staff.

Admin is being reduced pretty signif. Preserve ELL services. Reorg Business staff. All details in slide presentation

Skyward - System did not fulfill its promises, we will need to change this system. Other increases are substitution, special ed transport, tuition, and placement rate increases.

Fees to be raised - Sports, Bus, Supercap.

Newton has state budget allowances - wait until June to see how that unfolds.

Q: Per pupil allocation - PTOs are trying to be stop gap- some schools don't have the funds. Comments on how this impact Equity Policy. How will NPS address the differences in money per facility. Principals should communicate this issue, and let us know;

Q: In some schools the library is primary area to get books. How to deal with those differences? How to deal with seniority issues in Library? Add backs are a consideration. Option was to take them out completely, but NPS won't do that.

Q: This has happened in past where Library was locked. Will that be? Plan is to keep them open. Concerns exist, will make it work with adjustments.

Q: Process - past/future - How long did NPS see this coming, what is outlook for next 5 years? We knew in fall we were starting behind. By mid-year, knew about needed cuts/shortfalls. Further you get away from override, harder to preserve. Alternative cuts other than Latin, chorus - no others considered. Talk was about how much could be kept. For ex: Latin not primary lang.

How to manage health benefits? Transport costs? Family plans were high this year in health costs. Finding land in the city would make transport easier. Future: Enrollment going up in future. Each year going to be a challenge and will have to work on these.

Revenue: Q: Proper billing and timely collection of increased fees,

Use fees - MA school districts are not allowed to tax.

Q: Fees - System to collect, not efficient. Possibly one payment system. PTOC will mention at hearing on 4/4.

Q: Increases in retirement and health ins. that is not in NPS budget is growing at 7%. Can we say transition new hires to a FICA system and out of the pension system. All teachers in MA, are in state pension. Not a cost to Newton. 90% does not get money from Newton for pension (only clerical). OPed Newton contributes to.

Q: Families had asked if they can contribute to bring back chorus. A: Any solicitation to bring back via private funding. It's illegal to do that in MA. Q: what about volunteers in Library? We could possibly do that, Library parent volunteers are not in the same category chorus, but important to see where we are after reinstatement of some previously threatened programming to see where we are.

Q: Why does taking out chorus save money if Teacher still needed for same times for music classes? More of a restructuring.

Q: Lexia issue - it's a cost - can parents fund this? What else is going to be taken out like this that will disappear that we won't know about until it's gone.

Q:How much is case closed re: class size - Decisions to hold K-3 down, means 4 and 5 will increase. At this stage to add teacher, we'd have to take it from somewhere. If we are to restore anything it will be elem. library, and HS staffing should be the first thing. HS got major cuts in core subjects. HS parents don't advocate the way elem. parents do. If numbers are raised enough in elem grade, your school will get a new teacher. but may have to take it from elsewhere.

#### 4) New Business/Discussion

Review Emily's statement - Statement read Q: Is tomorrow the last opportunity to advocate against cuts? How long before decisions are made? When should parents e-mail? In next few days, the Superintendent will be supporting a priority list to put into effect should more money appear.

Q: What will take away be? Are there 3 main points? Basically, there is an equality impact n the schools as a result of proposed cuts. What are these?

Motion - Emily and Betsy present proposed statement at the School Committee meeting tomorrow in support of PTOC, with considerations provided during discussion.

Motion seconded. All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions.