

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of Plymouth Public Schools is to challenge, inspire, and prepare all students for success in an ever-changing and complex world.

PLYMOUTH BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
TERRYVILLE HIGH SCHOOL CAFETERIA
33 NORTH HARWINTON AVENUE
TERRYVILLE, CT 06786

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

MINUTES

Present: Mrs. Kulesa, Mr. Showers, Mrs. Tilton, Mr. Foote
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani, Mr. Perugino and Mr. Zbuska

Virtual: Mrs. Lucian

Absent: Mr. Seaman

Also Present: Mr. Falcone, Superintendent, Mrs. Melillo, Assistant Superintendent,
Mrs. Mozak-Pezza, Director of Curriculum & Instruction and Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

1. Call to Order and Pledge to the Flag

Mrs. Kulesa Chair called the Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education of February 12, 2025, to order 7 p.m. The group joined in the Pledge to the Flag.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion Mr. Foote, second Mr. Showers, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

3. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve the following minutes:

(a) The minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Retreat) of the Plymouth Board of Education of January 15, 2025. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mrs. Tilton, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions (**Mr. Foote abstains**) motion carries.

AND

(b) The minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education of January 15, 2025. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Perugino, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions (**Mr. Foote abstains**) motion carries.

AND

(c) The minutes of the Special Board of Education Meeting (Budget Workshop #1 for the 2025 – 2026 Budget of January 23, 2025. Motion Mr. Showers, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions (**Mr. Zbuska abstains**) motion carries.

AND

(d) The minutes of the Special Board Subcommittee Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education – Expulsion Hearing of January 30, 2025. Motion Mr. Perugino, second Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

2025 FEB 25 AM 9:36

PLYMOUTH, CT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
RECEIVED FOR RECORD

4. **Student Representatives**

Fallon Roth-Perreault

* Mid-Winter Conference – The Leo Club attended the Mid-Winter Conference on Saturday at the Wyndham Conference Center in Southbury.

* Winter Sports – The season is coming to an end. All sports teams honored their seniors at a winter pep rally on February 7th. Friday, February 7th was the Indoor Track Teams' final meet, the Berkshire League Championships. The Wrestling Team will have their League Tournament on February 15th at Derby High School. Cheer and Basketball Teams are also coming to the end of their season.

* Library Media Center – The Student Council brought to Mr. Hult's attention the lack of use of the Library Media Center.

Ava Gwizd

* Variety Show – The Senior Class is hosting a Variety Show on March 7th at 6 p.m. in the Terryville High School Auditorium. Teachers, staff, and students will all be showcasing their talents and unique skills. Proceeds from the event will go to the Terryville High School Angel Fund.

* Cafeteria Tables – Staff and students thanked everyone, especially Mr. Tencza, for the furniture that is now correct and is functional in height.

5. **Public Comment**

Prior to beginning of public comment, Mrs. Kulesa stated the following: Those wishing to speak will come up to the podium, and complete the information requested on the sign-up sheet. The speaker will then orally state his/her name and address. Time will begin once you begin speaking. There is a 3-minute time limit. Mrs. Tilton will remind you when time is up for you to wrap up your last thoughts.

Just as a reminder, this is public comment and not public question and answer. No questions will be answered at this time. If an answer is required, Mr. Falcone or a member of the Administrative Team will reach out to you at some point.

(a) In-person public comment (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Summary: The following individuals expressed concerns regarding eliminating magnet school transportation: the negative impact emotionally and academically, trauma, and routine change on students, and hardship for parents. It was suggested the Board reconsider and make the proper decision based on facts and not on feelings. Is this about the Budget or rather discouraging people from seeking education elsewhere?

Lena Warner, student, 95 Allen Street; Jessica Corrigan, student, 6 Helen Road;
Emil Danailon, 373 South Street; Diane Corrigan, 6 Helen Road; Lisa Briotti, 95 Allen
Street; Shannon Mendoza, 118 Ridge Road; Keven Therrien, 13 Bernice Avenue; and
Melanie Church, 328 Main Street

Summary: The following individuals commented on the negative effect of keeping magnet school transportation: By keeping magnet school transportation, we would be cutting programs and teachers which would affect students attending Terryville schools. The budget is already very limited. Priority for the budget is teachers and programs. Unfortunately, as a parent, you chose to send your child to a magnet school. If bussing is eliminated, and you choose to keep your child in the magnet school, it now becomes the parent's responsibility to transport the child. Some way, somehow as a parent will need to figure out a way and make it work.

Rebecca Allen, 17 Meghan Boulevard and Nicole Corry, 75 East Plymouth Road

(b) Remote public comment (please go to www.plymouth.k12.ct.us for instructions on how to participate) - None

6. **Superintendent's Update**

* Recipients of this year's Terryville High School Art Award from the Connecticut Association of Schools: Bailey King and Cassandra Fortunato.

* Recipients of this year's CIAC Scholar-Athlete Award: Megan Hudson and Maya Coviello

All four students will receive their awards at this spring's Aqua Turf Award Banquets.

* At the end of the first semester, the high school held a Career Symposium for students in the Career Center Classes. This class helps to prepare all students for life after high school. The goal, when students walk across the stage at graduation, their future plans are known to us.

* Congratulations to the eleven Terryville High School students who will be inducted into the National Honor Society in February.

* At the end of January, Eli Terry Jr. Middle School PTA held its first Winter Snowball Dance with over half of the student population in attendance.

* On February 27th, the Eli Terry Jr. Faculty and Staff will take on the 8th Grade in the Annual Student vs Staff Basketball Game.

* The Student Council at Harry S. Fisher Elementary School held two events to support two great organizations. (a) a Color War Competition – donations went to support the Terryville Lions Fuel Fund and (b) Students voted for their favor pet (dog or cat) in their Paws for a Cause Fundraiser and donations that were collected went to support the Animal Rescue Foundation.

* Plymouth Center School – Mrs. Loveland is working with the PTA to kick off their reading incentive program. (a) Click-Clack-Moo – students will sell books for the author to sign and will be completing various projects related to the book series. The author, Doreen Cro-Nin, will attend a school assembly and will bring her friend, Sprinkle, a pig that is famous and was in a movie with Steve Martin, Selena Gomez and Martin Short. If the children reach their reading incentive goal, Mrs. Loveland will kiss the famous pig in front of the entire school at the assembly.

* Just as a reminder, the school district will be closed for Winter Break from Monday, February 17th through Friday, February 21st.

7. **New Business**

Summary of Presentation by Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

Budget Breakdown with Possible Additions

Mr. Falcone's Original Budget Proposal - \$27,645,988

* Increase to the 2024 – 2025 budget of \$870,696 (3.25%)

Board of Education Additions (budget workshop) - \$27,934,279

* Positions added Back:

- Grade 1 Teacher Salary = \$68,218
- Math Interventionist Salary = \$81,560
- Custodial/Maintenance Salary = \$69,805
- Associated Benefits = \$68,708

* Increase to the 2024 - 2025 budget of \$1,158,987 (4.33%)

* Total additional funds added to the original proposed budget - \$288,291

* 4.2% - original estimate at budget workshop/
Adjusted based on associated benefits*

If Magnet School Transportation was added - \$28,046,904

* Increase to the 2024 – 2025 budget of \$1,271,612 (4.75%)

* Total funds added for magnet school transportation \$112,625
(\$91,000 reimbursement included)

* Total additional funds added to the original proposed budget
\$400,916

Some important dates to remember:

March 6, 2025 – Board of Education Budget Presentation to the Plymouth Board of Finance

April 21, 2025 – Tri Board Meeting with the Town Council, Board of Finance and the
Plymouth Board of Education

(a) Adoption of the 2025 – 2026 Plymouth Board of Education Budget and Vote

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adopt the Plymouth Board of Education Budget for 2025 – 2026 as presented to the Board with an increase of \$1,158,987 or 4.33% over last year's 2024 - 2025 budget.

Motion Mr. Perugino, second Mr. Foote, any discussion,

Summary of Board Discussion

Mrs. Tilton – Being an educator herself, she struggles with various emotions. Torn. Does not have the answers. The town just does not have the funds. There is not much more the Board can cut.

Mr. Perugino – Year after year, the same problem exists. The same individuals attend the Board's presentation to the Board of Finance. His question, why is there not more support?

Mrs. Kulesa – She feels the presentation of a 4.33% budget will not be approved. Therefore, the Board will be presented with the task of making further cuts. The public needs to remember, the Board of Finance is the first step followed by the Town Council. Unfortunately, The Board of Education does not have the final say as to the amount of money they will receive for the budget. That being the case, if the Board must reduce the budget, they will have no alternative but to once again remove those positions that were reinstated in the budget.

Mr. Showers – There was a \$92,000 cut from the State of Connecticut this year. Last year the cut was \$104,000. We just do not have the money.

Mr. Falcone – In reality, the Board does not control the money in its Budget. When a cut is made it is with people and these individuals are the most important resources to the children in the Plymouth Public Schools. In no way is he trying to dissuade children from attending a school elsewhere if they choose. However, it should not and cannot be at the expense of the students who attend Plymouth Public Schools. As Superintendent, Mr. Falcone was hired to advocate for these students.

The assumption is that the 4.33% Board of Education requested budget will not pass. So, everything which was added back into the budget will most likely be cut. It does not make sense to put back \$112,000 for magnet school transportation when in reality 1 ½ - 2 teachers will need to be cut. Therefore, Mr. Falcone could not recommend the Board to add back the \$112,000 to the budget. It would not be fair to students in the Plymouth Public Schools. It would not be fair for magnet school students to retain teachers and programs. While students in the Plymouth Public Schools will lose teachers, and others who help our students along with programs. By not adding magnet school transportation, the district would cut eleven positions rather than thirteen. Ultimately, consideration should be given to positions being eliminated before adding in magnet school

transportation. The district cannot afford magnet school transportation. To add, Thomaston has chosen to eliminate magnet school transportation from their budget.

Undoubtedly, the Board faces challenging and difficult decisions. To be fair, so does the Town Council in that everyone needs more money, even the Town.

Therefore, Mr. Falcone's recommendation is for the Board to adopt the Budget, as presented, knowing, undoubtedly, there will be more cuts forthcoming.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – A large portion of the budget is contractual obligations. The teachers, staff, etc. are very unpaid. There are teachers who can go to other districts and make \$10,000 - \$20,000 more than in Plymouth. It would not be fair to ask staff to take a pay cut to save something else. Some of her children attended Plymouth Public Schools and others attended magnet schools. Therefore, she is aware of what opportunities other schools have.

Mrs. Kulesa – Over the past 20 years, she has seen several Board Members that chose to send their children to different schools. Therefore, as a Board, we fully encourage and do not discourage school choice.

Mrs. Lucian – Her children have also attended magnet schools. She transported her children.

Mr. Perugino – He understands the parents who attended the meeting tonight. His children did not attend Plymouth Public Schools. Instead, they attended private schools and magnet schools. This was his choice as a parent. He would carpool, he and his wife worked it out and drove their children to school when necessary.

The following roll call vote was made:

ROLL CALL VOTE:

	Yes	No	Abstained
Mr. Showers	X		
Mrs. Tilton	X		
Mr. Foote	X		
Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani	X		
Mr. Perugino	X		
Mr. Zbuska	X		
Mrs. Lucian	X		

VOTE Yes 7 No 0 motion carries

(b) Out-of-the-State Field Trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania

MOTION: To entertain a motion to approve an out-of-state field trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania for Terryville High School band and chorus students in grades 9 – 12 on May 2-4, 2025.

Motion Mrs. Lucian, second Mr. Foote, any discussion, all in favor, any opposed, any abstentions, motion carries.

8. **Business Manager's Report and Personnel Report**

(a) Business Manager's Report – Mr. Tencza, Business Manager

- Included in the packet are the following - Accounts by Facilities Report for January and 7 different submissions.
 - (1 & 2) Business Office Activity Report & Negative Balance Explanations
 - (3) Board of Education Summary through January 31, 2025
 - (4) Monthly Budget Report, January 31, 2025
 - (5) Cumulative Board of Education Budget Expenditures % by Month, January 2024-2025
 - (6) Food Services Financial Performance Year-to-Date (July 1, 2024, through January 31, 2025)
 - (7) Capital Improvement Plan 2024 – 2033 Plymouth Public Schools (updated January 31, 2025)
- The Accounts by Facilities Report will be forwarded to the Town of Plymouth Board of Finance

(b) Personnel Report – Mr. Falcone, Superintendent

Mr. Falcone mentioned the recent hire of an evening security individual at Terryville High School.

9. **Public Comment**

(a) In-person public comment (limited to 3-minutes per speaker)

Some of the comments with respect to magnet school transportation were expressed by the individuals listed below: Addressing the number of children on the buses and the cost; if the Board is cutting magnet school transportation, cut all of the out of town school transportation, why are the magnet schools being targeted; look into the possibility of lowering the costs of transportation with bus company; disappointed the Board did not send cutting magnet school transportation forward to the Town Council; disappointment in Mr. Falcone in listening to him speak, felt he did not consider the children, he is not concerned about them, he only cares about the children in that building, the children that attend the magnet schools live in Town and are part of the community, let these parents and children be part of the community, no communication, find a way to include these magnet school parents; parents will find a way to transport their child/children; it was felt that these parents and children are treated as second hand citizens and are not valued; and give the Town Council a chance. Go to the March and April meetings and make your voices heard, urged the Board to come together with options for these parents, whether it be fundraising or paying for the buses on a quarterly basis and let these parents be heard. We live in a distressed community. We need changes.

Diane Corrigan, 6 Helen Road; Lisa Briotti, 95 Allen Street; Emil Danailon, 373 South Street; Alethe Therrien, 13 Bernice Avenue; Jessica Corrigan, 95 Allen Street, Lisa Warner, 95 Allen Street; Robin Palmer Zagurski, 13 Holt Street, 78, and Melanie Church, 328 Main Street

(b) Remote public comment (please go to www.plymouth.k12.ct.us for instructions on how to participate)

To summarize: Would like the Board to reconsider cutting the magnet school transportation from the budget. Seventy-five students utilize transportation on a daily basis to and from school. Is it necessary to have that many buses for the number of students attending the magnet schools? Could we have less buses? These students choose to attend a magnet school for a variety of reasons. To take away transportation would be detrimental for most, if not, all of these students. Bring them back to school in Terryville, due to transportation, would be removing them from an environment they know to something foreign. Parents rely heavily on transportation. Question the need for a security guard and a new pick-up truck.

Jim Hill, Jr., 12 Burr Road

10. Committee Reports – Policy Subcommittee – Mrs. Tilton, Chair

The Policy Committee met prior to the Regular Board Meeting. The committee discussed the following: A Proposed Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence.

The outcome of that discussion was as follows:

(a) The committee agreed to bring forth a Proposed Policy on the Use of Artificial Intelligence to the full Board for a first read. A copy of the Policy was placed at each Board Members seat.

11. Board Liaison Reports

Mr. Perugino/Mrs. Tilton -- Harry S. Fisher Elementary School

3/1 Wolf Pack Hockey Game (students in chorus grades 4 & 5 will perform at half-time)
Star Wars Night

3/26 Northern Nights Theme

5/11-17 IGA Roundup

3/17 Book Fair and Parent/Teacher Conferences

2/13/ Glow Fun Run

Yearbooks are now available for purchase.

Mr. Zbuska -- Plymouth Center School

2/10-14 Spring Bookfair

2/28 Bingo Night (RSVP if you would like to attend using on-line Link Tree, you may also use this link to preorder your pizza)

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani -- Eli Terry Jr. Middle School

2/26 PTA Meeting, 7 p.m. ETJMs Library or get the link to participate online

2/27 8th grade Students vs Faculty and Staff Basketball Game

Last games for Boys' and Girls' Basketball

Mr. Foote -- Terryville High School

1/15 Meeting

3/15 Designer Bag Bingo

Lynam Orchard Pie Fundraiser was a success.

IGA Roundup

April – Grad signs ready

May – Mother's Day Flower Sale

Mrs. Tilton -- EdAdvance

February Meeting Cancelled

5/7 – 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Day on the Hill – please contact her if you would like to attend.

12. Board Comments

Mrs. Tilton – Thanked everyone who attended the meeting. Hopefully, we can find a way to work together to solve problems.

Mr. Zbuska – It would be nice to see some of the town's people attend the Board of Finance Meeting.

Mr. Perugino – It was nice to see everyone here at the meeting to express their opinions. Was curious as to why the Board does not receive newsletters from WAMS, Maloney and Rotella as they were received in the past. He enjoyed reading those newsletters. Possible parents whose children attend these schools can inquire from their PTA's about sharing their newsletters with the Board.

Mrs. Candrea-Florenciani – To Summarize: Some time ago, she asked the Town Council, when they were getting ready to set the budget, about the SRO position and if they were giving the police department extra money to restore this position. However, the Town Council cannot tell the police department how to spend the money. More money could be given to the Board than the amount proposed. With that being said, the public may attend the Board of Finance and Town Council Meetings to voice their concerns. Tonight's meeting is not the last stop. Everyone is open to attend the Town Meetings.

Mrs. Lucian – Thanked the parents and students for their comments.

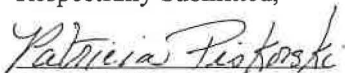
Mrs. Kulesa – To Summarize: Also thanked everyone for speaking at the meeting. Whether we agree or not, the Board wants to hear from the public. This meeting is not the last stop. The Board of Finance and the Town Council could choose to add more money to the Board of Education's Budget if they choose to do so. Once again, just like the Police Department, this does not guarantee the Board would use the money for the topic during public comment. Even though the Board of Finance and the Town Council may add money to the Board's budget, the Board is still in control. Again, to the public, attend those meetings and use your voice.

13. Next Board Meeting –The next Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Education is on Wednesday March 12, 2025, at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria at Terryville High School.

14. Adjournment

MOTION: To entertain a motion to adjourn at 8:41p.m. Motion Mr. Showers, second, Mrs. Lucian all in favor, motion carries.

Respectfully Submitted,



Patricia Piskorski

Recording Secretary

For the Plymouth Board of Education