**NEWTON NORTH SCHOOL COUNCIL MEETING – MINUTES**

5th meeting 7pm Monday February 4th 2013

Room 103

**1. Attendance of School Council Members**

Jo Doherty, parent representative & Co-Chair

Melissa Hanenberger, teacher representative

Chris Alberg, teacher representative

Sonya Jampel, student representative

Irene Golden, student representative

Margaret Albright, parent representative

Ellen Gibson, parent representative

Andrea Steenstrup, parent representative

Jackie Gelb, parent representative

Lynne LeBlanc, PTSO representative

Sally Brickell, PTSO representative

Apologises were received in advance of the meeting from Bev Spencer and from Principal Jen Price who was unable to attend the meeting as she was chaperoning a school exchange trip to France and Italy.

Jo Doherty introduced Wendy Lai, Principal intern to Jen Price, to School Council members and welcomed back Anthony Oliver, also Principal intern to Jen Price. Both of who were invited to attend this meeting.

**2. Acceptance of minutes from last meeting - January 9th, 2013**

The motion was proposed and seconded and the minutes were passed by unanimous vote. These minutes will be posted on the School Council website – discharged.

**3. Opportunity for Public Comment**

School Council welcomed Laurel, mother of new incoming sophomore student Susanna Kibel, to our meeting. Laurel expressed her desire to attend the meeting but declined public comment.

**4. Progress report on outstanding actions**

**4.1 Documentation - Sonya, Irene & Chris**

As a School Council member and also a participant in the documentation group as staff member of the Counseling department, Melissa provided an update of the documentation group, which held its second meeting on January 31st. The group has drawn up an outline of contents for the handbook currently entitled “The College Handbook for NNHS Students and Families” intended to provide guidance and information on post NNHS secondary planning opportunities. The intent is to make this handbook an easily found online resource by September 2013. Capable of being easily sustained and updated, the online handbook will use for its foundation the wealth of NNHS documentation currently provided in hard copy to students and their families during events held during their junior and senior years. In addition, admired features from similar sites such as those maintained by other high schools will also be incorporated as well as providing many links to other suitable sites for additional resources.

The various content sections have been assigned to working group members for drafting and will be made available to school council once a solid working draft has been established.

School council members asked about the opportunities to have the online handbook translated and was informed that the working group has identified its intention to address how to translate it subsequently into Spanish, Mandarin, possibly Russian and Hebrew. As this document is Newton North specific district translation services are not available but consideration is being given to the feasibility of having students or family members work on this aspect.

Given that access to such a resource requires connectivity, Andrea Steenstrup drew member attention to the Comcast offered program called “Internet Essentials” which offers internet service at home for $9.95 a month for any family that qualifies for the National School Lunch Program. While not a philanthropic service - Comcast needs to offer such a program in order to satisfy it’s regulatory requirements - such a resource might be worth evaluating by NNHS as suitable to suggest to eligible families.

**4.2 Data**

**4.2.1 Student tracker software program - Anthony & Bev**

Anthony provided an update on the output received from this program regarding seniors who graduated NNHS over the past 5 years. This program only tracks students attending college in the USA and not those accepted to and attending college in other countries. While it can track attendance at community colleges Anthony reported that there are approximately some 40 USA colleges, which cannot be tracked, including some in California. While it can track military colleges it cannot track those students entering into military service. The program tracks against a student enrollment semester to semester through to graduation.

Jo Doherty confirmed that the results of last years NNHS senior survey which included questions was forwarded to Anthony so he could access any variance in data between self reporting and the results of the tracking program such that would suggest a refinement, change or addition to/in questions asked in the senior survey. Brad MacGowan had previously identified the deadline for requesting changes to the senior survey as the end of March. Based on comparing the tracker results with those from last year’s senior survey, Anthony is to assess whether any changes or additions to the current senior survey are necessary.

It was suggested by Irene that a survey of underclassman might be appropriate to ask them if they feel they are receiving sufficient information about the college application process. The meeting decided this was a suitable question to discuss at the next meeting, which might be a joint meeting with the SFA.

Margaret pointed out that the Massachusetts’s State no cost, one-stop online resource for students, parents and educators to facilitate students managing their college and career planning provides a great resource for students & their families to explore all aspects of the college application process as well as tools useful for ascertaining interest and potential career options. For those interested please check out their website at [www.YourPlanForTheFuture.org](http://www.YourPlanForTheFuture.org)

This website will be referenced at the documentation working group as a potential resource.

**4.2.2 Senior Student survey - Ellen, Jo, Jackie & Sonya**

Please refer to agenda item 4.2.1.

**4.3 Pilot Program - Sally, Lynne, Ellen & Jackie**

A good proportion of the meeting was spent discussing the progress and direction of this particular strategic deliverable. After much consideration it was generally felt by the meeting that it might be better to identify the selected the families and then be better placed to identify what resources need to be recruited. The meeting discussed whether the program should be focused on the student, the family or the student and family. It was considered that the aim should be to work with the family and to let the family determine whether the student is involved in the mentoring program.

Concerns were expressed that the “mentor” should be a facilitator who was able to introduce the participating families to resources suitable for them and to guide them through the timetable of milestone events. And not to be regarded as “experts” or providing recommendations for decisions making. The counseling department staff would be referred to for any expert knowledge or help.

The school council agreed a clear protocol should be established for the pilot program detailing the expectations of the participants – families, mentors, facilitators and the NNHS Counseling department. And while there are many issues still to be finalized before such a program maybe considered fully operational, the School Council felt that it would still be a valuable resource to selected families and a valuable learning experience to help refine the offering as long as it is clearly understood by all participants to be a pilot.

Margaret suggested that the pilot should consider utilizing group visits as well as individual one on one mentoring. These would enable the gathering of families with similar experiences and concerns, with their mentors and a facilitator, to explore their questions in a group forum. Mentors would then follow up with their selected family to support them through any identified actions or milestones.

The council then considered various ways to identify mentors. One possible means is to recruit parents of current seniors for whom this is their youngest or only child. Consideration was also given to recruiting from families who have already graduated from NNHS - members of the wider NNHS neighborhood community wishing to give back. Also raised as a possibility was the notion of peer to peer - student to student mentoring similar to the model that already exists in NNHS for the peer to peer tutoring program. Finally it was noted that those families we are trying to help now could be viewed in the future as possible mentors themselves.

It was agreed that the next step was for this working group to refine the details of the pilot program to reflect the suggestions and recommendations of the meeting as and present to Jen Price in order to initiate the selection of families to be mentored.

**4.4 Resources - Margaret, Lynne & Jo**

Jo Doherty referenced that a listing of all the resources identified by school council members as a result of their work on this project has been collated and sent out to members. The intention is to discuss these resources with the documentation working group and specifically members of the NNHS counseling department to assess which resources they consider worthy of further evaluation. At which point school council members can be recruited to access these resources and suggest how/if they might be useful tools.

**5. AOB & Next meeting**

The next meeting is Wednesday, March 6th, 2013 at 7am. An agenda will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting identifying the location.

The attending school council members discussed no further business. After the official school council meeting was concluded, and staff and student members had left, parent representative members met to discuss the current override situation in Newton and to debate whether to issue a statement. It was agreed to issue a statement supporting the override. That statement is identified below.

“Dear parents/guardians,

On March 12, 2013, Newton voters will be asked to vote on an $11.4 million tax override.  The parent representatives of the Newton North School Council support the passage of the Override Package in its entirety.

The Override Package includes funding to pay for additional teaching positions throughout the district to keep up with our growing enrollment.  This will help keep class sizes reasonable even as more students enroll at our schools.  It will also help maintain our wide breadth of programming.  The high schools are slated to receive 12 additional regular teaching positions (shared between North and South) in addition to more special education and English language learning teaching positions to match enrollment growth.

If the override package fails, class sizes throughout the district – including at Newton North – will increase and elective choices will diminish because Newton Public Schools will be unable to hire additional teachers.

We encourage all eligible voters to vote in favor of all 3 override questions in the city’s special election to be held on March 12, 2013.

Sincerely,

North School Council Parent Representatives

Jo Doherty    (co-chairperson)

Margaret Albright

Sally Brickell

Jackie Gelb

Ellen Gibson

Andrea Steenstrup”