



Natick Finance Committee

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 3 of the Town of Natick By-Laws, I attest that the attached copy is the approved copy of the minutes for the following Meeting:

Town of Natick Finance Committee

Meeting Date: January 26, 2021

The minutes were approved through the following action:

Motion:	Approval
Made by:	Mr. Scurlock
Seconded by:	Mr. DeLuca
Vote:	3 – 0 – 0
Date:	February 23, 2021

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Evans
Clerk
Natick Finance Committee

MEETING AGENDA

Posted: Friday January 22, 2021 1 PM

1. Call to Order
 - a. Review of Meeting Agenda and Ordering of Items
2. Public Comments
 - a. [Committee policy & procedures available via this link and also at the meeting location](#)
3. New Business
 - a. [Review Technology & Transportation Budget](#)
4. Adjourn

Education & Learning Subcommittee:

David Coffey

Jim Scurlock

Bruce Evans

Jeff DeLuca

Richard Pope

Town Administration:

Mr. Dennis Roche, Director, Technology, NPS

Dr. Anna Nolin, Superintendent, NPS

Dr. Peter Gray, Assistant Superintendent, Finance, NPS

Mr. Tim Luff, Assistant Superintendent, Special Services, NPS

Mr. Kirk Downing, Assistant Superintendent, TLI, NPS

Mr. James Araujo, Data Analysis, NPS

Mr. Scurlock called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM

Mr. Evans moved to open the meeting, seconded by Mr. Pope, voted 5 – 0 – 0

Mr. Coffey = yes

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Technology

Presenter: Dennis Roche

[FY22 Tech Budget v1 presentation](#)

Technology Inventory

Total number of devices as of 12/31/2019 8468

Number of computers added in 2020 1941*

Number of computers retired YTD in 2020 (199)

Additional computers to retire in 2020 (161)

Total number of devices as of 12/31/2020 10049**
(Increase of 1581)

* One asset was purchased and retired in 2020.

** Does not include devices on order for Middle Schools or Kennedy Building Project.

Mr. Roche stated that the inventory of devices as of the end of this calendar year is higher than normal. This is a result of the global pandemic and the difficulty in getting new devices so NPS has been extremely conservative in not retiring devices and trying to get more life out of them. NPS has lent a lot of devices to families needing devices for remote and hybrid education. Fortunately, we purchased a lot of devices over the last year because there were some grant opportunities to help us do so. We did have one asset that was bought in 2020 that was retired in 2020, so that is why the numbers are off by one. In addition, the new devices in support of the opening of the new Kennedy Middle School are not yet included in this report because this is a calendar year summary and those items will be reflected in January 2021.

	BEN	BRO	ESC	HL	JOH	KEN	LIL	MEM	NHS	OOD	PRE	TEC	TWN	WIL	Grand Total
Chromebook	114	81		836	44	860	80	80	599		2	460	22	1048	4226
Chromebox	4				1	26	3	3	19					3	59
Desktop	6	11		1	2	10	3	12	153		6	67	1	32	304
iPad	331	292	46	2	137	189	275	212	52	9	48	84	25	295	1997
iPod	12	1	1		1	4	23	15	12			1		4	74
Laptop	114	95	13	64	51	301	110	61	1526	2	27	536	29	310	3239
Tablet				1					101				11	37	150
Grand Total	581	480	60	904	236	1390	494	383	2462	11	83	1159	77	1729	10049
% of Total Devices	6%	5%	1%	9%	2%	14%	5%	4%	24%	0%	1%	12%	1%	17%	

	BEN	BRO	ESC	HL	JOH	KEN	LIL	MEM	NHS	OOD	PRE	TEC	TWN	WIL	Grand Total
2009	2	2				5	11	1	3		1	2			27
2010	4				1	23	13	1	4		4	1		14	65
2011	32	4			5	70	8	2	15		2	11	1	13	163
2012	86	40	1	1	5	45	7	23	84		6	25	7	36	366
2013	50	34	1		26	31	16	29	10		4	9	12	34	256
2014	93	113	5	21	61	155	161	104	127	1	25	110	7	320	1303
2015	13	16	7	1	4	67	10	6	27	3	3	46	8	116	327
2016	107	110	9	188	33	322	16	26	116	1	8	340	11	392	1679
2017	154	120	12	174	71	197	206	149	538	3	5	56	10	326	2021
2018	7	16	9	136	13	111	29	8	385	2	4	53	5	75	853
2019	30	24	16	103	16	103	14	29	536	1	19	77	15	66	1049
2020	3	1		280	1	261	3	5	617		2	429	1	337	1940
Grand Total	581	480	60	904	236	1390	494	383	2462	11	83	1159	77	1729	10049

This slide shows the distribution of the devices across the schools and the historical totals. In the first section, the column labeled HL is the number of device that NPS has lent to families, a total of 904 devices and these numbers continue to rise. In addition to these devices, we've also lent out approximately 50 hotspots that are not included in this list. These hotspots were required because some students have had issues getting reliable internet and we've provided those services to them as well.

Inventory by year

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
Chromebook					7	6	99	825	886	343	228	1832	4226
Chromebox									32	2		25	59
Desktop	8	9	4	23	8	32	5	79	72	1	62	1	304
iPad		1	33	112	195	801	71	237	384	73	49	41	1997
iPod	12	13	8	18	7			12	2	2			74
Laptop	7	40	118	183	37	455	97	524	644	429	696	9	3239
Tablet		2		30	2	9	55	2	1	3	14	32	150
Grand Total	27	65	163	366	256	1303	327	1679	2021	853	1049	1940	10049
% of Total Devices	0%	1%	2%	4%	3%	13%	3%	17%	20%	8%	10%	19%	

Asset Count	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Grand Total
BEN	2	4	32	86	50	93	13	107	154	7	30	3	581
BRO	2		4	40	34	113	16	110	120	16	24	1	480
ESC				1	1	5	7	9	12	9	16		60
HL				1		21	1	188	174	136	103	280	904
JOH		1	5	5	26	61	4	33	71	13	16	1	236
KEN	5	23	70	45	31	155	67	322	197	111	103	261	1390
LIL	11	13	8	7	16	161	10	16	206	29	14	3	494
MEM	1	1	2	23	29	104	6	26	149	8	29	5	383
NHS	3	4	15	84	10	127	27	116	538	385	536	617	2462
OOD						1	3	1	3	2	1		11
PRE	1	4	2	6	4	25	3	8	5	4	19	2	83
TEC	2	1	11	25	9	110	46	340	56	53	77	429	1159
TWN			1	7	12	7	8	11	10	5	15	1	77
WIL		14	13	36	34	320	116	392	326	75	66	337	1729
Grand Total	27	65	163	366	256	1303	327	1679	2021	853	1049	1940	10049

Our goal each year is to ensure that we keep good, effective devices for students, faculty and staff and this makes up a significant portion of our budget each year.

Technology Device goals for FY22

- Provide incoming freshman with a new Chromebook
- Expand 1-to-1 program to grades 5 & 6
- Refresh and replace obsolete teacher laptops
- Refresh and replace obsolete devices at elementary schools

Technology Budget

Objective	FY21	FY22	Variance
Supplies	\$3,500	\$3,500	-
Equipment replacement	\$699,279	513,589	(\$185,690)
Equipment (new)	-	-	-
AV	\$15,000	\$15,000	-
Purchase of services	\$360,000	\$405,546	\$45,546
Software	\$69,500	\$85,600	\$16,100
LAN/WAN Maintenance	\$244,500	\$273,500	\$29,000
System-wide Copiers	\$395,000	\$395,000	-
TOTAL	\$1,786,779	\$1,691,735	(\$95,044)

Overall, the budget request is (\$95,044). One of the areas that I typically spend time on is sustainability planning or the device replacement plan across the district. However, given the COVID-19 situation, we had to scrap our normal sustainability planning and start from scratch because of all the different things that were going on.

	Target Life	FY22 July 1, 2021	FY23 July 1, 2022	FY24 July 1, 2023	FY25 July 1, 2024	FY26 July 1, 2025	FY27 July 1, 2026	FY28 July 1, 2027	FY29 July 1, 2028
High School Student Device Sustainability (Chromebooks 3 Year Lease):									
Incoming Freshman FY22	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Incoming Freshman FY23	4 Years	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00			
Incoming Freshman FY24	4 Years	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00		
Incoming Freshman FY25	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00	
Incoming Freshman FY26	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00
Incoming Freshman FY27	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Incoming Freshman FY28	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Incoming Freshman FY29	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00
High School Labs & Building Systems:									
Video Editing Lab - 3 Year Lease	4 Years	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40	\$14,399.40
Web Design Lab (One Time Purchase - Cash)	4 Years	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$51,000.00	\$0.00				
Game Design & Art Lab (One Time Purchase - Cash)	4 Years	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$51,000.00	\$0.00				
Foreign Language Lab - 3 Year Lease	4 Years	\$7,189.40	\$7,189.40	\$7,189.40	\$0.00				
Zspace Lab (One Time Purchase - Cash)	4 Years	\$60,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
Security System Replacement Hardware	4 Years	\$32,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00				
MS Chromebooks for Students : (One Time Purchase to Expand 1 to 1 to Grades 5 & 6)									
Wilson Students (Incoming Grades 5 - 7) 750 Chromebooks - Grant Funding in FY	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kennedy Students (Incoming Grades 5 - 7) 750 Chromebooks - Kennedy Building	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wilson & Kennedy Incoming 8th Graders FY22 (New devices provided in FY21)	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MS Chromebooks for Students : (Chromebooks 3 Year Lease)									
Incoming 5th Graders FY23	4 Years	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00				
Incoming 5th Graders FY24	4 Years	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00			
Incoming 5th Graders FY25	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00		
Incoming 5th Graders FY26	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00
Incoming 5th Graders FY27	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Incoming 5th Graders FY28	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
Incoming 5th Graders FY29	4 Years	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$60,000.00
Elementary Devices for Students :									
Elementary Schools (Re-fresh old aging devices)	4 Years	\$300,000.00	\$300,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Teacher Laptop Sustainability: (Laptops 3 Year Lease)									
Teacher Laptop Replacements - Replace 250 each year	3 Years	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Teacher Laptop Replacements - Replace 250 each year	3 Years	N/A	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Teacher Laptop Replacements - Replace 250 each year	3 Years	N/A	N/A	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00
Total Cost:		\$513,588.80	\$641,588.80	\$663,588.80	\$674,399.40	\$764,399.40	\$674,399.40	\$674,399.40	\$674,399.40
Budget:		\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00	\$699,279.00
Budget Variance:		-\$185,690.20	-\$57,690.20	-\$35,690.20	-\$24,879.60	-\$65,120.40	-\$24,879.60	-\$24,879.60	-\$24,879.60

Dr. Nolin noted that NPS has been transitioning away from Apple to Chromebook for student and staff use. This year, we made the final transition of high school students off Apple laptops. Mr. Roche and his team solved the barriers that precluded NPS from moving to Chromebook and the teachers are now on board with using the Chromebooks because we can provide good solutions to allow us a parallel experience to their previous devices, but at a much cheaper price. Mr. Roche said that when NPS went to full remote learning, we had to make some hard decisions – one of these was telling the current 8th grade class to keep their Chromebooks during the summer and bring them to the HS. This was done to ensure safety and not contribute to spreading the virus. These Chromebooks had some viability going into the next school year. This set the stage for a long-term decision about Chromebook usage and we talked with the high school faculty and staff. Note that the sustainability plan shows we're not using funds for fiscal 22 to maintain the student 1:1 program, until FY 23. We also didn't start any new leases last year which puts us in a great position to start planning sustainability and create creative opportunities. When we went into closure, we had to determine how to continue our learning environment support, getting people devices that needed while staying within budget. The first thing we did was grab as many devices as fast as we could from our two middle schools - devices that were shared between 5th & 6th graders. Then, we

ordered 300 Chromebooks using unspent funds in our operating since we knew we didn't have enough devices to last the rest of the school year. This worked out well because we heard from families who had home computers that didn't work or didn't have easy access to technology at home, so our priority shifted to ensure that we had devices to loan out to the public. In addition to that, we planned to upgrade the 7th grade Chromebooks for the following year, which we did. We didn't upgrade teacher laptops and we didn't upgrade the elementary school devices to save cash, believing we could address these in the following school year. This purchase also allowed us to purchase \$133K of much-needed lab equipment at the HS (Video Editing, Foreign Language Lab, zSpace, & Security System replacement software).

The Chromebooks have a three-year life cycle so our plan is to do a three year lease for incoming freshmen to get a new device starting in FY23. So when we get to the third year, we have a laddered approach for leases at the high school. We're taking the same approach at the middle school level and aren't using FY22 budget to expand the 1:1 program to grades 5th & 6th grade and beginning in FY23, we will start the same laddered approach as in the high school. Previously, it cost us \$400,000 per year to purchase Apple laptops. For \$360,000, using this laddered approach, we're only at \$360,000 and we've expanded 1:1 to cover grades 5-12 at a lower cost. From a technical perspective, we have a more versatile device that we can more readily manage. Further, we were able to leverage the Kennedy MS project to equip devices for the Kennedy Middle School for grades 5, 6, & 7 and had a grant that helped with COVID-19 devices for students that we applied to the Wilson MS grades 5, 6, & 7. So The MS orders were placed with already secured funds in the projected delivery date is April/May 2021. We usually don't order devices until July, but did so to assure availability for the start of the school year since there is high demand for the devices and device shortages.

At the elementary level, we budgeted \$300,000 for both FY22 & FY23 for replacement of old devices. We recognized this past summer that demand for devices from families was ongoing and we didn't have enough devices to give to every student, so pulled the all the devices in our elementary schools that we could round up and that's how we got over 900 devices out in the community. We don't know when we can get those devices back and what the start of the school year looks like yet and it wouldn't be responsible for us to ask for the return of those devices until we know what the learning environment looks like. Also, these devices are mostly older devices that may be nearing their end-of-life. Next year, when we get the devices to the middle schools, there will be some devices there that we can redeploy to the elementary schools, but the quantity is unknown so this plan is fluid and my last resort is buying new devices. Thus, the \$300K is a placeholder (to acquire anywhere from 750-900 Chromebooks depending on the price point we can get) - I know I'm going to have to spend some of it, but don't know how much yet.

Teacher laptops (Chromebooks), we're allocating \$100K in FY22 and will use a three year lease.

Age of Teacher Devices

Age	Year	Chromebook	iPad	Laptop	Total
New	2020	17	22	6	45
1	2019	24	18	240	282
2	2018	12	14	51	77
3	2017	7	29	249	285
4	2016	45	21	135	201
5	2015	18	23	35	76
6	2014	1	41	162	204
7	2013	1	59	24	84
8	2012		23	58	81
9	2011		1	17	18
10	2010			1	1
11	2009			2	2
	Total	125	251	980	1356

Depending on the curriculum requirements, some teachers have both Chromebooks and iPads. I'm concerned about the number of devices that are 6-11 years old. There are also technology people with multiple devices because they need to support all these devices. There also are teachers or department heads that may have secondary devices to do evaluations, classroom visits and other tasks. Some curriculums require specific applications on iPads, for example.

Purchase of Services

INCREASES:	
Power School	\$43,346
Increased Dark Fiber (redundancy) & Internet Bandwidth	\$ 3,400
DialPad - Remote Technical Support	\$ 4,500
Google Enterprise for Education Licenses	\$32,500
School Messenger Communicate	\$ 8,800
TOTAL	\$92,546
DECREASES:	
Hosting of IPass	(\$10,000)
Esped (Now part of PowerSchool)	(\$22,000)
Blackboard Connect (being replaced)	(\$15,000)
TOTAL DECREASES	(\$47,000)

PowerSchool Breakdown

	FY21 Actual	Budget Owner	Estimated FY22	Updated FY22	Variance
Ipass	\$10,000	Tech	\$0	\$0	\$0
PowerSchool Base System	\$72,000	Tech	\$72,000	\$73,000	\$1,000
PowerPacks	\$9,000	Tech	\$9,000	\$8,500	-\$500
eCollect	-	-	\$0	\$8,000	\$8,000
HR - Unified Talent	\$18,000	HR	\$18,000	\$18,771	\$771
School Spring	-	-	\$0	\$5,100	\$5,100
Applicant Tracking	-	-	\$0	\$6,105	\$6,105
SPED - Special Programs	\$21,000	Tech	\$15,000	\$17,050	\$2,050
504 Module	-	-	\$0	\$3,410	\$3,410
ELL Module	-	-	\$0	\$3,410	\$3,410
Total	\$130,000		\$114,000	\$143,346	\$29,346

All items highlighted in yellow are additional modules added during FY21 and the budget for PowerSchool in FY22 increased by \$28,346.

DialPad is VOIP service to provide a better way to provide remote technical support when my technical staff were working from different locations at home and wanted to leverage their own personal cell numbers but not have to provide those cell numbers to people needing tech support. Dialpad lets us set up a helpdesk line and rotate calls across my department to have a remote Help Desk. It was also very effective in support of virtual Town Meeting where my team spent over 250 hours ensuring that it went smoothly.

Google Enterprise licenses are enhancements that improve Google Meet capabilities. We had been looking at doing this last January and when the pandemic arrived, this further highlighted the requirement. These educational licenses allow us to actually take advantage some advanced functionality that other districts who don't subscribe will not get.

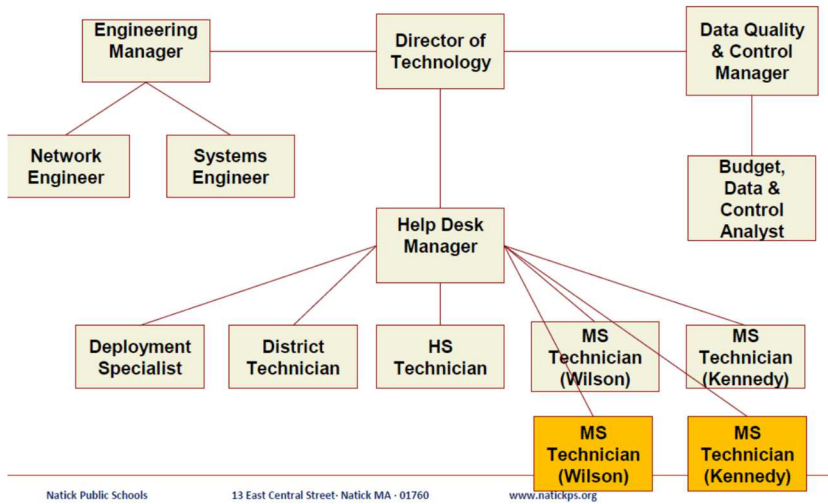
School Messenger Communicate is a new mass communication system that provides similar capabilities to Blackboard Connect at half the cost. Similarly, hosting of iPass and ESPED are replaced by the PowerSchool modules that we're adding.

Splashtop is an application used in higher education that provides low latency remote control of HS and MS labs. All our computer labs are based on Apple software and we provided Chromebooks to our incoming freshmen class so we needed to enable them to access Apple software if they're in these classes. Splashtop works with any device to remotely connect to these lab computers. So a Chromebook user can run Final Cut Pro using this software and the experience is just like you're sitting in front of the lab computer so it provides access to the software needed for their curriculum,

and not only provides the short-term COVID-related benefits but also will save money long-term. We have licenses for the middle schools and high school.

The LAN/WAN Maintenance agreement for security systems (\$40,000) is a placeholder. I'm filling in for the Facilities Director who recently departed and this is to ensure that we have a service agreement in place for those key systems. We were able to retire some obsolete networking tools that we no longer need

Technology, staffing.



Our current staffing consists of three teams:

- Engineering team does all the back-end infrastructure work including disaster recovery, performance, security, and any big complicated projects and new technology integrations.
- Data quality control team is responsible for back-end database integrations, website management, all procurement functions, inventory functions, annual reports, forecasting, auditing.
- Help Desk team which is comprised of a help desk manager, a deployment specialist and four technicians. I'm fortunate to have a lot of very dedicated individuals who have been with me a long time, but I am concerned about their ability to manage the ever-expanding support workload. My recommendation is to add two technicians to our middle schools. However, our budget requests one of those positions in FY22, but I want to underscore the need

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22 No New Techs	FY22 With 2 New Techs
Devices	9117	8468	10049	11549	11549
Technicians	5	5	4	4	6
Supported Locations	10	10	10	10	10
Technicians per	1 to 1824	1 to 1694	1 to 2512	1 to 2887	1 to 1924

Device					
Technician per Location	1 to 2	1 to 2	1 to 2.5	1 to 2.5	1 to 1.6

	Prior to 1:1 Program	(FY12) August 2011	(FY13) August 2012	(FY15) August 2014	(FY18) August 2017	(FY21) July 2020	(FY22) August 2021 No New Techs	(FY22) August 2021 2 New Techs
8th Grade	-	400	400	400	400	400	400	400
9th - 12 Grade (New NHS)	-	-	1500	1500	1500	1500	1600	1600
7th Grade	-	-	-	-	400	400	400	400
5th & 6th Grade	-	-	-	-	-	-	800	800
Technicians	2	4	4	5	5	4	4	6
Technicians per 1:1 Student	-	1 to 100	1 to 475	1 to 380	1 to 460	1 to 575	1 to 800	1 to 533

Prior to the 1:1 program we had two district-wide technicians. When we started the 1:1 program for 8th grade in FY12, we had 400 students at two middle schools. In FY13, the new high school opened and added 1500 students, and in FY18 (400 7th grade students) and FY22 (added 5th & 6th grade students). And, last spring, we went down from 5 to 4 technicians. These 4 technicians must support 3200 devices, or 800 devices plus teacher and lab devices in their building. We requested two technicians to assist with this problem and will be able to bring us up to 5 technicians which reduces the number of supported devices to 640/technician, which is still high, but an improvement.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Coffey asked if there are any challenges that still need to be met to ensure all students are getting what they need to continue their education. Mr. Roche said yes, as long as we continue to provide them with effective devices and the tech support that's required and this balance is reflected in my budget request.

Mr. Coffey asked if there is any CARES Act or other money that might be available to offset some of these costs. Dr. Nolin said that they are looking at COVID pool testing scenarios so we can get kids back in school faster and will use money for that. Education recovery in general will be the topic for those CARES dollars.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether a family has to show a financial need to be lent a device or just if requested. Mr. Roche said it is on request, but they haven't said no to anyone who has an educational need and is registered in the school system. Dr. Nolin added that, by law, NPS isn't allowed to ask about financial need. If you think of it like a textbook in a school, we don't issue the book only if there's a financial need because that's what students will use to learn in a particular class. So the technology is legally treated in the same fashion in school law cases.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether the system-wide copiers that on a lease contract have a service agreement included in that lease. Mr. Roche said there is a lease agreement and the copiers are subject to meter read charges, so the charges are based on usage. The lease does include service agreements.

Mr. DeLuca asked for clarification of the pricing of the zSpace Lab. Dr. Nolin said this zSpace Lab is a proprietary product for virtual and artificial reality, dissections and lessons of that nature. Some of that technology has advanced so that it's not proprietary to particular devices now, but we bought it back when it was and this is the upgrade to that software.

Mr. DeLuca asked, given the dependence and importance of devices and connectivity to the classroom, what the Technology Department is doing for audits, vulnerability tests, point of failure testing, and whether it was in the budget. Mr. Roche said they just applied for a state grant to do cybersecurity and penetration testing. He noted that NPS also has a web page underneath our main website, with a [data privacy and security page](#) that goes through details and what we're doing for data privacy and security; NPS has adopted two security frameworks that are detailed there. Mr. Roche said he is also a certified auditor and NPS did a self-assessment years ago. Further, we have received two cybersecurity grants: 1) health check to validate the work we've already done; 2) conduct an employee awareness campaign to train our faculty and staff on the types of things that they should/shouldn't to ensure cybersecurity. All teachers are assigned laptops and connect via Wi Fi. Our engineering team is really good in the diagnosis of network problems and monitoring the health of the network on an ongoing basis – we get alerts on our phones when wiring closets or switches go down and a building loses connectivity. We also added a secondary data center to the new Kennedy MS and a new fiber ring in town that allows us to run 10x faster than the prior ring to provide increased redundancy and resiliency.

Mr. Pope asked if MS students have higher rates for needing tech support than HS students. Mr. Roche said demand for tech support is pretty equal across the board. The bulk of my technical support team works out of Natick HS and that's why we've earmarked the additional technician to the MS where there is only one technician on site.

Mr. Pope asked what NPS has provided in addition to loaner devices to ensure internet connectivity. Mr. Roche said NPS provided hotspots (MiFi from Verizon) to 60 families who didn't have reliable internet service and was paid for by grants from COVID-19 relief.

Mr. Pope asked whether students can use BYOD. Mr. Roche said that they made a change this year based on COVID-19 to allow BYOD as they tried to head off increased demand for devices and noted that that this is the first time we have allowed home computers into school. We did this reluctantly because BYOD causes potential concerns - we normally do not allow BYOD to keep the learning environment secure.

Mr. Evans asked for a brief description of the PowerSchool modules. Mr. Roche said that although PowerSchool is funded through his budget, it is not his project. Dr. Nolin said she would provide more information on each of these modules and briefly described them as follows

PowerSchool Base System: Dr. Nolin said that NPS has tried to develop a data dashboard for individual students and evaluated (IBM). PowerSchool is not a data dashboard yet, but to create a data dashboard, track our applicants, cross-check it with MUNIS and cross-check it with our budget scenarios so we have one ecosystem that helps us match staff with our actuals.

PowerPacks, and eCollect: To be provided. Ms. Grace Magley, Director, Digital Learning at NPS will provide details on these modules. Dr. Nolin believes that the single sign-on process for all student apps and integration into the Google learning environment requires a bridge from the student database into those particular products. These three items allow us to create a seamless learning environment that

reduces confusion. For example, all 5th graders use a product called Freckle (math) and this allows us to create easy access to that learning ecosystem.

HR-Unified Talent: Dr. Nolin said this creates a workflow where the Business Office and HR are unified and that's the HR unified talent scenario (applicant tracking).

SPED - Special Programs replaces the eSPED, our current vault for those protected documents and workflow and parent signatures. This replacement product is integrated into our student database.

504 Module, ELL Module – Mr. Luff said the 504 Module plus ELL Module replaces most of the functions of the prior eSPED product but is tightly integrated with PowerSchool. Although it's a little more expensive (\$24,870 v \$21,000) the improvement is worth this difference.

Mr. Evans asked whether the data integration issues with MUNIS are ongoing or is it moving on a path towards resolution. Dr. Nolin said her team has had productive conversations with Mr. Rooney, the Interim Town Administrator and Mr. Townsend, Deputy Town Administrator – Finance. Mr. Lynch from the NPS Business Office is working to create a new cleaned-up chart of accounts with Mr. Townsend and the MUNIS consultant who will work together to achieve that integration, so the table is set to do that Mr. Townsend has been working to ensure that the MUNIS system works well for the town and has been putting in additional modules and has said that he understands what you're proposed, but doesn't want to slow down the process of putting these new modules in. However, we all agree that the chart of accounts is the root of many of our parallel reporting issues. Dr. Gray and his team are working hard with Mr. Townsend to get this to happen.

Mr. Scurlock asked whether there are lessons learned from delivery of remote learning that might carry over even when students return to in-person participation. For example, there may be some students who do better with remote learning than in class learning or we could offer courses in the evening or earlier in the morning using technology. Dr. Nolin said she alluded to this at Spring Town Meeting when she shared some of the bright spots that resulted from their adaptation of teaching in a remote/hybrid environment. There are options like nighttime classes, early morning classes and there is an emerging profile of a student who has been extremely successful in remote learning. Just today, we were meeting with our middle school leadership team and one of the teachers asked whether we planned to keep using the Remote Learning Academy even if we aren't required to do so by the state? Mr. Downing noted that the "special" pandemic regulations authorized NPS to run a virtual school (NPS had to make a charter application to get permission to run a Remote Learning Academy). It is those types of learnings that we're looking to implement to see what can we take from the hybrid and remote learning and keep it as a regular course of how we do business. For example, NPS' investments in technology, training, applications and a robust Tech Department helped us make a strong transition to hybrid and remote learning scenarios. Many districts couldn't do it the as well and as rapidly as we did it. For instance, sometimes we can video chat with staff for therapies across town where we previously would need to drive to a given school. There are a lot of ways that we can capitalize on what we learned here and we'll continue to do those sorts of autopsies, if you will, as we close down phases of remote and hybrid learning. We've been so busy scaling up that we haven't really had that thoughtful, reflective piece yet, but we are keeping a running list of things that worked well that we want to keep as well as things that must be changed. It's not clear yet whether the DESE Commissioner's thinking is on lessons learned. However, as we transition by to "live learning" and are talking about compensatory services for students, we may be able to offer more personalized and direct service if we continue to use some online interfaces like night school or other types of services that are easier to deliver to students and remove the barrier of transportation.

Presenter: Peter Gray

1:15:51

Mr. Pope asked whether advocacy from our state legislators could help with DESE. Dr. Nolin said it is not clear what direction the Commissioner is taking. In the past year, we have had a few surprises and difficulties. Right now, we're struggling with trying to implement COVID-19 pool testing and flu vaccines with little assistance and a lot just put on the shoulders of the local districts. You'll probably hear that when you speak to Mr. White about the Health Department's budget. There have been no reflective conversations at the state level on lessons learned learning from this. The most recent situation was being hit with specific time-on-learning regulations despite being told by DESE to "do the best you can". And no one has lifted the mandate to "impact bargain" with all of our unions. So superintendents have been negotiating with unions and we have an extremely collaborative union that wants students to have as much live learning as possible. Many other Superintendents are in very contentious negotiations that have affected the quality and programming of schools. In the local tri-county region, superintendents talk about lessons learned, but we're so consumed by dealing with the day-to-day infection rates and the new expectations that come out every few weeks that we haven't talked in depth about what the future is going to look like. DESE used to have an Office of Digital Learning and when this Commissioner was appointed, they reduced that department. The message that sent is that the Commissioner was more of an in-person education person and wasn't as tech-integrated, coming from a more urban Superintendent background. His first and only conference call before the pandemic emphasized project-based learning. I anticipate that he will have to have a transition plan in place, but do not know what that plan is. I do celebrate the fact that this pandemic allowed us to accelerate stronger teaching with technology and using technology to engage better with students. Our teachers have become very good at engagement and learning in that venue, so they have a broader bag of tricks and a stronger instructional mode than ever before.

[FY22 Transportation Overview](#)

Transportation includes both regular education busing and in-district special education busing.

- Our regular education busing contractor is Connolly Bus. They provide 24 bus routes and 7 late buses in the Town of Natick.
- Our special education in-district busing provider is JFK Transportation.
- We also provide out of district specialized transportation with several other providers. They are used on a case by case basis. Our largest out of district provider is Accept Collaborative.
- Both our regular education and special education in-district contracts expire June 30, 2021. We are preparing both IFBs (Invitation to Bid) documents with the Town Procurement Officer to advertise in the month of February.

The Connolly bus contract was a five-year contract that was approved five years ago at Town Meeting. We're putting out an IFB with the town procurement officer for both the Regular Ed and Special Ed in-district contracts. Both contracts expire on June 30, 2021 and we will be advertising for bids for both of those contracts in the next few weeks and will review those bids and finalize a contract.

ACCOUNT DESCRIPTION	FY20 BUDGET	FY20 ACTUAL	FY21 BUDGET	FY22 REQUEST	FY 21 vs. FY 22 INC/ (DEC)
TRANSPORTATION - REGULAR	\$855,485	\$855,485	\$850,766	\$1,455,308	\$604,542
TRANSPORTATION - MCKINNEY VENTO	\$130,540	\$145,005	\$165,000	\$165,000	\$0
TRANSPORTATION - SPED	\$1,992,080	\$1,548,609	\$1,878,391	\$1,878,391	\$0
SUB-TOTAL TRANSPORTATION	\$2,976,094	\$2,549,099	\$2,894,157	\$3,498,699	\$604,542
OFFSETS TO REGULAR TRANSPORTATION:					
GROSS COSTS	\$1,695,622		\$1,699,106	\$2,099,106	\$400,000
LESS:					
TOWN APPROPRIATION	-\$410,137		-\$418,340	-\$428,799	-\$10,458
BUS FEES	-\$430,000		-\$430,000	-\$215,000	\$215,000
NET SCHOOL APPROPRIATION	\$855,485		\$850,766	\$1,455,308	\$604,542

We calculate our transportation budget by adding together the projected annual contracts for Regular Ed transport (\$1,455,308), McKinney-Vento transport, and Special Ed contracts to get transportation subtotal of \$3,498,699

The town appropriation for transportation is calculated by deducting the town bus subsidy (\$428,799) and Bus Fees charged to families (\$215,000), from gross costs (\$2,099,106) which yields a Net School appropriation of \$1,455,308 for FY22. This \$1,455,308 then goes back up to the top in Transportation Regular. Since we're going out for contract negotiations, I'm unable to say what we've put into this contract for anticipated increased cost and we are working with our school district legal team to include language to protect us against a possible shut-down in the future. When we shut down last March, 15 other districts who utilize the Connolly bus service negotiated jointly and received a reduced rate with Connolly, even though our attorneys said there's no contractual escape clause that entitled you to reduced payment in the event of closure. Further, the savings from not having to pay the full contract for Regular Ed and Special Ed were utilized to prepay our Special Education tuitions to help balance the budget. We anticipate that McKinney-Vento and Special Ed transport will be the same as last year's forecast as these are based on current student load as well as where they go and what we anticipate for payment. So we do see a rather sizable increase. But once again, we are only projecting at this time until we get the bids back. Once we know the final numbers we'll be able to adjust that accordingly.

Reasons for increase in transportation budget:

- Loss of Fee Revenue due to COVID-19: (\$215,000). This is due to reduced ridership and space distancing requirements on the bus. We anticipate 50% of our normal bus fees will not be collected.
- Anticipated additional costs to regular education transportation - (?) This contract is out for bid in February. It is anticipated that, in addition to normal inflationary costs associated with a normal bidding process, that additional costs will be added to address COVID-related issues. We

have added additional funds to our normal inflationary expectations in order to address this potential issue.

Because we open up our bus registrations in July and close them as school comes into session in September, we typically utilize the previous fees, not knowing what the current fees will be. That said, when we went into shutdown in March last year, we either refunded the unused bus or credited the future payment in FY22. If your student graduated or weren't going to use the bus in FY22, we refunded the bus fee. For anyone coming back to use the bus in this upcoming school year, we carry the credit forward for the bus fees in FY22. Between the credits, refunds and reduced capacity on our buses, we anticipate we're going to be down about 50% in our bus fees.

A Regular Ed school bus can hold up to 72 elementary kids, 60 middle school kids, and 48 high school kids. Because of social distancing DESE requirements and Board of Health requirements, we can only have a maximum of 24 students on buses. Each bus has 24 bench seats, but the bench seat behind the driver cannot be utilized, yielding 23 bench seats. This means that, unless you have a sibling, who can also travel with a student to the same school destination, the maximum number of students on any bus is 23 students. There have been big changes in bus usage during COVID. When we went to the two cohort model, parents were uncomfortable using the buses and we're seeing a gradual return as parents became more comfortable with the safety protocols that were in place. However, we're expecting a 50% reduction in bus fees this year and have embedded this additional cost within this current budget. This is due to the credits that were extended to families when bus transportation to the schools was stopped. This budget is contingent on successful negotiations with our suppliers that we hope to have completed prior to the Town Meeting in April and will have a concise budget for transportation as we get closer to that date.

Mr. Evans said he recognizes that there are many unknowns with the transportation contracts being up. Given that we may or may not be in a remote learning situation by the time school starts in the fall, does it make sense to reduce the amount in the budget for the purposes of public display as a negotiating tool or does it make sense for the town not to commit to a public discussion of what we anticipate transportation costs to be in a new contract. Dr. Gray said NPS talked about this prior to deliberation of the transportation budget. Dr. Gray said that they will negotiate in good faith with the bid responders and, along with our town partners, negotiate a mutually-agreed number for these contracts. We would keep this budget information in our back pocket and wait until fall town meeting (? to see where the actual bids come in at. However, the initial transportation budget was developed at the end of December and refined in January to ensure that adequate funds were there. We have no intention of sharing that number with Connolly. That's always one of the issues, whether it's dealing with a bid or negotiating a contract - how do you appropriately set a budget while not giving away how much you set aside. The money we've budgeted is for all of our contractors and I'm fairly confident we won't need it all. ACCEPT transportation is a collaborative that includes all the local area school districts and they were exempt from any kind of a loss for transportation, as were our out-of-district tuition providers. JFK transportation as well as Connolly both agreed to a very significant reduction and we required that they show us what their fixed costs that they couldn't eliminate due to the stoppage of using the buses. There was a lot of back-and-forth with the financials and an agreement was reached where they agreed to a much smaller amount during closure.

Mr. DeLuca asked for a summary of the out-of-district transportation costs. Dr. Gray stated that the out-of-district transportation costs includes any student on an IEP that requires out of district placement, based on what is the best for the education of that child. NPS then reaches out to other school districts to see whether Natick can "carpool" and drive multiple students from different towns to a specified

location to keep that cost of transportation as low as possible. As you might expect, that has been greatly diminished with COVID.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether there are some out-of-district placements in Natick and what the financial impact is on NPS. Dr. Gray said that there are some students who are placed in Natick's schools because we have an outstanding SPED program and we receive tuitions to cover the cost of educating those students, but the originating town is responsible for the transportation costs of the student.

Mr. DeLuca asked whether Metco transportation was treated the same as out-of-district transportation. Dr. Nolin said Metco is completely separate.

Mr. DeLuca asked for clarification on McKinney Vento transportation - does the town receive any reimbursement or grants to cover this cost. Mr. Luff noted that NPS is required to students to different towns if they are living there because they were homeless and they used to live in Natick, or vice versa. It also covers kids who are transitory, covered under Title 1 or foster. So there are many situations where kids are coming in and out, depending on where they have a right to go to school, and they have the right to go to school in whichever town they were in or the town they're living now. Dr. Gray noted that the McKinney-Vento funding that used to be provided to districts is no longer available and the districts need to include that transportation cost as part of their budget.

Mr. Pope asked, given the discussion with transport companies on fixed costs when shutdown occurred, is that something we will include in future contracts to have shut-down clauses in in future contracts. Dr. Gray said there will be specific language and methodology in these contracts that should we go into shutdown, the terms and conditions are already agreed in the contract. In speaking with other districts across the state that have conducted request-for-bids recently, this is pretty standard and the bus companies want to protect themselves as well. If there's any delay in the issuance of the bid process, it's going to be because we're trying to tie down some language in this area of the contract.

Questions from the Public

Ms. Catherine Brunell asked why the McKinney-Vento grant was taken away. Mr. Gray said although there were grants available that provided some limited funding under very unusual circumstances.

Ms. Brunell asked whether the Metco transportation is funded out of the General Ed fund or is it funded entirely by the state. Dr. Nolin said it is entirely funded by the state. However, there are "9C cuts" within the school year that affect the Metco budget. There have been times where the operating budget had to meet the demand of sports busing for Metco students, which is a cost over and above the regular school bus because we want those students to participate effectively in all aspects of life and Natick education.

Ms. Brunell asked how many McKinney-Vento students we are transporting. Mr. Luff said the most recent number we have is 63 students and noted that the number has steadily gone up each year. However, in COVID-related times, transportation is a little different. It also decreased a bit when the motel where homeless families were being housed closed, but increased when they added the foster care system to the whole process.

Mr. Evans moved to close the meeting, seconded by Mr. Pope (Mr. Coffey had to leave prior to the close of the meeting), voted 4 – 0 – 0.

Mr. DeLuca = yes

Mr. Evans = yes

Mr. Pope = yes

Mr. Scurlock = yes

Meeting adjourned 5:47 PM