

**CITY OF NORTHFIELD WORK SESSION
SEPTEMBER 1, 2020**

At 6:04pm this meeting was called to order by Deputy Municipal Clerk, Shannon Campbell. This meeting was properly advertised in the Press of Atlantic City on January 11, 2020 and on August 29, 2020, in accordance with Public Law 1975, Chapter 231.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-8(b), this meeting will be live-streamed using Zoom conferencing service and the public is restricted from attending in-person. Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86324037688>; Meeting ID: 863 2403 7688; One tap mobile +16465588656,,86324037688# US (New York) +13017158592,,86324037688# US (Germantown) Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) +1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown) +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago) +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose) +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma) +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston) Meeting ID: 863 2403 7688

FLAG SALUTE

The flag salute was led by Mayor Chau.

Deputy Clerk Campbell read the following statement:

“Since March 24, 2020, Northfield City Council continues to provide access to and participation at its meetings during the Covid-19 pandemic through the use of Zoom video-conferencing and in accordance with the Governor’s Executive Orders and the Open Public Meetings Act.

Due to social distancing requirements, members of the public are still restricted from attending in person.

Zoom meeting participants can dial in by telephone and listen to the proceedings, or they can access the meeting using a web-browser, and be able to view and listen. Instructions on how members of the public can access Zoom have been made available on the municipal website and FB pages, and were published in the Press of Atlantic City.

All participants will be ‘muted’ upon entry to the meeting. Web-browser participants will not be able to share their screens or see the camera-view of anyone other than the host, which is the City of Northfield.

Those wishing to exercise their right to participate during the public comment portion of the meeting should wait until the specific announcement is made to open the public comment period. At this time, one by one, any telephone users will be asked to identify themselves and will be unmuted to permit commentary. For web-browser participants, comments or questions may be submitted via the chat function and will not be acknowledged outside of the designated public-comment portion of

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the meeting; chat-users must also provide his/her name and address for the record in order to be heard.”

ROLL CALL

Present (in person): Councilman Dewees; Councilwoman Madden; Councilman O’Neill; Councilman Smith; Councilman Utts; Council President Perri; Mayor Chau

Absent: Councilwoman Korngut

Solicitor Stein, Engineer Nassar, and Chief Newman were also in attendance.

Council President Perri welcomed everyone including those livestreaming on Zoom. He thanked everyone on the front lines.

Council President Perri then moved to old business.

WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – OLD BUSINESS

- Radio Tower, Rear of City Hall– *Update if applicable from Council President Perri*

Council President Perri had nothing new to report.

- Proposed Dog Park – *Update if applicable from Councilwoman Korngut*

Councilwoman Korngut was absent.

- Property for Sale by Atlantic City Electric – *Update if Applicable, Mayor Chau*

Mayor Chau advised that Atlantic Electric has decided to sell via open bids. He recommended that the City does not pursue purchasing the property, he had not heard any one in favor of a purchase.

- Offer to Donate Private Property to the City – *Update if Applicable, Councilman Smith*

Councilman Smith reached out to the property owner, he requested remediation information. The owner stated that information would be in the settlement documents. He would update at the next meeting.

Council President Perri moved to new business.

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WORK SESSION / TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION – NEW BUSINESS

- Standing Item – New Grant Opportunities

Council President Perri asked if there were any new grant opportunities.

Engineer Nassar reported that there was a grant opportunity through the NJDOT Transportation Set Aside Program. He met with Councilman Dewees and Councilman Utts; they discussed the possibility of upgrading the bike path including the lighting system. He will come back at next meeting with a plan.

Councilman O'Neill noticed that Somers Point was widening their bike path.

Engineer Nassar responded he would like to widen the path two feet to be in compliance with normal standards; Somers Point received a \$1.8 million dollar grant. We would do what we can with the funds if received; he would like to do the whole path if we could.

- Northfield Avenue Drainage – *Req by Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar provided handouts to Council. He explained that Public Works video-piped the system. NJ American Water Company has a line along Northfield Avenue that is going through our drainage line. NJ American Water (NJAMW) advised Engineer Nassar that this was not their issue, they could move their line but not fix the drainage problem. The handout shows that there is silt in the pipe, it would cause problems. He requested Council send a letter to NJAMW with the City's position.

Councilman O'Neill asked for differentiation of the pipes in the handout.

Engineer Nassar explained the picture and that he was told by NJAMW that the pipe was from 1923.

Councilman Dewees asked how this was affecting the inlet?

Engineer Nassar responded that it was taking away from capacity, something was compromised due to the silt infiltration into the system.

Councilman Dewees asked if we could run a jet line?

Engineer Nassar replied no, it would be very difficult. The water company is willing to move the line; it has to be under our drainage line.

Councilman Dewees asked if it was preventing us from maintaining it?

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Engineer Nassar replied, yes.

Council President Perri asked what was needed from the City?

Engineer Nassar would like Mayor Chau to send a letter.

Council President Perri suggested it should be from Mayor and Council, he asked Engineer Nassar to work with Clerk Canesi on drafting the letter.

- Vault, 200 English Lane – *Req by Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar reported that Public Works went to check the small pipe to see if it was going anywhere, they could not find any connection points. He discussed closing it with Public Works, so it doesn't become a danger; someone could get hurt. They would enlarge the existing pipe to help alleviate the drainage issues on Heather.

Council President confirmed that he did not want to continue the pipe to the vault on the other side.

Engineer Nassar would like to close the vault. The pipes are in our right-of-way, they should be abandoned.

Councilman Smith spoke with the homeowner, they acknowledge that Engineer Nassar was there. The homeowner was planning on doing some work and was concerned about vehicles crossing the area.

Engineer Nassar explained that there was another vault in the back yard, it was covered by a concrete slab. We can check the drainage pipe from English Lane; he explained enlarging the pipe would benefit the system. The existing vault would be filled with dirt.

Councilman Perri suggested Engineer Nassar follow up with Public Works.

Engineer Nassar will come up with a budget and come back to Council.

Councilman Smith asked Engineer Nassar for an update on the drainage and flooding issues on Cedar Bridge Road.

Engineer Nassar had contacted Public Works and asked them to video-pipe that existing inlet toward New Road. He will provide the information when received.

- Realignment of Birch Grove Road – *Req by Engineer Nassar*

Engineer Nassar provided a handout to Council and explained that Birch Grove Park Road was not aligned properly. He explained the impact on residents; the street was

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one way from Mill to Burton. He suggested realigning the road and adding to our road program.

Councilman Smith asked if it encroaches on residential property lines?

Engineer Nassar explained that someone's driveway is on our property. He felt residents knew where the property line is due to existing fence lines and surveys that have been done. The actual corners are visible. It has to get done to take the road from private property to where it belongs.

Councilman Dewees replied that fortunately the encroachments were on our side.

Council President Perri asked if there was an estimate?

Engineer Nassar would like a voice vote to add this to the road program so this would be part of the bid.

Council President Perri asked if we had the funds?

Engineer Nassar would discuss with CFO Stollenwerk.

Council President Perri called for a voice vote, all members present were in favor of adding the realignment of Birch Grove Road to the Local Road Program.

- Crossing Guards for 2020-2021 School year

Council President Perri moved to Crossing Guards. He reported that he, Councilman Smith, Mayor Chau and Chief Newman had some meeting with the school board and CFO Stollenwerk; he deferred to Mayor Chau and Councilman Smith.

Councilman Smith read the following statement:

“The statement I’m about to make is intended to provide members of the public with facts and context with regard to the current situation related to the crossing guards who provide assistance to our children who walk or bike to the Northfield Community School.

For at least the past 45 years, the City of Northfield has employed school crossing guards – I use that chronological reference because that is how long our most senior guard has been employed with us – yes, 45 years.

We have guards at 13 locations throughout town; of the 13 guards that serve these locations, 9 of them have been with us for 10 years or more.

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At least as long as the Northfield Community School has been in existence, and probably longer than that, these guards have worked two, one-hour shifts per day. One hour in the morning, and one hour in the afternoon.

All of this matters because it supports what a shock it was to City Officials when, on August 7th our Chief of Police was notified by NCS Superintendent of a dramatically different school schedule for the 2020-2021 school year, one that would require the guards to work close to three times as many hours as they ever had in the history of our town, and one that would likely cost the taxpayers far in excess of an additional \$140,000 per year.

In case the enormity of the change is not clear, the school's 2020-2021 schedule resulted in an increase from 26 crossing guard hours per day, to as many as 91 hours per day, with less than 30 days to make that happen.

It was Police Chief Newman who immediately recognized the need for increased crossing guard presence when he was informed of the plan on Friday, August 7 at 2:30 in the afternoon. The plan had been presented to the public and voted upon during a special meeting of the Board of Education the evening prior. There was no mention of crossing guards in the plan. The original hybrid plan, presented to families in an email from the school on July 24, indicated the likelihood of an A/B schedule with students alternating days and attending 2 days a week in person and 3 days virtually. That original plan would not have required any change in crossing guard duties and actually would have reduced it by one day, since there would be no students in school on Fridays. In light of the change to a new schedule, Mayor Erland Chau and Chief Newman promptly sent a letter to NCS Superintendent Bretones, advising him that the implementation of the staggered schedule, one with four start times, and four dismissal times, created an unprecedented change, and a significant, if not impossible challenge for crossing guard staffing.

So, for those members of the public who say the City 'knew' and did nothing, you are wrong. We promptly notified school officials that this may not be possible. A few days later, the school responded to the letter sent by the Chief and the Mayor, and the parties met. The outcome of the meeting was a reduction in guard presence, but one that would still require 3.5 more hours per day, per post than in any previous years. So instead of 91 hours, the demand was down to 71.5 hours; this was still an almost three-fold increase.

Now, we all understand the first-time challenges the Covid-19 crisis has created across all aspects of our daily lives, and the City is and has been willing to do its part in assisting the school, but we were never given the opportunity, by the school, to voice concerns or to discuss with the school, the impact that this change would have on our ability to provide crossing guards. I have heard that there was a 're-opening committee' that included 'all stakeholders'; but the City of Northfield, City Officials and our Police Department were never invited to attend any committee meetings. I

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have also heard there were surveys conducted by the school; we the city was not included in those either.

Since the city employs the crossing guards, and they are obviously an important part of student transportation in a walking district such as ours, it is hard to fathom how we were overlooked as a stakeholder in the discussions of creating such a dramatically different attendance pattern at our school.

Now, if you take the cost of the schedule off the table – but just for a minute because this is an enormous amount of money that was not considered when the City of Northfield and Northfield Community School each prepared their annual budget. In any case, taking money out of the equation, it has been said that because the City knew 30 days before the 1st day of school, that the City had ample time to just hire new guards, but instead, ‘did nothing’. As you may be able to imagine, a work schedule that consists of one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, is likely not all that attractive to a great many people. Accordingly, the job of crossing guards has been traditionally hard to fill, and we very rarely get more than a few applicants for any open position. In fact, in the two weeks since the job posting for new guards, there has been exactly one application, though I heard another may have come in today.

Once a successful candidate is identified, under STATE LAW s/he has to pass a criminal background check, and also under STATE LAW, s/he must be provided with a minimum of 2 hours of classroom instruction, and another 20 hours of ‘field training’ by shadowing another, experienced crossing guard. So, new guards can’t work their own shift until they’ve worked 20 hours WITH SOMEONE ELSE. In essence a new guard can’t really be trained until school is already in session. It is understandable that members of the general public may not know this, and may unintentionally minimize the difficulty in putting a qualified, trained crossing guard on a school post.

While it is hard to believe that the City’s elected officials were not included as stakeholders, this is in fact, not all that unusual when it comes to communication regarding student safety. Elected officials have never been involved in these conversations, and in fact, they have only ever occurred directly between the NCS School Superintendent and the Chief of Police. The School has never contacted City Council, or the City Council Liaison to the school, for public safety support before, whether it be for an officer, a class II, or a crossing guard. For example, when the school wants an officer present for graduation, we’re not expected to know this, even though graduation most certainly occurs every year.

What happens in reality is that the Superintendent contacts the Chief of Police. In addition to being established practice, this also conforms to the terms of a Memorandum of Agreement between the County Prosecutor’s Office, and local schools and police – signed on October 4, 2019 by Superintendent Bretones and

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Chief Newman, which establishes each as the liaison to ‘facilitate communication and cooperation’. This document is not new; it is signed every year.

When the school wanted to coordinate a graduation parade, it was Chief Newman who was contacted. When the school wanted to discuss Alyssa’s Law, it was Chief Newman who was contacted. However, this year, up until the communication from Superintendent Bretones on Friday, August 7th, the Chief of Police had not even been notified that the school was considering reopening at all.

Members of the Board of Education have posted on social media that the school board has asked the city ‘to redesign routes as an option to better utilize the guards we have and not spend a dime but they do not seem willing to cooperate and find solutions.’

This could not be farther from the truth – the Chief’s response was that data would be required to evaluate such a plan. As previously stated, there are 13 prioritized locations requiring a guard. Chief Newman, nor this Councilman for that matter, is unwilling to compromise the public safety of our children without studying the impact of such decisions. To do so would be irresponsible. Also, I would like to see the fuzzy math that was used to redesign crossing guard routes using 26 hours total, per day, based on the current schedule.

When that same Board of Education member was challenged by a parent who said, ‘If we were all fully aware of the situation as we now know it, I can't imagine a fiscally responsible NCS parent would have willingly voted for the [new plan] if it was presented on the survey that the logistics associated with that ... plan included a potential \$132,000 expense as well as lack of crossing guards to cover all 13 locations for the additional 3 1/2 hours per day ... versus the other ... [original] hybrid model of 2 full days with zero additional costs and full crossing guard coverage’. The Board Member – who had initiated the post - replied that Facebook was not the place for the matter to be discussed. That is correct, it should have been done, in consultation with the city, prior to any plan being presented or voted upon. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

We want to provide safe passage for our children to and from school. However, what has been put on social media has put the City of Northfield in a position to defend ourselves. We have been put on the defensive by the Board of Education who not only did not include us in any planning conversations, has been less than forthright in relaying what is really going on here.

What the district has proposed DOES NOT comport with the City’s public safety objectives, and further, in creating this plan, the district did NOT comply with the Anticipated Minimum Standards as set forth in ‘The Road Back Restart and Recovery Plan for Education’ set forth by the New Jersey Department of Education, which reads in part:

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‘All school districts will be expected to develop reopening plans. Collaboration is critical to the development of a district reopening plan. Therefore, every school district should establish a Restart Committee that includes district and school-level administrators, members of the local boards of education or charter school boards of trustees, the presidents of the local education associations, or their designees of the local education associations, and a diverse set of content experts, educators, parents, and students. The Restart Committee should work closely with the Pandemic Response Teams, Local Health Department, and others in municipal and county government as necessary to develop district plans.’ Again, that invitation to participate never arrived.

So, where does that leave us? I believe the city is committed to providing safe passage to school for our children. We are willing to attempt to cover the locations necessary to start the school year. I believe there are some other alternatives that should be considered, for example - eliminating the stagger for Middle School and Elementary School. Have the AM and PM sessions occur at the same times, still allowing for two hours of cleaning between sessions. I have also suggested having our guards only cover the Elementary School crossings. Each of these options would potentially reduce the hours needed to be covered from 5.5 per day to 4.

While the guards themselves may be willing to attempt to cover this new schedule, we need to consider the possibility that increasing the hours for these individuals may not be sustainable. Chief Newman is committed to making this work through the implementation of our original 13 guards, plus 3-4 substitutes, along with Class II officers, and finally members of the police force if absolutely necessary.

And, as alluded to, there is a substantial cost to all of this. The city is committed to its originally budgeted amount for the guards (about \$120,000), but this new plan adds an estimated additional \$140,000 on top of that for the school year. I think it is incumbent upon the school to share 50% of that cost of this additional unfunded liability resulting from their plan.

Obviously, the city and the school want what’s best for the children of Northfield. Mr. Bretones and the school board have made the decision that this schedule best serves the needs of Northfield families. I believe they are operating in the best interests for the education of our students. The city is rightfully concerned about the public safety of our kids. We must work together to ensure positive outcomes for all of our residents, and in these uncertain, unprecedented times, we must share in the burden.”

Mayor Chau spoke; he replied that as Councilman Smith pointed out there were lots of false statements and rumors. The Police Department logistically does not have manpower for the middle shift, some guards have a second job. He was advised that the current guards will make an attempt to work the middle shift. There was a 1-hour layover between shifts. We also have to negotiate with their union, there was a

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change of working conditions. With regard to the financial aspect, over \$127,000 of unanticipated burden would be placed on the City and the tax payers. The City was not prepared for this nor was it budgeted. Positions have been posted for additional guards; it was not an overnight process. Applicants may not be qualified; it was not an easy task to be a crossing guard. He was not in favor of volunteers for this position, he thanks them but stressed the need for qualified, certified people. He reached out to other towns about using their guards. State statute reads that the City may appoint crossing guards. The City has paid for over 45 years, two shifts a day. Other towns have disbanded their guards. We will have guards. We will provide and pay for the two shifts as we have in the past. He reiterated that the school did not consult us. The blame should not be placed upon the City. He understood it was a hard decision, we were all here to work together for the safety of our children.

Council President Perri asked for discussion.

Councilwoman Madden felt the plan of the Board of Education was egregious, she suggested the school should go back and work a plan for the students and taxpayers. She felt the split sessions were a recipe for disaster health-wise. She felt the Board should look to other districts for plans. She added that we don't have manpower; contract and finances were an issue. The Board of Education just raised our taxes without any cuts, it was very irresponsible and was doing a disservice to the tax payers. She suggested virtual learning for a month until a better plan could be provided.

Councilman O'Neill asked who from the school board was representing them?

Council President Perri replied that they met with Mr. Bretones and Board members. We were at an impasse; the Superintendent and Board President were not willing to move their position. He noted that it would take a lot of money to sustain this. They (the school) do not want to make a compromise.

Councilman O'Neill, noting he did not have children in the school, said he received information third-hand. If the school was doing what neighboring towns are doing this would not be an issue. Cleaning the school would be costly. He reported that he heard there was a survey, and some parents took the survey several times. Money was not addressed in the survey. Parents told him if they knew the schedule would have cost taxpayers this much it may have per swayed their decision. Councilman O'Neill stated that he did not comment on social media, but he read comments from School Board members; this is coming from all of our tax dollars. He did not feel this schedule was workable. He was not asking for an argument with the School Board. He asked that Councilman Smith's letter be posted so all can read it. We don't always agree. Tonight, we agree, if the Chief says it's unsafe, he was in agreement with the Chief.

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Council President Perri replied that Councilman Smith's letter would be entered into the record. There was no other option, we have to use our resources, the school was not willing to change. We solicited the County Superintendent.

Councilman Dewees asked if we had any idea what the attendance was going to look like?

Council President Perri replied, no, not until school starts. The Superintendent who approved the school board's plan refuses to change his mind. The City cannot take legal action against another government entity. We spent many hours on this, the school is standing their ground.

Mayor Chau recognized this was an unprecedented time, we don't know when this will end. CFO Stollenwerk advised that we do not have the money, we had a very lean budget, we do not have \$130,000. It was suggested that we could use the Police force, it would cost more money with overtime, and the officer would have to leave the post if there was an emergency. Mayor Chau said he was not willing to take that risk. He compromised with the school for police to fill in but their budget was limited as well.

Councilwoman Madden agreed with Councilman O'Neill. She did not buy that the superintendent could not change, the cost was impossible. The schedule did not make sense, she felt there must be something we can do, we need to come up with a different plan.

Mayor Chau to Councilwoman Madden: Mr. Bertones and his staff were experts in education, due to circumstances, there needs to be more decision-making process to make a plan.

Councilwoman Madden suggested the school go virtual.

Council President Perri reminded Councilwoman Madden that the school was an autonomous body, we can't do anything, we negotiated many hours, they were not willing to compromise.

Councilman Dewees asked if there was any recommendation form the Chief or the Mayor?

Mayor Chau replied that we started reevaluating the posts, it was suggested by the school board to consolidate the posts. We can't get the data until we have the physical count of students using the post.

Council President Perri noted the we were not sure the existing guards could even work the suggested work load, we were on a time restraint, must use all our resources that we have now.

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Councilman Dewees asked what the school was contributing.

Council President Perri replied there was no agreement with the school at this time. They suggested getting the money from their special education busing, around \$60,000.

Councilman Dewees replied that where their money comes from is up to them. Where are we getting money to fund this?

Council President Perri said we have monies available to a certain extent, after that point would have to do a transfer or emergency appropriation. CFO Stollenwerk did not want to do an emergency appropriation.

Councilman O'Neill questioned the emergency fund.

Council President Perri replied there is no emergency fund and surplus cannot be used in this calendar year. There were not many other options other than an emergency appropriation.

Councilman Smith reminded all that we are on a different fiscal year than the school, he proposed asking the board of education for half of the funds. We still have to move money around. He has a third grader who wants to go to school. The school needs to share the burden of this unfunded liability. We have to make this happen.

Council President Perri noted that there was no memorandum of agreement, there is a way to bill for special police services.

Councilman O'Neill expressed concern with Police manning posts.

Council President Perri reiterated that the school was opening, the Chief and Captain were on top of it, we have to move forward.

Mayor Chau added that we have to be cognizant of our house, we have to run the city properly and efficiently, we all want to help the school.

Clerk Canesi explained that an emergency appropriation is automatically added to the next budget cycle. For example, if we do an emergency appropriation in the amount of \$100,000.00, we start the next year \$100,000.00 in the hole; we have to make up \$100,000.00 just to get to zero.

Council President Perri believed it could be timed-out, but it has to be paid, it is a tax increase no matter what. We are all being devastated by this pandemic.

Councilman O'Neill felt we should follow what other schools are doing.

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Council President Perri stressed concerns with the Board and Superintendent, the school was not willing to change, we need to do our best to provide the service.

Councilman Dewees said the Mayor reached out to other communities about lending or borrowing guards, had we reached out to more than just Egg Harbor Township?

Council President Perri replied that Linwood's schedule is the same, the starting rate is less than their starting rate, towns not using guards are collecting unemployment. Crossing Guards have always been a courtesy.

Seeing no other new business, Council President Perri asked all to take out their agendas.

REVIEW OF REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Council President Perri reviewed the Regular Meeting agenda and made the assignments.

PUBLIC SESSION/ FIVE MINUTES PER SPEAKER

Council President Perri opened this portion of the meeting for any member of the public to speak on any topic; he noted a five-minute limit per speaker. He wanted to be clear that any comments made on social media by a Councilperson were not the opinions of City Council; statements were not part of the government.

By means of typing in the Zoom Chat, Deputy Clerk Campbell advised participants that the public comment portion of the meeting was now open. She asked that the public please state your name and address and said engagement will be limited to 5 minutes per speaker.

Via Zoom Chat – “John Kummings, 2326 Shepherd Dr. Northfield – I would like to comment on the Crossing Guard issue.”

Mr. Kummings asked to be unmuted so he could speak.

Deputy Clerk Campbell unmuted Mr. Kummings so he could speak.

John Kummings, 2326 Shepherd Drive - He has been a resident since 1992, he was a superintendent in another district. He understood this was a dramatically different schedule, nothing was convenient. He felt 30 days was a lot of time. He stated that the state statute does say “may”. He referred to discretion in case law, if city uses discretion and does not cover those times, the onus was on the City, the City was creating a dangerous situation, school needs to open, he felt it was a good plan. He referred to comments about school going remote, he felt that was not responsible.

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Mayor Chau explained that a letter was sent to Superintendent Bretones. The City was not involved. He met with Chief Newman, did what they could to address the issue, they asked the guards if they could man those shifts, we have been working on resolving this.

Via Zoom Chat – “Alicia Garry 202 Saint James Place Thank you for reopening 1st Street playground. Are there any sanitation measures being completed by the city on a daily schedule? If nothing has changed to allow reopening of 1st Street playground, besides recommending Governors Executive Order 163 which was ordered June 23rd and Governor allowed reopening of playgrounds July 2nd of which 1st Street playground reopened Aug 21st, what is preventing Birch Grove Playground from reopening? Why is there a orange Cone pushed in what appears to be some type of hole at 1st Street playground? The ground is sinking around it. This is a dangerous situation that has been there for at least a week. Why is area around it not fenced off? Any child could remove the cone and who knows the danger? In respect to the crossing guard situation if Council does not have the additional funds now, this is a mute point. Regardless whether School pays for portion and city the remainder, it still is the burden of the taxpayers. Perhaps council should work with all entities to make this the safest solution to reopen with the hybrid schedule at the best time frame. In the interim, provide crossing guards with their previous schedule one hour in morning, one hour in afternoon until there can be a compromise. Everyone must be flexible and adapt. No plan will accommodate everyone 100%. Parents will have to take on some of the responsibility of the safety of their children. Thank you Alicia garry 202 Saint James place”

Councilman Dewees replied that the Birch Grove Park Playground would be open tomorrow, he explained Public Works replaced the weed barrier and the mulch.

Councilman Utts replied that the First Street Playground was being sanitized once a week.

Councilman Dewees would address the cone issue with Superintendent of Public Works Vitale tomorrow.

Via Zoom Chat – “m online can I please speak Kerrie Marrone 114 W Rosedale Ave. I need to speak for Judith Otterburn Martinez who cannot be here”

Mrs. Marrone asked to be unmuted so she could speak.

Deputy Clerk Campbell unmuted Mrs. Marrone so she could speak.

Kerri Marrone, 114 W. Rosedale Avenue - Mrs. Marrone felt it didn't help to discuss how we got here, she wanted to address earlier comments. There were three reopening committees, it was a transparent process; anyone was welcome to be a part of the committee. Formal invitations did not go out but the process was transparent.

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The Council liaison was present at all board of education meetings. Parents on Council received emails as well. On July 27th the Superintendent presented a plan for an a/b schedule that would have students in school two days a week, the rest of the week would be virtual with the school closed on Friday. When the plan was proposed to people, they did not like the plan, residents wanted new plan. She was speaking as a parent tonight. The board of education did not approve the plan, the went back to the committees. She did not know why from anyone from town didn't jump on to the committee. We as the Board of Education make decision about crossing guards, we didn't know there was a union. On August 6th the plan was presented and approved for four and a half days; it increased instruction hours for students, the community wanted this. Seventy five percent of Northfield families are sending children for in person instruction.

Clerk Canesi informed Mrs. Marrone that she had exceeded her five minutes.

Mrs. Marrone continued, noting that the Road to Recovery was approved by the County Superintendent. It was unfortunate to find out the plan had a burden to the City she was hoping we could move forward and find a solution. She asked if she could speak on behalf of a neighbor who was unable to attend, the neighbor created a petition, she asked if she could read a statement.

Council President Perri replied yes.

Mrs. Marrone, on behalf of Julie Ottenburn, 2308 Merritt Drive – Mrs. Ottenburn and Patrick Carney created a petition that currently has 185 signatures. She read the following excerpt:

“The constituents and parents of children who attend Northfield Community School are deeply concerned that there may not be enough crossing guards for the upcoming school year.”

Mrs. Ottenburn wanted to know how the City came up with the numbers.

Council President Perri asked Mrs. Marrone if she was still reading from the petition? He replied that the numbers include payroll deduction and taxes. He advised her that we understand there is a petition to move forward. The school is on a fiscal schedule and the City on a calendar year. The numbers are fairly close and have been provided to superintendent.

Mrs. Marrone announced that parents had suggested reducing the number of guards.

Council President Perri replied that would will not happen until the chief looks at numbers, it was his discretion solely.

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Mrs. Marrone noted other suggestions that were in the petition: change traffic routes- have a one-way system during school hours, parents volunteer to be guards, train high school or middle school students to be guards, hire guards from districts which are going remote, use police officers as guards as they are already being paid. Parents and community members want to help, now that this information has come to light the Veterans Association has volunteered to help to ensure our children's safety. Patrick Carney is a United States Army Veteran from 2005-2013 and has volunteered to organize this effort in collaboration with the City.

Council President Perri answered her statements noting that job applications could be filed through the Police Department. Council President Perri thanked Mrs. Marrone for her statements.

Via Zoom Chat "2309 Merritt Drive - Patrick Carney not the Veterans Administration but local Veterans."

Mr. Carney's statement corrected a statement made by Mrs. Marrone from the petition.

Via Zoom Chat – "Carlos Martinez 2308 Merritt drive."

Mr. Martinez asked to be unmuted so he could speak.

Deputy Clerk Campbell unmuted Mr. Martinez so he could speak.

Carlos Martinez, 2308 Merritt Drive - Mr. Martinez announced that he was a 10-year resident – his wife wrote the petition. He attended several council meetings in the past. The taxes and money that the City collects for a surplus was redundant. The City spends money on the parks which are unnecessary for the citizens to use. It's an interesting situation, he found that there were areas going south toward Ridgewood and Central that don't need guards. We all sacrifice, some of us have not been paid, he felt the guards should take a cut in pay. He did not think it was hard to be a crossing guard, all can be trained online. Educators feel in class is the best for kids, kids were in jeopardy of learning, money was not an excuse. We all want to get back to normal. Do what is best.

Via Zoom Chat – "Melissa Finnegan 24 country club drive As a staff member in another district, the amount of work to create these restart plans is unfathomable. To say to just switch to virtual is rather demeaning. Each family in this district has also spent significant time trying to make this plan work for our families. At this time it should be noted that the timeframe for this alternate schedule is unknown. Thank you."

Deputy Clerk Campbell asked again if any zoom participants have questions or comments.

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Seeing no others wishing to speak, Council President Perri closed the public session.

At 7:47pm, on a motion of Councilman O'Neill, seconded by Councilman Smith, all members present were in favor of adjourning this meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Campbell, Deputy Municipal Clerk