

Newton PTO Council Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 27, 2018 @ 7:30pm
Newton Ed Center, Room 210

Attendees

Emily Prenner, Christine Dutt, Betsy Blagdon, Lindsay Pike, Jen Abbott, Will Adams, Shana Maldonado, Lisa DePalma, Jas Rai, Karen Hite, Angie Abend, Nicky Chapman, Valerie Pontiff, Adam Howes, Liz Flaig, Sally Brickell, Rebecca Anderson, Nina Tebaldi, Tamara Bond, Caroline Wilson, Liz Hiser, Gabriela Kroszynski, Maureen Oates.

Introductions & Vote to approve Minutes

Betsy Blagdon moved to approve the minutes from the PTOC February 6, 2018 meeting. Lindsay Pike seconded. Motion passed.

Superintendent's Remarks – FY19 NPS Budget

Dr. David Fleishman

Areas the budget attends to:

Enrollment growth in the high schools + 1 middle school and several elementary schools
Social/Emotional & Behavioral Supports – high schools and specialized programs

All principals, curriculum coordinators, administrators collaborated to develop the budget.

+73 students in next 5 years in NPS (=1% growth) vs +1482 students since 2005 (=13% growth). Leveling off of school population. What has shifted? Secondary schools are more crowded. New Cabot will help relieve crowding even more @ elementary level.

Q: How do you project enrollment?

A: Only look 5 years out – use birth rate and population projections.

Q: Take into account new housing developments?

A: Yes but no big ones are scheduled to go online within next 5 years.

Highlights of Elementary changes:

Minus 2 FTE's

Add Assistant Principals – All schools w/ > 440 students will have an AP

Avg class size = 21; Projected net decrease of elementary students across district = 8.

Highlights of Middle School changes:

+0.5 FTE Student Services Admin @ Day

+0.5 FTE teacher at OH

Avg team size = 89; Projected net decrease of middle school students across district = 16.

Highlights of High School changes:

+3.5 FTE's @ NSHS / +1.5 FTEs @ NNHS = 5 total teachers

High schools currently staffed for 157 fewer students than projected.

Projected net increase of high school students across district = 54

Other additions:

Teaching & Learning

- +0.5 FTE Math Coach (elementary)

Information Technology

- +1 FTE tech support to decrease response time; 1,000 Chromebooks @ high school to prepare for online MCAS.

Student Services

- Addition of personnel (+11.5 FTEs) in specialized programs at all levels, w/ focus on students on autism spectrum and other special needs.
- Used one-time funding to purchase elementary math materials, technology, maintenance and substitute coverage.

How were we able to get all these additions?

- Funding shifts, efficiencies and reallocation: drivers include reallocating staff to areas w/ increased enrollment, reduced out of district tuition projections (= cost) and lower utilities costs.
- 3.8% increase allocated by Mayor at start of process
- Total budget request FY19 = \$227,560,263 (86% for salaries & benefits, 14% all other expenses)
- Final vote on budget @ April 9th School Committee Meeting
- Emily notes straw vote taken @ March 26th SC meeting was approved unanimously

Q: Any changes @ NECP?

A: No.

Q: Would you have liked to have added even more staff?

A: I think we did a good job focusing: mental health, specialized programs, enrollment growth @ high schools (large class sizes). Also made a decision that staffing need at NSHS was greater.

Overview of Newton School Budget Process + FY19 NPS Proposed Budget

Emily Prenner

How does school funding work and why should we care?

Massachusetts ▶ City of Newton ▶ NPS ▶ Individual Schools and where PTO fits

Funding from the State: MA

1993 Ed Reform resulted in current funding sources:

- Each city gets Chapter 70 funding based on a Foundation Formula
- Circuit breaker – goes towards out-of-district tuitions (NPS now has 150 students attending out-of-district schools)
- METCO reimbursement
- Federal funding & grants – Title 1 (designated schools, based on % of low income families, changes every year); IDEA (special education)

Budget process @ State level has regular timeline: Jan (Governor proposes) ▶ House/Senate versions & reconciliations ▶ Final budget (July)

Funding from the City: Newton

FY18 NPS budget was 55% of entire City budget.

Timeline: Mayor proposes in April ▶ City Council approves May/June

City can't dictate how NPS spends its allocation, only the amount.

Also: capital expenses for school buildings are in a different allocation than for NPS operating budget (e.g., CIP – large projects like school renovations)

NPS

Timeline: SC sets system-wide goals Sep ▶ Supt & staff develops budget ▶ SC votes April

FY19 proposal: 86% NPS budget goes to benefits & salaries (70% salaries – 16% benefits), 14% All other expenses

NPS gets an allocation from the Mayor – this year 3.8% increase over last year.

What is the cost of maintenance of effort--that is, to do the same things as last year--is where the conversation begins.

Schools

Budget impacts here are via the per pupil allocation – supplies, materials

As enrollment has increased per pupil allocation has gone down, but FY19 restores it.

PTOs

A way to close any per pupil budget gap via equity items + tech + playgrounds

A voice of advocacy – parents are a critical constituent

Q: Where are different buckets of funding sources for capital costs, pensions. Where does it all come from?

A: Capital funding comes from City. 90% of NPS employees are in the State pension plan, so there is little cost to the City.

Equity Policy Update

Christine Dutt, Emily Prenner, Jen Abbott

Christine, Jen & Emily gave an update on the work of the Equity Committee.

- District's perspective is that the individual student experience should be equitable no matter where they go to school.
- No final decisions have been made.
- So far, most discussion in Equity Committee has been re: elementary level.
- District is honing in on 3 areas of PTO spending on curriculum-related activities that appear to be unequal across schools: Creative Arts, Technology, Field Trips
- Considering requiring small group professional development (PD) to be approved by Office of Teaching & Learning (to parallel the process w/ technology now). For some PTOs PD is a separate line item, or happens via mini grants, and others it's embedded in Principal Discretionary.

The group had many questions about process – e.g., how would approval for equity items work? Emily, Christine & Jen noted that there is a commitment to communicate whatever is decided about the process for approvals on part of SC and district.

Q: Can we circulate examples of budgets or develop a budget template – so everyone knows what categories are.

A: PTO budget templates exists already for elementary. However, there is a desire to preserve autonomy of each school also. Sometimes activities in individual schools don't fit in standard template.

Emily also reminded the group that while the Committee hopes that the guidelines will be ready and voted on by SC this summer they won't be enforceable until Fall 2019. PTOs can develop their 2018-19 budgets this spring as they normally do.

Plan is for a year of rollout, training, education. District to help PTOs craft 2019-20 budgets in Spring 2019. Still working on methodology for equity and process/communication for rollout, roles of each entity: PTOs, SC, NPS.

Other items under discussion:

- Mini grants may become line item
- Breakout categories for all specialists, not just Library
- Curriculum Support – define what this means

Q: For schools that have them, are there mini grant guidelines for what projects get funded?

A: Yes @ NSHS – look on South PTSO website; Williams – had them @ one time, now a matter of judgement of committee.

Group paused equity discussion to hear request from Newton Schools Foundation

Newton Schools Foundation (NSF) Survey

Liz Hiser

PTO Council members encouraged to fill out online survey from NSF, to be forwarded by Emily & Christine tomorrow, to help NSF with strategic planning process. PTO leaders are important constituency for NSF, wants to hear from us. Many thanks in advance for spending 4 minutes to give your opinions.

Q: Could develop a component of fundraising to give to another school that doesn't have the capacity? Funds to assist if schools are in trouble? Could PTOC serve as a support system/channel to get help?

A: Lots of things on the table.

Comments from group:

- Concern that parents wouldn't donate to a school where they don't have a child.
- CASC could be an area that schools could help other schools with.
- CASC has become "part of the curriculum" – district should fund? Interesting data: ~\$250K spent annually by elementary PTOs on CASC.
- Field trips – parents in habit of paying for them. Currently no way to track or quantify that. Could we get a sense of how many Field Trips per school? We do have data on FT buses, if the PTO subsidizes them.

Open Discussion/New Business

One PTO recently became aware that each school should have a parent rep to SEPAC. Lisa DePalma, SEPAC Rep, noted that there are currently only about 3 schools who do not send a rep to SEPAC meetings – big participation improvement from prior years.

Next PTOC meeting: May 15th with Newton's State Legislative Delegation. Bring questions re: anything happening on State level that impacts schools, families.