



# ***Town of Littleton School Committee***

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JEN GOLD, Vice Chair  
STACY DESMARAIS, Member

JUSTIN MCCARTHY, Chair

BRAD AUSTIN, Clerk  
BINAL PATEL, Member

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

**March 9, 2023**

**7:00PM**

**PRESENT:** Justin McCarthy  
Brad Austin  
Jen Gold (7:08PM)  
Stacy Desmarais  
Binal Patel (7:08PM)

**ALSO PRESENT:** Kelly Clenchy  
Steve Mark  
Dorothy Mulone  
Bettina Corrow

### **NOT PRESENT:**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Justin McCarthy called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m.

On a motion by Brad Austin and seconded by Stacy Desmarais it was voted to approve the March 2, 2023, agenda as presented. (AYE: Unanimous).

### **INTERESTED CITIZENS**

None

### **RECOGNITION**

1. Superintendent Clenchy congratulated the Girls Varsity Basketball for their win, good luck as they continue. The Spring sport season is just around the corner. Please register if interested.
2. The Class of 2024 Auction went really well. Lots of great items were auctioned off.

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*Our mission is to foster a community of learners who strive for excellence and prepare each student to be a successful, contributing citizen in a global society.*

## **NVTH INTERVIEW/APPOINTMENT**

1. Joint appointment with BOS and Town Moderator for the Town of Littleton representation to the Nashoba Valley Technical High School. Mr. Ed Mullen provided a letter of interest for a 3-year term. Notice has been posted and the School Committee was accepting applicants until March 2, 2023.

On a motion by Timothy Goddard, and seconded by Gary Wilson, it was voted to approve the appointment of Ed Mullen as the Littleton Alternate District representative to Nashoba Valley Technical High School for the three-year (2023-2026) term. Roll Call Vote Timothy Goddard, AYE; Charlie DeCoste, AYE; Gary Wilson, AYE; Mark Rambacker, AYE; Cindy Napoli, AYE; Justin McCarthy, AYE; Brad Austin, AYE; Jen Gold, AYE; Stacey Desmarais, AYE; and Binal Patel, AYE. Motion carried.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **Discussion regarding the potential removal of Religious Holidays from the School Calendar** - The School Committee Board continued their discussion regarding Religious Holydays. Policy JHA was included in the packet.

Justin McCarthy – I continue to feel that we should remove these three holidays. We may have some students who choose to take those days off, which is fine, but we are trying to increase the instruction time for students and have our school year end before the last week of June.

Brad Austin – We heard from a lot of students and families, on both sides of the issue. We do have a whole week to celebrate Christmas and no students have to worry about missing a basketball game, an AP test or anything like that. If we are looking for equality, it would not be equal if we take these days away. I think it is important to keep these holidays on the calendar. I really want to keep these holidays on the calendar.

Jen Gold – I feel like keeping the holidays on the calendar as regular school days but keeping in mind that these days we should not have any tests. Let students be able to take these days off if needed.

Binal Patel – If this community sees this as an inclusion, which will benefit everyone, I would like to keep these holidays on the calendar. Keeping Diwali on the calendar and not having another holiday on the calendar, does not necessarily keep this equity. That would not be an inclusion.

Stacey Desmarais – I feel if we were to vote these holidays off our calendar, it would go against the message we are trying to teach our students. We teach them inclusion. By taking them away we go against what we are trying to teach them.

### **Public Input:**

Aarya Washasunder, Giselle Kierman, and Rachael Friedman, High School Students – It seems if we want to keep with inclusion, that we should keep these holidays on the calendar. We really hope you will keep them on the calendar going forward.

Justin McCarthy showed a graph of surrounding towns who celebrate these holidays as well. I would support eliminating Good Friday and keeping Diwali and Yom Kippur on.

Jen Gold – We did not get one email asking to keep Good Friday on the calendar.

Brad Austin – It is possible that we didn't get one email because no one thought that we would remove that holiday off the calendar.

**Public Input:**

Charlie DeCoste – I do not think you have to remove a Christian holiday to trade one for another. We do not call it Christmas break. We call it winter break. I am asking you not to remove Good Friday from the calendar.

Stacey Desmarias – We are trying to make a balance with these holidays.

Brad Austin – I do not want to surprise the public and just take Good Friday off the calendar.

Binal Patel – If we are inclusive, we should keep the holidays on the calendar.

Jen Gold – We have told everyone we were looking at three holidays. Good Friday is part of these three days. How do we get to the threshold? We need to be fair.

Justin McCarthy – I think as a district we are trying to sway away from these holidays. We are trying to make the calendar more consistent.

Kelly Clenchy – I would caution you to think that people in Littleton do not think that Good Friday isn't important. We have had that holiday on the calendar for years.

On a motion by Justin McCarthy and seconded by Jen Gold it was voted to remove the three holidays for the 2023-2024 calendar. (2 AYE and 3 NAY). Motion was not passed.

On a motion by Justin McCarthy and seconded by Jen Gold it was voted to remove Good Friday as a holiday on the 2023-2024 calendar (4 AYE and 1 NAY). Motion carried.

**2. Draft 2023-2024 School Calendar:** Superintendent Clenchy requested the School Committee to approve the 2023-2024 LPS calendar included in the packet.

Jen Gold – I think we should have the teachers start on Friday Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> so the students can start on Tuesday Sept. 5, which gives us one more day.

Binal Patel – Could we move the Dec. 20 to the Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> as a half day. How about having the first day of school being a half day?

Michelle Kane – We chose to have Dec. 20 as a half day as that week tends to be a little festive so that would be a good week for a half day. Also, this provides two full weeks of continuous learning and momentum for students and staff at the beginning of December. Having the first day as a half day does not seem to be a great idea. The buses tend to run a little late on the first day, so I do not think it would be a good day. We like to have the students in the building for a full first day to learn the routines, procedures etc.

Justin McCarthy – Why don't we make Wednesday Nov. 22 a PD Day instead of the half day on March 6<sup>th</sup>? I think having the first day of school as a half day would be a great idea. It is an interrupted day to begin with and there is plenty of time for the students to learn the routines. They have 179 more days in the calendar.

Brad Austin – I cannot imagine that a lot of good PD will happen on the Wednesday the day before Thanksgiving.

Elizabeth Steele – We have 2 District days, 4 Building based days and 6 faculty led PD Day. I do not know how valuable the PD Day would be on the Wednesday before a long weekend.

Justin McCarthy – I think starting on Sept. 1 for teachers, taking Good Friday away, means we could end on Friday June 14. Parents want the school year to end before the last week of June, when summer camps start.

Kelly Clenchy – I ask that you serve the LEA with a notice if you choose to take away the PD Day on March 6 and have it on Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> instead.

Jen Gold – We are trying to take away some of the half days we have on this calendar. I think the month of November looks better but I would really like to see if we could get rid of some more half days.

Justin McCarthy – Can we make a motion for a start day on Sept. 1?

Kelly Clenchy – Yes.

Stacey Desmarais – I do agree that it might be hard to stay engaged on the day before a long weekend, but our students stay engaged so why can't the teachers. I think it would be a good move for the district.

On a motion by Brad Austin and seconded by Jen Gold it was voted to approve the 2023-2024 calendar with a start day for staff on Sept. 1 and start day for K-Grade 12 students on Sept. 5 and with removal of Good Friday. (AYE: Unanimous). Motion carried.

**3. Draft School Committee Calendar 2023-2024:** Superintendent Clenchy requested the School Committee to approve the 2023-2024 school committee calendar as presented.

On a motion by Justin McCarthy and seconded by Brad Austin it was voted to approve the 2023-2024 school committee calendar as presented. (AYE: Unanimous). Motion carried.

**4. Transportation Bid Discussion:** The School Committee Board continued their discussion regarding the transportation bid. The FY2024 Budget Drivers were included in the packet.

Jen Gold – We will not know for a year or so how this will go. Once we get the two-tier in place it will be worth it.

Binal Patel – We got a lot of feedback. Is this worth it for 25-30 min. I believe it is worth it when I am looking at the bigger picture.

Stacey Desmarais – How much is this 25-minutes actually costing us per year? And what could that number/amount be going to?

Justin McCarthy – It's about \$260,00 a year with a 5% cost of living increase each year.

Kelly Clenchy – We will be using the school Choice funds and then using funds from the appropriated funds. Our school choice funds might go down.

Steve Mark – The School Choice funds. The 5% increase for the school budget is not guaranteed but the town.

Binal Patel – We have gotten many emails from the community asking us not to do this as taxes will increase as a result. Is that true or an assumption?

Justin McCarthy – Yes, the assumption is that this will result in a tax increase and eventually coming from taxpayers' money.

Brad Austin – We can do this for the first couple of years without using taxpayers' money. We have the money in our funds.

Justin McCarthy – It is a large number but when we looked at area districts and their start times, it is the time to do this. Let's reinvest in our district. I do not think it will help all the students, but it will help a lot. If we cannot afford this down the road, we can always take this initiative back.

Jen Gold – It will not help 1,700 students at once but if they stay in Littleton schools it will help them overall.

Brad Austin – This will help a lot of families with consistency in start times.

On a motion by Brad Austin and seconded by Jen Gold it was voted to approve the transportation bid and authorized Steve Mark to sign the contract as presented. (4 AYE & 1 NAY). Motion passes 4-1.

### **INTERESTED CITIZENS**

None

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

- 1. PMBC:** None
- 2. Budget Subcommittee:** Next Meeting is March 16 with Public Hearing.
- 3. SEPAC:** Reading for all workshops. Great attendance. Parent & student bowling event coming up.
- 4. Policy:** We are currently scheduling a meeting for next week to go through some more policies

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Justin McCarthy and seconded by Jen Gold it was voted to adjourn at 8:40PM to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contract negotiation discussion with no intention to return to Open Session. Roll Call Vote: Brad Austin, AYE; Justin McCarthy, AYE; Jen Gold, AYE; Binal Patel, AYE; and Stacy Desmarais, AYE.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**  
**March 16, 2023**  
**PUBLIC HEARING BUDGET**  
**7:10PM**

### **DOCUMENTS AS PART OF MEETING**

Notice from School Committee - Vacancy  
Letter of interest from Ed Mullen  
Policy JHA - Absence to observe religious Holidays  
Draft 2023-2024 LPS Calendar  
Draft 2023-2023 School Committee Calendar

FY2024 Budget Drivers