



The Newport Board of Education held a regular meeting on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 6:30 PM. The meeting took place at 30 W. 8th Street, Newport.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Ramona Malone asked for a roll call. The following were present: Ramona Malone, Tim Curl, Ed Davis, Sylvia Covington, and Bobbie Stubbeman.

Ms. Malone asked everyone to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance and to pause for a Moment of Reflection.

RECOGNITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Student & staff members of the month:

NPS

- Leonel Escoba-Pablo, Student
- Julia Lewis, Teacher

NIS

- Olivia Parker, Student
- Kellie Sturgeon, Instructional Assistant

NHS

- Jalynn Davis, Student
- Emily Norman, Teacher

Abby Rubright, the student board representative, was asked to provide an update on a recent event that Newport's FCCLA students had the privilege of attending. February marked Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month, a nationwide initiative dedicated to highlighting the value, achievements, and successes of CTE programs.

As part of the celebration, FCCLA students were invited to participate in the annual Kentucky Schools Boards Association (KSBA) conference in Louisville. This event provided a unique platform for students to showcase the opportunities and benefits offered by CTE programs.

Thanks to a grant, Newport's FCCLA students were able to purchase a soft-serve ice cream machine and an espresso machine. These machines were used to serve complimentary treats to guests at the conference, giving attendees a firsthand experience of the valuable skills students acquire through CTE programs. FCCLA will be selling espresso at the high school to fundraise for upcoming competitions.

John Hayden, Newport's City Manager, attended the meeting to introduce a new IRB proposal in collaboration with PLK Communities. The proposed site, located at 910 Lowell Street in Newport, spans over 17 acres of industrial land along the Licking River. This property was previously owned by Newport Steel Company until 1981. However, the site's development has been hindered over the years due to the need for extensive environmental remediation, which will cost an estimated \$5.1 million.

The vision for the site is to transform it into a mixed-use residential community, featuring public green spaces and a pedestrian-friendly design. A key highlight of the development will be a commercial pickleball facility, open to the public.

The proposed Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement is expected to generate \$240,000 annually, a significant increase from the current \$21,120. Additionally, the school district will benefit from tangible taxes derived from both the development and its residents. The PILOT is proposed for a term of 40 years.

This development marks the first real proposal the city has received in over four decades. The board plans to further discuss the proposal at the April work session and will communicate their decision to the city by the end of the month.

Ms. Malone announced that the board has started the superintendent evaluation process for 2025. They have discussed their concerns and expectations moving forward.

The board took a 10-minute break.

COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Several guests signed up to address the board:

1. Elizabeth Bravo addressed the board regarding Education Epiphany, lack of communication between central office and teachers, and unprofessional mistreatment particularly from Mr. Watts.
2. Beth Kuhnell addressed the board regarding lack of collaboration among central office and teachers, financial failings, curriculum support, and programs cuts without replacement.
3. Dustin Caudill addressed the board regarding the functionality of the district and asked the board to consider a list of 9 questions to be discussed at a work session.
4. Jerome Bowles NAACP President, spoke and said he supports Newport's administration and teachers and will continue to support superintendent Watts and the school board. He urged the district to continue to challenge each other to build back better as they continue forward. He invited everyone to call on the NAACP for help as a collaborative partner.

Ms. Malone stated being a board member is a voluntary position and she wanted everyone to know they serve in these roles to make a difference.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2025, MARCH 6, 2025, MARCH 12, 2025, AND MARCH 19, 2025

On MOTION BY CURL AND SECONDED BY COVINGTON the board approved the minutes as written

1648 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

TREASURER'S REPORT

Before approving the bills for payment, Ms. Stubbeman asked about the speech hours reflected on the invoice report. Ms. Snapp said those are outside consultants hired to work with our speech impaired students thru the special education department.

On MOTION BY DAVIS AND SECONDED BY CURL the bank reconciliation for February was approved and will be filed for audit and the bills were approved for payment.

1649 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

STUDENT LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Mr. Watts' report covered:

- Staffing and funding at the Newport Regional School. We currently employ one principal, 3 teachers, and one administrative assistant at that location. Funding is received from KECSAC and Title funds. General funds make up the difference which equates to approximately \$100,000 annually. Mr. Voelker will explore whether Newport is mandated to service this facility and report back to the board.
- New business items for the board's approval MOU with Cincinnati Works, District Facility Plan, budget amendment for NPS SBDM, and a fundraising request.

Ms. Payne presented her report and opened the floor for questions. Ms. Stubbeman asked about providing feedback from the video observations to teachers. Ms. Payne explained the hierarchy of her role. She does not work directly with teachers; she is present at the sessions and sometimes is involved in the filming but she communicates feedback to the principals who then pass information to the instructional coaches who work with teachers directly.

Ms. Stewart presented her report and opened the floor for questions. She updated the board on HB241 which allows districts to amend their calendars to reach 1,062 hours of instruction. If districts cannot meet 1,062 hours by June 6, they can ask the education commissioner to waive five days. It also allows five "disaster relief student attendance days...using alternative settings" if there are more weather-related closures this year. The bill also includes capping nonresident enrollment in virtual schools and limiting enrollment if the school is the lowest performing 5% of schools based on the 23/24 state accountability system results. SEEK could potentially drop by 50%. The bill stops nonresident virtual enrollment in 2028 to give the general assembly time to set new rules around these schools.

Mr. Curl commented on attendance month 6 dropping significantly from the schools and district goals. Ms. Stewart said the days covered during this time period included several very cold weather days as well as sickness among staff and students alike. She said she will apply for low attendance days in June.

Ms. Stewart is asking the board to approve the reconvening of the calendar committee to take another look at the 24/25 calendar since HB241 has passed.

Mr. Maines submitted his report and invited any questions or concerns. Mr. Curl asked about the School Bus Stop Arm violations. Kentucky, like all states, prohibits the passing of a stopped school bus with its stop-arm out and red flashing lights on the roadway when approaching from the rear. Mr. Maines has been very proactive in reporting these violations to local officials in hopes of preventing any injury to a student by potential violators. There are 3 high-definition camera views used to identify violators; one inside the bus, one facing the vehicle coming toward the bus, and one facing the rear of the car.

Ms. Swanson submitted her report. During the week of March 19th, the district joined the nationwide Spread the Word – Choose to Include campaign. This initiative is part of a larger movement that spans schools, communities, and organizations across the country, all working together to promote awareness, acceptance, and participation for individuals with disabilities.

Rusty Adams submitted his report. At the request of the board, he consulted with several vendors and other districts at a recent conference regarding audio quality for live streamed board meetings. His report provided the consensus and recommendation for a microphone solution for the board's review. He also provided an analytics report showing the number of viewers actually watching the meetings over the past year.

Mr. Adams has also been looking at the possibility of switching our phone provider to a more modern state-contracted internet provider for K12 schools. Districts have been encouraged to move away from old lines as telecom providers seek to phase those old lines out and as they become increasingly harder to maintain. It is anticipated that we can lower phone costs by several hundred dollars per month by making this change.

Ms. Malone inquired about the current Apple Lease the district is currently under. Mr. Adams reported we are ½ way thru the lease; 2 years still to go.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Before approving new business, Adam Heidrich, College & Career Coordinator at NHS, explained the purpose of the MOU with Cincinnati Works. This program helps non-college bound youth prepare to enter the labor force while providing a talent pipeline for industries that have expressed a need to attract and retain motivated workers.

Mr. Maines explained the District Facility Plan process. The comprehensive review and evaluation of a school district's facilities is prepared every four years. This evaluation is undertaken by a Local Planning Committee with the assistance of the district administrative staff, architects, engineers, KDE and other consultants. The District Facilities Plan and its preparation are governed by law and is the determinate of a district's needs and the trigger for expending restricted construction funds.

Ms. Stubbeman asked if any general fund money is used for these projects. Mr. Maines reassured her building funds are used for the projects on the plan. Debt service to pay the bonds is general fund money. As part of the local planning committee, Mr. Davis said it has been an eye-opening experience to see what it takes to keep everything going in a school district.

Ms. Snapp reviewed the budget amendment for SBDM at NPS.

On MOTION BY STUBBEMAN AND SECONDED BY CURL permission was granted to take the 24/25 calendar back to the calendar committee for further consideration.

1650 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

1. Personnel report
2. MOU with Cincinnati Works
3. District Facilities Plan as approved by the Local Planning Committee
4. 2nd reading of the 25 26 SY calendar
5. Budget amendment – NPS SBDM
6. Fundraising request – NIS
7. Approve reconvening the calendar committee to review the 24/25 SY calendar

On MOTION BY DAVIS AND SECONDED BY CURL the consent agenda was approved as presented.

1651 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

BOARD COMMENTS/CONCERNS/ UPDATES

Ms. Fatsy, NTA President and teacher at Newport High School, asked to address the board. Ms. Malone agreed but asked her sign up to speak under public comments moving forward. Ms. Fatsy said she would be sure to do that. She began by reading text messages received during the meeting regarding Dr. Dickey and lack of feedback from curriculum after video demonstrations. She said it is time for action – there is a disconnect between central office and teachers. She reiterated the lack of curriculum support. She urged the board to get back to basics; talk to teachers and building administration for feedback on curriculum. Get teacher buy-in before moving to the next “best” thing. Come into the buildings and sub in a classroom to get a first-hand look at what is going on. The last place we need to cut is teachers. Lastly, she noted the Wildcat Academy is a waste of time. Teachers need quality PD that is not being offered at this event.

ADJOURNMENT

On MOTION BY COVINGTON AND SECONDED BY CURL, the meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM

1652 – MOTION CARRIED 5-0

Chairman

Secretary