# LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

*Regional School District #18*

*A Private School Experience* *in a Public School Setting*

**Regular Board of Education Meeting**
January 8, 2025

*Board Present:* Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

*Administration Present:* Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Sean Kennedy, Assistant Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

*Others Present:* Heather Saia, RETA Co-President; Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti, High School Student Representatives; ten community members from LOL

**I.** Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Jason Kemp. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II.** Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting and Executive Session of December 4, 2024

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to approve the minutes of Regular Meeting and Executive Session of December 4, 2024 and Special Meeting of December 18, 2024 as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

**III.** Visitors

1. CT Association of Public School Superintendents Student Recognition

Olivia Kelly and Simon Karpinski, seniors at LOLHS, were recognized as the recipients of the Superintendent's Award for 2024-2025. This award was based on their service, leadership and academic prowess. They were presented with framed certificates by Jim Wygonik, Principal of LOLHS, who spoke to the many accomplishments of these students.

2. Report from Student Representatives

Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

*At LOLHS*: December was a busy month at the high school. To start the month off, members of the Athletic Leadership Council and Student Council attended the annual CIAC Leadership Conference. National Honor Society put on its annual Berry Drive, which helped provide for families in need and give back to the community. The Student Council hosted PJ Day for the Kids to support the Connecticut Children's Hospital, which was a huge success, raising several hundred dollars in donations. The Mock Trial team won both of their first trials and will be advancing to the next round of competition. Band and chorus held their annual winter concerts, and winter sports are underway with lots of success for the Wildcats. The students and staff were visited by Kendrick Moore, the Assistant Director of Equity and Leadership for CAS-CIAC, who spoke about how they can impact others with kindness. To finish off the month, the Student Council sponsored a spirit week with holiday themes like festive sweater day and winter character day. For Wednesday's advisory, students got to pick winter activities to participate in such as watching a holiday movie, decorating cookies, or karaoke at the Winter Carnival. Before leaving for winter break, we had an assembly to listen to the band and chorus perform and participate in some fun games with both students and teachers, which was a big hit. Looking ahead to January, midterms are quickly approaching beginning next week.

*At LOLMS*: The middle school had a busy December. The chorus and band held their annual winter concerts to showcase their skills and hard work. The boys and girls basketball team opened their seasons with victories, and we look forward to a successful season ahead. A special thanks to the high school select singers who did a walking tour of the school while singing and performing. Prior to winter break, the middle school held a spirit week including a PJ Day fundraiser for childhood cancer, as well as a second pep rally of the year titled "Reindeer Games" where students showed their school spirit and energy. The 8th grade students are working diligently on their interdisciplinary projects that lead up to the national History Day competition. The middle school is holding the annual 8th grade showcase on Thursday evening , January 30, where each 8th grader gets to show off their culmination of research and presentation skills to their families and greater community. Additionally, we have a dozen students putting final touches on their Invention Convention projects.

*At Lyme Consolidated School and Mile Creek School*: Both Lyme and Mile Creek students participated in the CCMC pajama day fundraiser. We also enjoyed a visit from the select singers and hosted our own sing-a-longs as we readied everyone for winter break. At Lyme, fourth and fifth graders attended *The*

*Nutcracker* at The Garde Theater where everyone enjoyed a beautiful performance including two Lyme School students. All Lyme students helped to collect new and gently used blankets to donate to the Homeless Hospitality Center in New London and to the local animal shelter. At Mile Creek School, we have welcomed a new music teacher, Matthew Guevara. Construction has begun, and art and music instruction is being held in homeroom classes. The first edition of our school newspaper, the *Wildcat Times*, was also published.

*In the Preschool Program*: December was a busy month at Center School. We welcomed the high school and middle school select singers for a holiday concert, and our families visited for the annual gingerbread celebration. We also participated in the annual PJ Day for the Kids fundraiser. We all wore pajamas to school, and we raised nearly $300, which will be donated to the Connecticut Children's Hospital. In January we will be learning about winter, wild animals and snowmen. We will read *Animals in Winter* and *The Snowy Day*, and we will create a reenactment of the classic story *The Mitten* by Jan Brett. We will learn the letters M, N, O and P, and we will learn about the freeze/thaw cycle by studying things that freeze and melt. During good citizenship chats, we will discuss Martin Luther King, Jr., and talk about what our dreams are for the future. In math, we will practice writing numbers and learn the AAB pattern. In art, we will make our own versions of *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh. The color of the month is blue, and the shape of the month is the star.

3. Public Comment

Sheryl Shyloski, an Old Lyme resident with a child at Mile Creek School, voiced the following concerns:
- How information was conveyed when a bullet was found in a kindergarten classroom at Mile Creek School, specifically in how Mrs. Enoch did not choose to release a school-wide statement addressing (a.) details of what was found (bullet vs. shell casing) (b.) whether a person was identified that brought the bullet to school and (c.) if police were notified. An example of such a statement when a similar incident occurred at a Brookfield School can be found at https://www.newstimes.com/news/article/brookfield-whisconier-middle-school-bullet-found-18643954.php
- The bus situation, specifically: (a.) length of time for bus rides (b.) impact of lack of bus participation on parent pick up and traffic congestion related to parent pick up (c.) requested written findings from the "Bus Committee" and (d.) requested parent survey to better understand parent/student needs.
- The lack of after school programming relative to other districts and whether this can be further explored during the budget season. I have also spoken at the Parks and Rec Board meeting some time ago and followed up with individual communications with both Don Bugbee and Winnie Edmed.

**IV.** Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

**V.** Administrative Reports

1. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the January enrollment report which reflected a total of 1,281 students, one student less than last month this time.

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the January personnel report which reflected the following personnel changes:

| Vacancies | |
|---|---|
| Instructional Assistants | All Levels |
| Kindergarten Teacher (long-term substitute position) | Mile Creek School |
| Physics Teacher (long-term substitute position) | LOLHS |

| Appointments | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | **Position** | **Location** | **Effective Date** |
| Derrick Agsalud | Instructional Assistant | Mile Creek School | December 10, 2024 |
| **Resignations/Retirements** | | | |
| **Name** | **Position** | **Location** | **Effective Date** |
| Robert Fusari | Instructional Assistant | LOLHS | January 3, 2025 |
| Donna Wakim | School Psychologist | Center School | January 2025 |

Mr. Neviaser gave an update on the progress towards the district goals.

*Curriculum*

Utilize Panorama to track and monitor progress across all domains in order to make informed decisions about individual student programming.

**Still continuing to use Panorama with students.**

*Human Resources*

In alignment with state guidelines, implement the newly created Region 18 Educator Support Plan and gather feedback on the process to inform any plan revisions for year two.

**PDEC is developing a teacher survey to inform updates/clarifications for next year.**

*Community*

In order to streamline communication to our students and families, evaluate school and district processes to determine the most efficient and effective methods of disseminating information.

**Information guide reviewed by principals to ensure comprehensive coverage.**

*Facilities*

In preparation for construction to begin, develop strategies to minimize classroom disruption, adhere to the approved budget and design, and continue to maintain existing facilities via the five-year plan.

**Construction has begun at Mile Creek School.**

*Sustainability*

Maintain and expand "Green Teams" at each building to identify, address, and support student, staff and community-driven sustainability initiatives.

**Center: Preschool students continued to practice efficient hand washing techniques (turning off water while washing and limiting paper towel use) and recycling in classrooms and the cafeteria. Students also enjoyed playing in gingerbread houses, which were built from recycled and upcycled cardboard boxes.**

**Lyme School: Lyme School was awarded $23,753 through a Department of Agriculture grant called CT Grown for CT Kids.**

**Mile Creek School: The team is managing all of the plastic film recycling (they took this over from adults who were previously managing it). Also working with the Audubon to build a bluebird habitat around the campus.**

**LOLMS: Eco-Warriors watched *Season of the Osprey*, which was filmed at the mouth of the Connecticut River and includes footage at Griswold Point, an upcoming hiking destination. Students also explored educational apps on their devices to continue to support stewardship.**

**LOLHS: Students made posters for the Commons area to support "saving the silverware." An extra wash basin was added during lunches to provide additional location for collection. Students have reported it's helpful.**

*Board of Education*
Attend professional development opportunities offered through CABE including the CABE/CAPSS Convention and other statewide board of education activities.
**Mr. Lodge and Mr. Kemp attended the CABE Legislative Breakfast in December.**

2. Business Manager's Report
Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of December 31, 2024. Fluctuations of note: The district spending is on track with last year. Plant Operations and Maintenance is down year over year due to encumbrances, mostly in purchased service accounts, as well as limited spending on contingency this year versus about $54,000 at this point last year. Special Education overage is based upon student need and stipulated financial obligations.

| | 2024-2025 Received YTD |
|---|---|
| Town of Old Lyme | $12,802,170 |
| Town of Lyme | $2,888,212 |

Mrs. Shoemaker inquired about the Administrative Services line item, which is much higher than last time this year. Mrs. McCalla will look into this and report back at the next Board meeting.

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report, which reflected a net spending of $9,270 to address repairs associated with the water treatment plant.

**VI.** Educational Presentation

There was no educational presentation scheduled.

**VII.** Chairman & Committee Reports:

*a.* *Facilities*. Mr. Staab reported that this group met earlier in the evening when they toured Mile Creek School where construction has begun.

*b.* *Finance*. No report.

*c.* *Communications*. No report.

*d.* *Policy*. No report.

*e.* *LEARN*. Dr. Brown reported that LEARN will provide shared services for small districts who don't have the staff needed for various services. LEARN is also implementing individualized service rates for special education students.

*f.* *LOL Prevention Coalition*. No report.

*g.* *PreK-8 Building Committee*. Mrs. Fogliano provided the following update:

***PreK-8 Renovation Project Report January 2025***

*Construction work continues at LOLMS, Center School and Lyme Consolidated School. Between now and the end of the April break, Downes expects to have completed any abatement, OSHA cleaning, roughed in the ductwork, set up the electrical wiring, and set up the structural steel to accommodate the VAV* units that need to be installed in those three schools.*

*(*VAV units are devices that connect to air handling units and control temperature and air flow in each building zone. These units will ultimately be integrated and hooked up to our existing digital control systems.)*

*Downes will be reinstalling the acoustical tile grids and closing up as much of the ceilings as possible in all three schools in the near future, to make for less distraction in the instructional areas. At a later date, when the full HVAC systems are installed and tested, construction crews will then only need to access certain portions of the ceilings to complete the work.*

*Choices on building materials to be used on our security vestibules are now being made for each of these three buildings as well.*

*The Mile Creek portion of the renovation project began on December 23, 2024. Ceiling tiles are down, abatement has started, and temporary separation partitions have been installed, painted, and the doors fitted with locks.*

*The Mile Creek School Site Work bids are back. The base bid which allows us to start the excavation for the building addition will come to the BOE for approval on Wednesday, January 8, after being reviewed by the Building Committee on Monday, January 6. The base bid for excavation came in under budget, but*

*the separate alternate bids for paving came in high, primarily due to the cost of asphalt. Despite some savings from the removal of the fire sprinkler system, some fire walls and doors will need to be added back into the overall Mile Creek School budget.*

*Because of the re-design of the Fire Protection in Mile Creek, design documents must be redrawn before bidding (State approval came in mid-December). This particular bid (for sprinklering the addition and any other needed fire protection upgrades in the Mile Creek School) has been delayed going out as a result, and is slowing the next phase of construction at Mile Creek School. Delays are never good news but, fortunately, the December 2025 deadline for the State HVAC grants does not apply to Mile Creek, as it is an Alteration Project with a separate set of State grants.*

*Needless to say, the District administration and the Building Committee are closely following these developments and will hold additional meetings as needed to expedite construction where we can. Similarly, we will be making a recommendation to the full BOE about the paving portion of the Mile Creek project after thorough review of our options.*

*Downes Construction will hold a meeting for interested parents and Mile Creek School property abutters later in January to set expectations for the next phase of Mile Creek School construction, as they have with the staff in every building.*

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Susan Fogliano*
*Building Committee Chair*

Discussion followed on the parking issues (during drop-off and pickup times) currently experienced at Mile Creek School. It has been determined that it will cost $2.5 million to improve the parking situation, and the Building Committee is monitoring where they will end up budget-wise to see if they have sufficient monies for these improvements. This will not preclude doing this as a capital project outside of this project.

Mr. Staab, referring to a referendum fact sheet, recommended a list of project improvements they are doing and not doing (based on what was voted on at referendum) be compiled and communicated to the community. There was consensus that this paving improvement is a high priority and much needed at Mile Creek School. The committee is monitoring the monies closely.

**VIII.** New Business

1. Board of Ed Meeting Schedule for 2025-2026

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the regular meeting schedule for the Board of Ed for the school year 2025-2026. He explained that this requires Board action so that it can be filed with the town clerks in Lyme and Old Lyme by the January 31 deadline.

MOTION: Mrs. Fogliano made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lowry, to approve the 2025-2026 Board of Education meeting schedule as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

2. Tuition Student Request for PK-4 Program

MOTION: Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. James, to approve the tuition student request for the PreK-4 program as presented contingent on enrollment numbers.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

3. Bus Contract

Mr. Neviaser reported on the findings of the Bus Committee which was charged with studying the upcoming bus contract. Mr. Neviaser reported on a meeting with representatives from M&J Transportation where they posed a concept to develop a bus contract with the inclusion of performance guarantees (examples of penalties that could be cited: a manager who is also a driver; insufficient number of drivers; buses not timely a certain amount of days, etc.). M&J representatives were amenable to this contract concept with performance guarantees.

Mr. Neviaser indicated that the new bus contract would have an increase in cost, noting that there is always the risk of higher bids should they go out to bid. The decision to be made is whether to go out to bid or negotiate with the current vendor, M&J Bus. Mr. Neviaser noted that small districts don't normally receive many transportation bids, and the numbers M&J were presenting were not necessarily what they would bid should they go out to bid. Mr. Neviaser discussed the risk of going out to bid and getting only one bid with a significant increase in costs. Mr. Neviaser discussed the challenges any bus company will face, e.g., lack of drivers, routes covering a lot of geography, etc. Mr. Neviaser noted that an advantage of M&J included direct contact with the owner of the company.

Mrs. McCalla also addressed the advantage of including performance guarantees in the RFP; a significant one would include the routes being published by a deadline of August 15. She also discussed some advantages of staying with M&J such as the drivers' commitment to M&J and this community.

Mr. Neviaser also reported that their tracking of student bus rides has found that the rides are not as extreme (long) as voiced and are within the contract limit (hour maximum). It was noted that the majority of bus complaints are from Mile Creek School parents where a significant amount are driving their students to and from school each day.

Discussion continued on issues such as traffic at Mile Creek School, why students are not riding the bus, and whether the parents had input on M&J's performance. There was consensus to send out a parent bus transportation survey the following week before any decision is made regarding the bus contract.

4. PK-8 Building Committee Recommendations

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the bid results and subsequent scope review (sitework) of the low bidders by Downes Construction Company, which were approved by the PK-8 Building Committee at their meeting on January 6, 2025. This information is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

MOTION: Mr. Lodge made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lowry, to approve the bid for the Mile Creek School project as presented in the letter of authorization dated January 6, 2025.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

**IX.** Old Business

There was no old business to report.

**X.** Executive Session

Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing the Superintendent's mid-year review and pending claims and litigation. Mr. Neviaser was invited to attend the executive session.

**XI.** Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Shoemaker and a second by Mrs. Dean-Frazier.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

DOWNES CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

January 6th 2025

**Mr. Ian Neviaser**
**Superintendent of Schools**
**Region 18 Mile Creek School Phase 2**
**tel: 860.434.7238**
**neviaseri@region18.org**

**Project:** **REGION 18 MILE CREEK SCHOOL**
**205 Mile Creek Road Old Lyme, CT**

**Re:** **Letter of Authorization #2 (LOA) for Sitework Bid taken on 12/19/2024**

Based on the attached bid results and subsequent scope review with the apparent low bidder(s), Downes Construction Company, LLC recommends the contract for the above referenced Bid Package be awarded to:

| Bid Package | Subcontractor Name & Address | Contract Sum |
|---|---|---|
| **BP#31.1 Sitework** | **Colossale Siteworks Corporation**<br>**510 Christian Lane**<br>**Berlin, CT** | **One Million Six Hundred Thirty Three Thousand Eight Hundred Ten Dollars and No Cents**<br>**.....$1,633,810.00** |

Major notes on recommendation:

*None*

We believe that the above contractor(s) are the lowest responsible qualified bidder for the bid packages listed and request your agreement to issue contracts. This value will be included in our future GMP Amendment #2. By signing this Approval Letter, Regional School District #18 and the Building Committee is authorizing Downes Construction Company, LLC to commence construction phase 2 services and agrees to compensate Downes Construction Company, LLC for this work as a component of GMP Amendment #2 (Phase 2 Construction and General Conditions and Phase) to our contract. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
*Downes Construction Company, LLC*

Ben Stoner
Project Manager

Copy to: File; Budget Update Sheet Attached

I hereby authorize Downes Construction to proceed with construction in accordance with our agreement.

**Agreed by:**
**Regional School District #18**

(Signature)

(Printed name and title)

(Date)

**Agreed by:**

(Signature)

(Printed name and title)

(Date)

*Please return one (1) signed copy of this letter indicating your approvals of the above*