



SCHOOL COMMITTEE

BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES

February 4, 2025

Meeting:	School Committee
Date:	February 4, 2025
Location:	Essex Elementary Cafeteria
Attendees:	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Michelle Cresta, Director of Finance & Operations Chris Reed, Chairperson John Binieris Jake Foster Kate Koch-Sundquist, Vice-Chair Anna Mitchell Erica Spencer Theresa Whitman
Absent:	
Guests:	
Recorded by:	Maria Schmidt
Link to Reports and Presentations	https://www.mersd.org/domain/785

A. Call to Order of – Mr. Reed called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

B. Business Meeting Open Session

1) Consent Agenda –

a. Acceptance of Warrants: AP Vouchers 1045-1049 and payroll warrant for January 30, 2025

b. Minutes for approval: January 21, 2025

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*Ms. Spencer moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Ms. Koch-Sundquist seconded the motion.
The motion passed unanimously.*

2) Chairperson’s Report – Mr. Reed. No Report

3) Sub-Committee Reports

- **Elementary Facilities/MSBC Sub-Committee** (John Binieris/Theresa Whitman) – No Report
- **Finance Committee** (Jake Foster/Anna Mitchell) – No Report
- **Policy/Communication Sub-Committee** (Kate Koch-Sundquist/Erica Spencer/Theresa Whitman) – No report
- **Negotiation Team Sub-Committee** (Kate Koch-Sundquist/Chris Reed) – No Report

4) Public Comment (Guidelines for public comment can be found in sections BEDH and BEDH-E of the School Committee policy manual) –

Jennifer Coleman Michaud, speaking for John Mullady, MERHS Social Studies Teacher. Mr. Mullady’s statement spoke to the value of the Media Literacy and Civic Action course as a graduation requirement. Mr. Mullady has taught a course on the Holocaust and seen the high amount of misinformation to which students are exposed. Fortunately, the course offers an opportunity for natural conversations about reliable sources. Mr. Mullady stressed the difficulty in gleaning truth from the sea of misinformation with which students are overwhelmed and said that the educational system is behind in changing to meet the technical world. The media literacy course, in its second year, is starting to dent the important task of helping students navigate the onslaught of the information stream. Teachers are organically able to support each other’s curriculum and teach students a framework for crafting arguments. Mr. Mullady characterized the course as meeting both state and moral obligations.

Lauren DuBois, MERHS Social Studies Department Head. Comment provided by Ms. DuBois: “My name is Lauren DuBois, and I am in my 21st year of teaching Social Studies at Manchester Essex. I am the Chair of the Social Studies Department at the Middle/High School, and I am here to express my opposition to the proposal to change the graduation requirement for our Media Literacy and Civic Action course. Currently students are required to take Medial Literacy and Civic Action in order to complete the state required Civic Action project in High School. It has been proposed that we combine this Media Literacy course and our computer science courses into a combined Digital Literacy/Technology Requirement. Media literacy and computer programming are two very different skill sets, and though both are important in modern society, they should not be combined into one graduation requirement.

Media literacy is described as a skill set that promotes critical engagement with messages produced by the media. Renee Hobbs, Professor of Communication Studies at the Harrington School of Communication and Media at the University of Rhode Island and founder of the

Media Education Lab, says media literacy is the “active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.” (Hobbs & Jensen, 2009) The U.S. National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) defines media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication.”

Media Literacy and Civic Action is a course that the Social Studies Department very strongly believes to be vital to the education of our students. The media literacy component is an opportunity for them to examine how misinformation, disinformation, and Artificial Intelligence are shaping the world around them. The Civic Action Project gives them a blueprint for taking action and staying involved in their communities. Being an engaged citizen means advocating for issues that are important to you. Learning that barriers exist and success is not guaranteed, students can find value in the process beyond the classroom as problem solvers with resilience. We worked hard to get this course as a graduation requirement approved by the school committee two years ago because we strongly believed in it then and its content and skills have only become more important. The members of the Social Studies Department had the amazing opportunity to attend the National Council for the Social Studies annual conference in November. This is an organization and a conference that brings together the leading figures and resources in our discipline. This year, the majority of sessions were focused on media literacy and/or civic action. They are among the most important issues in our discipline right now. When we created this course, we were solving two significant problems, how to make sure every student in our school had education in media literacy and the opportunity to complete a state required civic action project in high school. Not requiring the course is going to recreate the problem of when students will complete this project and there is no plan in place as to how to solve it. I believe we need time to make that plan before we decide this change is needed. This course does not need to be restricted to 9th graders. It was designed to partner in the schedule with Physical Education making this course compatible with Freshmen and Sophomore schedules.

Our schedule allows student to take 35 credits per year, totaling 140 credits over their high school career. 110 credits are currently required for graduation.

If we add 2.5 credits in Visual and Performing Arts AND Technology for an additional 5 credits (which I fully support), we still only add up to 97.5 required credits. Why not consider having all three 2.5 credit requirements in our Program of Studies.

Please consider maintaining the current requirement of Media Literacy and Civic Action while also adding the Visual and Performing Art and Technology as separate requirements.”

Jennifer Coleman Michaud, MERHS Social Studies Teacher. Comments provided by Ms. Michaud: “My name is Jennifer Coleman Michaud and I am a teacher in the high school Social Studies department. This is my 15th year as a teacher in the district. I am here tonight to express my concerns about removing the Media Literacy and Civic Action class as a graduation requirement as proposed at your previous meeting on January 21st.

The Media Literacy and Civic Action course has two main components to it, a media literacy curriculum and the completion of a civic action project identified in Chapter 296 of the Acts of

2018 and as outlined in Massachusetts General Laws Part I Title XII Chapter 71 Section 2. First, I will address Media Literacy.

Media literacy is increasingly becoming one of the most important practices in the United States. In our world of for-profit media, ad sponsored content, and the growing reach of social media influencers, Americans need to be able to discern what is fact and what is fiction. The mission of American media conglomerates is not to provide quality information, but to generate a large audience in order to sell advertisements and increase their revenue. This incentivizes salacious, sensational and inaccurate headlines and stories in order to get those clicks and viewers. Social media content creators aim for viewers in order to attract brand partnerships to expand their own wealth and power. There is no concern for truth, just whatever content can create the most views and potentially go viral. Michelle Amazeen, associate dean for research at Boston University's College of Communication in an article published on January 30, 2024, states that, "just when we need trusted information more than ever, our media ecosystem is poised for a tsunami of deliberately false content intended to mislead, supercharged by the use of generative artificial intelligence. Most... people, we found, understand they need to have new skills to deal with it." It is our responsibility as educators to provide students these skills to navigate the digital content they are exposed to every day. In a report published by Common Sense Media in 2022, teenagers spend an average of 8 hours and 39 minutes per day on screens solely for entertainment purposes. This includes watching ad supported videos on YouTube and browsing social media sites consuming content made by the average American. Teenagers, now more than ever, need to be taught the skills to navigate the vast expanse of content and information the internet pushes at them daily and to discriminate truth from opinion, or at worst outright lies.

A high school Civic Action project became a state requirement in 2018. Until 2023, we as a department attempted to implement the project at the end of junior year. However, it was often a rushed, and less meaningful experience than desired. Social Studies Department Chair Lauren DuBois and former principal Patricia Puglisi created a solution to the civic action project "problem" by combining the project with media literacy education into the course we are here to discuss tonight. This act of creative problem solving created a place for a media literacy curriculum and dedicated space for the civic action project where students have an entire quarter to engage in the six stages of action civics, which conclude with the students taking action and reflecting on their experiences. By making this course a graduation requirement, we fulfill our duty under state law and provide a media literacy curriculum to all incoming high school students, setting ourselves apart from other districts.

Both media literacy and civic action teach, develop, and promote skills necessary to be a citizen in the 21st century world. These skills include

- Critical thinking – Analyzing media messages requires students to assess the motives behind content, evaluate sources, and understand context. These skills do not only apply to digital sources, but print sources as well. Students are encouraged to examine diverse points of view from multiple perspectives. This encourages students to be the ones asking questions and not solely answering the questions teachers ask them. Earlier this year I got called out by 10th grade students, the first "graduates" of the media literacy and civic action class, asking me why we were only reading a source expressing George Washington's opinion and not including sources from diverse perspectives, proof

students are internalizing the skills of the course and have the ability to apply them to new situations.

Civic action projects also help to develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Students work to identify school and community issues they would like to address and attempt to come up with practical, creative solutions to these problems.

- Enhanced communication abilities – Media literacy helps students become more effective in both consuming and producing content, empowering them to communicate effectively in today’s digital world. The Civic action project involves presenting ideas to different audiences, whether through presentations, surveys, interview requests or other forms of communication, improving written and verbal communication skills. Many civic action projects involve advocating for a cause, so students learn how to make compelling arguments using evidence and advocate effectively for social, political, or environmental change. You had the pleasure of experiencing one of these presentations last year when two 9th grade students proposed for your approval a school comfort dog.
- Leadership, Collaboration, and Teamwork: Students often take on leadership roles within their projects, learning how to guide and motivate their peers while making important decisions. Planning, organizing, and executing a civic action project requires time management, task delegation, and the ability to adapt to challenges that arise, including working with others. Collaboration helps students build teamwork and communication skills by working with classmates, community leaders, or other outside organizations.
- Research Skills: Students typically need to research community issues, policies, or potential solutions in order to identify a project topic, which helps them hone their ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information.
- Civic Responsibility and Engagement, Social/Cultural Awareness and Empathy: By completing a civic action project students develop a deeper understanding of their roles in society, how civic participation works, and how they can create positive change within their communities. Engaging with real-world issues often deepens students' empathy for others and raises their awareness of societal problems, encouraging a greater sense of social responsibility and by addressing issues affecting diverse groups. As a result of the project, students often gain a better understanding of the various social, cultural, and economic contexts of the world in which they live.

Most importantly, the civic action project is a **student-centered authentic assessment** based on individual student interests, desires and goals. Unfortunately, the opportunity for students to develop and practice this lengthy list of skills and roles promoted by both the project and media literacy instruction is now at risk due to the proposition of removing the Media Literacy and Civic Action course as a stand-alone graduation requirement.

Manchester Essex Regional School District states its mission is “to provide a high quality, comprehensive, student-centered, educational experience that prepares [students] for a post-secondary educational or service experience, a career, and life as an engaged member of society.”

The MERSD Vision of the Graduate identifies the skills and dispositions MERHS graduates will possess as a result of their K-12 education. Every skill and role promoted by the Media Literacy and Civic Action Course listed previously is featured in the Vision of the Graduate. These include:

Empathetic Global Citizen: A person who understands and accepts different cultures and beliefs and the importance of acting as a responsible citizen.

Responsible Collaborator: A person who acknowledges and respects the perspective of others, demonstrates active and equitable participation in group settings, seeks appropriate resources to carry out responsibility as part of a group, can identify and work towards a common goal, and who advocates for ideas while resolving conflict within a group.

Critical Thinker: A person who recognizes and questions implicit/explicit bias; Evaluates ideas, information, and sources for validity, relevance, and impact; reasons and weighs evidence from multiple perspectives to reach conclusions, recognizes patterns and makes inferences, draws appropriate conclusions and is one who considers multiple perspectives.

Effective Communicator: A person who is mindful of audience interpretation, demonstrates responsible digital communication, expresses ideas in a purposeful and confident manner both verbally and in writing, writes and speaks clearly for a variety of audiences and purposes, acknowledges multiple perspectives and is able to present to a variety of audiences.

Personally Accountable: A person who is mindful of audience interpretation, accountable for their own words and actions, practices academic integrity, and overcomes barriers to meet personal goals.

Social/Emotional Awareness: A person who demonstrates empathy, which is the ability to understand the feelings of another.

Innovative and Creative: A person who demonstrates open-ended thought, takes risks, demonstrates curiosity, demonstrates habits of mind that identify the requisite skills and knowledge needed to solve a complex problem, and when faced with a problem, can recognize and understand their failures and then seek alternate solutions independently.

Our MERSD District Improvement plan seeks to promote student centered authentic learning and the MERHS School Improvement plan demands implementation of interdisciplinary learning.

As we know, digital media is ubiquitous in the lives of today's students, influencing everything from their social interactions to their understanding of global events. The ability to discern credible sources, identify biases, and analyze media content is essential not only for academic success but also for responsible citizenship. The skills promoted by media literacy do not only impact their success in social studies classes, but in every moment of their academic day, making this the most authentic interdisciplinary experience of a student's high school career. Based on the skills and opportunities the Media Literacy and Civic Action course provide for our students

and its perfect alignment with the mission, goals, and plans for our school district and high school it is unfathomable to me that this course is in danger of no longer being a requirement to graduate MERHS. I urge you to please consider the ramifications of this decision on our students. This course exemplifies the education that our students deserve, and the education this district, in its own guiding documents, aims to provide.

Thank you for your time.”

Tamara Burns, MERHS Visual Art Teacher. Comments provided by Ms. Burns: “I am Tamera Burns, Visual Arts teacher and senior faculty member at MERHS. I am also a 45-year resident of Manchester. I am in full support of the Fine and Performing Arts graduation requirement for two important reasons: 1) As a top ranked school district, this proposal brings MERSD in line with other high performing school districts who support the arts as an integral part of educating students. 2) This proposal fully supports the MERSD’s Vision of the Graduate. Thank you for your support of this important proposal.”

Sophia Johansson, 18 Bennett Street, Manchester. Ms. Johansson stated that she is worried that changes to graduation requirements will result in students being kicked out of special education. Ms. Johansson said that districts were previously required to keep students in-district until age 22 if they did not pass the MCAS. Without the MCAS as a graduation requirement, there is increased flexibility within districts to determine what constitutes graduation. Ms. Johansson said that the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services has expressed concerns along these lines and is monitoring how the change in graduation requirements will affect students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ms. Johansson urged the School Committee to support the viewpoints of the teachers expressing concern about graduation requirements and to craft solid graduation requirements that reflect best practices.

Superintendent Beaudoin provided a point of clarification, stating that she is not aware of any decrease in the district’s obligation to students.

Lindsay Torres-Banks. 40 Forest Street, Manchester. Ms. Torres-Banks said that she had understood the proposed civic action requirement update to mean that the project would be incorporated into other areas. Ms. Torres-Banks said that she does not want to see the media literacy requirement eliminated. Ms. Torres-Banks emphasized the importance of creating critical thinkers and said that technology does not replace media literacy. Ms. Torres-Banks said that there is confusion about what the proposed change entails.

Nadia Wetzler. 10 Moses Hill Road, Manchester. Ms. Wetzler praised the experience of her ninth-grade student who recently completed the Civic Action class. Ms. Wetzler said that the complexity of media requires that students are taught to be responsible consumers of what they see online. Ms. Wetzler described the experience of her student in completing the civic action project. Her student prepared and presented a team project to the Manchester Sustainability Committee. Their work included research, outreach, survey design and administration, data processing, and public speaking. Ms. Wetzler said that it was a unique experience that mirrored her work skills as an adult. Mr. Wetzler urged the School Committee not to change the civic action graduation requirement.

5) Continued Business

- a. High School Graduation Requirements (second read) – Vote to Approve.

Mr. Reed asked for clarifying insight from the district regarding the proposed change.

Superintendent Beaudoin said that the reorganization is intended to remove the content from inclusion in only one class. It would not exclude media literacy or the civic action project from being pursued and would create an opportunity for the high school to examine other ways of meeting these goals.

Principal Sgroi provided insight into the reasoning behind the change, stating that this year a significant number of ninth-grade students were unable to take the course due to IEP considerations or scheduling conflicts. Each year, there are also students who enter MERHS after grade nine. Principal Sgroi said that it is difficult to place these students in a class with younger students. These situations result in administrative requirement waivers for students. By expanding content presentation to other classes, students would have more options for meeting the requirement. Ms. Sgroi said that, based on student feedback and discussion, the high school was also exploring other venues for the civic action project. It could be incorporated into the SCORE project or completed in other courses in-line with student interests. The proposed update to the media literacy/civic action project will present more course options for satisfying the requirement.

Ms. Spencer stated that she believed the proposed change to be re-wording only rather than substantive, and she is now concerned about loss of digital literacy instruction. Ms. Spencer asked if the change in the requirement would allow a student to use a python course to meet it and received confirmation. Ms. Sgroi said that digital media literacy should be embedded across multiple courses. Students should be receiving this content repeatedly. Superintendent Beaudoin said that it is tied to the K-8 program, as well. Ms. Whitman asked if the civic action project could be uncoupled from the course while maintaining the requirement for digital literacy.

Superintendent Beaudoin asked Curriculum Director Heather Leonard to speak to Digital Literacy and framework standards. Ms. Leonard stated that digital literacy and technology have available frameworks of which the district can take advantage by overlapping media and digital literacy. The district is also considering the K-12 curriculum continuum of digital literacy computer science (DLCS). Superintendent Beaudoin said that the proposed change to the requirement is the beginning of tracking to the framework. Principal Sgroi said that a vote is needed for scheduling, as the high school hopes to release the complete program of studies in early March.

Ms. Spencer requested further discussion on the topic for the SC. Ms. Koch-Sundquist proposed a workshop. Superintendent Beaudoin expressed doubt that there was time for a workshop with the demands of the Essex building project. The superintendent said that graduation requirements could be left as is.

Mr. Foster moved to table the vote on proposed graduation requirement changes until additional information is available to the School Committee.

Ms. Spencer seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Whitman stated that she is not in favor of delaying the vote on the proposed graduation requirement changes.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist moved to amend the motion to include moving forward with a vote on only the art requirement.

Ms. Whitman seconded the motion.

Discussion: Ms. Spencer stated that the two graduation requirements should be considered together because of the cumulative impact on students and said that she is not in favor of separating the vote.

Clarifying Questions: Ms. Whitman asked whether the partial vote or waiting until March 4 for the next SC meeting would be more disruptive. Principal Sgroi stated that waiting for March 4 would be late for scheduling purposes. Superintendent Beaudoin suggested pushing the issue to the policy subcommittee for further information gathering in order to have a final vote at the March 4 SC meeting.

Mr. Foster agreed with the need to look at the proposed graduation requirements in their entirety. Mr. Foster said that the state is expected to provide additional guidance that would inform the district's approach. Mr. Foster said that he supports expansion of the civic action project but does not hear a plan for doing so yet. Mr. Foster said he was opposed to the amendment and suggested tabling the proposed changes and continuing forward with the district's current graduation requirements.

Ms. Whitman noted that language regarding completion of the MCAS is in the current graduation requirements. Superintendent Beaudoin proposed voting on the MCAS language in March.

Ms. Koch-Sundquist rescinded her proposed amendment to the motion.

Ms. Spencer asked about tabling the vote until further guidance is available. Superintendent Beaudoin replied that the governor is seeking to assemble a graduation requirement council, and it is not known how long that will take. The superintendent said that high schools may be asked to produce a document that shows how students are measured on aspects previously assessed by the MCAS, and districts may be asked to provide course lists that address the graduation requirements. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the program of studies should be published as soon as possible for parents. By leaving the graduation requirements unchanged, the program of studies could be posted immediately.

The School Committee voted 4-3 to table the vote on updating graduation requirements until additional guidance is available. Ms. Whitman, Mr. Reed, and Mr. Binieris voted against the motion.

- b. Memorial School Building Project - \$1.1M Bond Anticipation Note (BAN).
Vote to Approve. On February 27, 2025, payment is due for the outstanding \$1.3 million Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) that was borrowed one year ago. This payment is included on voucher 1047 in the amount of \$1,351,422.22 which includes interest of \$51,422.22. This note is to provide temporary funding until the final audit is completed by the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) and reimbursement is received by the district. The district is currently in the pipeline for the MSBA audit and hopes that it will be completed by Winter 2025. Until the time of the audit, the district will not know the exact amount that it will need to permanently borrow as the last piece of funding for this construction project. Since the original temporary borrowing occurred more than 24 months ago, the district is required to reduce the principal of the BAN. It has been determined that the amount can be reduced by temporary borrowing of \$200,000 as the construction project has come in under budget. The new BAN was publicly bid on January 30, 2025, and the lowest bid came in with an interest rate of 4.00%. The proceeds of the new BAN will be distributed to the district on February 26, 2025. The School Committee is required to vote to approve the new BAN.

Ms. Reed moved to support the BAN in conjunction with the following required language.

Ms. Spencer seconded the motion.

VOTE OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Voted: We hereby determine, in accordance with G.L. c.70B, that the cost of the Manchester Memorial Elementary School project authorized by vote of the Committee passed on September 4, 2018 being financed with proceeds of a portion of the Notes (defined below), together with all other bonds and notes of the District previously issued to pay costs of this project, does not exceed the portion of the total cost of the project that is not being paid by the school facilities grant and we hereby approve the issuance of notes and bonds to finance this project under G.L. c.70B.

Further Voted: to approve the sale of \$1,100,000 4.00 percent General Obligation Bond Anticipation Notes (the "Notes") of the District dated February 26, 2025 and payable February 26, 2026 to Oppenheimer & Co., Inc., at par and accrued interest, if any, plus a premium of \$6,270.

Further Voted: that in connection with the marketing and sale of the Notes, the preparation and distribution of a Notice of Sale and Preliminary Official Statement dated

January 23, 2025 and a final Official Statement dated January 30, 2025, each in such form as may be approved by the District Treasurer, be and hereby are ratified, confirmed, approved and adopted.

Further Voted: that the District Treasurer and the Chair of the Committee be, and hereby are, authorized to execute and deliver a significant events disclosure undertaking in compliance with SEC Rule 15c2-12 in such form as may be approved by bond counsel to the District, which undertaking shall be incorporated by reference in the Notes for the benefit of the holders of the Notes from time to time.

Further Voted: that we authorize and direct the District Treasurer to establish post issuance federal tax compliance procedures and continuing disclosure procedures in such forms as the District Treasurer and bond counsel deem sufficient, or if such procedures are currently in place, to review and update said procedures, in order to monitor and maintain the tax-exempt status of the Notes and to comply with relevant securities laws.

Further Voted: that any certificates or documents relating to the Notes (collectively, the “Documents”), may be executed in several counterparts, each of which shall be regarded as an original and all of which shall constitute one and the same document; delivery of an executed counterpart of a signature page to a Document by electronic mail in a “.pdf” file or by other electronic transmission shall be as effective as delivery of a manually executed counterpart signature page to such Document; and electronic signatures on any of the Documents shall be deemed original signatures for the purposes of the Documents and all matters relating thereto, having the same legal effect as original signatures.

Further Voted: that each member of the Committee, the District Secretary and the District Treasurer be and hereby are, authorized to take any and all such actions, and execute and deliver such certificates, receipts or other documents as may be determined by them, or any of them, to be necessary or convenient to carry into effect the provisions of the foregoing votes.

The motion passed 7-0.

c. Draft 2025-2026 District Calendar – postponed

Mr. Foster moved to open the public meeting portion of the School Committee meeting.

Ms. Whitman seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Public Hearing – Mr. Reed asked for respect for all opinions and requested that speakers, while not limited to two-minutes, remain aware of others waiting and be considerate of the length of their address. He requested that everyone have an opportunity to speak once before anyone spoke a second time.

- 1) Presentation of FY26 Proposed Budget – Superintendent Beaudoin provided a brief overview of the FY26 Proposed Budget, highlighting points of interest. Full budget documents are included with the meeting packet on the district website.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated that a tentative budget is usually shared in December for planning purposes. It is based on assumptions, because the district lacks final figures for key variables at that point. In January, the district usually presents a recommended budget. In the past, that budget covered program needs and preserved educational goals. This year, the superintendent said the administration is unable call the presented budget “recommended.” Instead, it has been labeled “proposed,” because it is approaching the level of service cuts and no longer contains built-in opportunities.

FY26 Proposed Budget

FY26 Proposed Budget = \$32,397,588 million

- 5.42% increase from FY25 budget

FY26 Operating Assessment = 4.93 %

- Manchester: 4.48% / \$731,623 apportioned growth
- Essex: 5.68% / \$561,395 apportioned growth

FY26 Draft Capital Budget = \$3,955,014 million

- Debt service for MSHS and MMES approved by voters when projects began
- \$107,749 decrease (2.7%) vs. prior year
- BAN Renewal in February will impact final capital budget number

Historically funded with neutral impact to the operational budget.

Investments & Program Enhancements

Preventative Spending & Common Practices

Required Spending

Superintendent Beaudoin said that a large driver of the budget increase is healthcare. Early predictions put the increase for the current budget at 24%. High usage, in addition to the inflationary market, is driving the higher-than-average increase. Since inclusion of this increase estimate in budget projections, the district’s healthcare provider quoted a final renewal rate increase of 26.9%. Superintendent Beaudoin noted that the META contract codifies the plan and splits for healthcare, and the district is locked into these numbers for the life of the META contract unless it renegotiates. The district’s only option for lowering healthcare is to go out to bid.

Superintendent Beaudoin said that the budget includes cuts, but not to the program. Principal Maino has announced her retirement at the end of the current year. The district is planning not to renew the position, instead having one principal manage oversight of both the middle and high school. For next year, the middle school model would be maintained. Superintendent Beaudoin said that it could be an opportunity to think differently. The proposed budget also reassigns two high school positions. One would go to support middle school world language. The other FTE position would be transferred to Manchester Memorial Elementary School to manage increasing enrollment and class size there. Staffing reallocations would result in a reduction of 9-12 course sections which will impact scheduling and high school class size. Achieving an aligned middle/high school schedule would mitigate the impact on the high school, allowing the principal to share world language staff between levels. The proposed budget also discontinues the position of district facilities manager. These duties will be reorganized to other staff. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the expanded use of reserves has the potential to drain the fund. In addition, the latest healthcare estimate equates to a \$700K liability that is not accounted for in the FY26 proposed budget. The superintendent said that the district has run out of “good” cuts to make. Superintendent Beaudoin emphasized that a decision needs to be reached about whether the district should seek to maintain its level of service.

FY26 Proposed Budget

- Budget Summary
 - Tentative budget assumptions have been refined based on information available as of 1/15/25. *Changes outlined in budget memo.*
 - Healthcare Costs:
 - A projected 24% increase in healthcare costs has been partially addressed by budgeting for a 10% increase, representing a high typical year of growth.
 - The remaining 14% increase is isolated for separate consideration, in response to discussion at the School Committee meeting on 7/21/25.
 - A best-case renewal rate of 15% would still require an additional funding allocation of \$205,585. A chart outlines funding needs at various renewal rates.
- The proposed budget includes:
 - \$150,000 additional E&D reserves over FY25 (Total: \$500K)
 - \$100,000 additional choice revenue over FY25
 - \$150,000 carryforward usage of OPEB reserves to reduce the cost of retiree health care

Ms. Cresta highlighted components of the FY26 Proposed Budget. Budget funding underscored the challenge of maintaining the current level of education programming.

Ms. Cresta emphasized the recurring, structural nature of the funding deficit that the district must manage each year.

Ms. Cresta's summary memo contains the reminder that, due to the change in the role of the Director of Finance & Operations since the previous budget, some of the projected costs in the FY26 budget are allocated differently. The dollar amounts and percentage changes from FY25 to FY26 reflect the actual change in costs along with a difference in the categorization and interpretation of certain costs and account lines.

The proposed budget is a 5.42% increase over last year. There is a revenue increase of \$100K attributed to the expansion of the school choice program, which will accept another 20 students for the 2025-2026 school year. Estimates of town apportionment figures are based on the EQV of both towns from 2022. The EQV figures will be updated with 2024 information as it becomes available later this month. The FY26 Proposed Budget includes \$500K of E&D funds from the anticipated \$1.4M fund and \$150K of OPEB funds. On page 20 of the budget packet, there is a correction for enrollment. The corrected change is listed as a total decrease of 2.3% in resident enrollment for the year. Superintendent Beaudoin noted that district enrollment grew 28% between 2007 – 2014. Currently, enrollment is similar to resident enrollment when the district was formed. Enrollment projections anticipate a flat line in enrollment. The superintendent said that local trends are consistent with larger trends across the state. The district has responded to declining enrollment over recent years by reducing staff via retirements.

2) Public Comment –

Brian Gressler, 30 Choate Street, Essex. “We find ourselves at the crossroads that Superintendent Beaudoin has long warned was coming. No more delaying. No more short term fixes. Fund our schools or fall behind. Last year, I praised the district's fiscal responsibility, especially versus comparable school systems. That sentiment still exists, but my focus this year is on solutions. What do we expect, what do we demand, from the School Committee and town leadership?”

For the School Committee, as Ms. Koch-Sundquist has pointed out, the MASC Code of Ethics defines your primary responsibility as the children. While we acknowledge the fiscal pressures of member towns, they are not your priority. The Code does not list the town boards, the voters, or even the parents. Just the children.

Unfortunately, we seem to have lost our way and have allowed these outside fiscal factors to become the primary focus. With that in mind, we call for two things from this School Committee:

Approval of a 9% or greater budget increase, which best reflects prioritizing children, and

A renewed emphasis in everything you do towards that priority. When I go to a School Committee meeting, I want the starting point of every discussion to be the children. I

want the baseline of every budget to be the one that is best for the children. Start there every time, and then adjust.

So, who is responsible for all those other things? After all, as a community, I'm not suggesting that we ignore them. The answer is our town leaders, yet they are failing.

We have often heard from Essex leadership that the town is in fiscal crisis, that we are one on call fire department away from receivership. They use a language of fear, but it is largely a crisis of their own making. Essex leadership has made a choice to minimize tax increases over maintaining town functions. This includes schools but can equally be applied across the whole of the town operating budget. There are a number of factors that drive this policy, and there are communities in our towns that need protecting, but let's be clear...it is a choice.

How did keeping tax increases capped at Prop 2½ limits become standard policy? Inflation through the late 70s was 7 to 13% per year. In 1980, it was 13.5%. As a result, property taxes were increasing at 5 to 10% per year. In this environment, they created a threshold, not a cap, over which towns could not raise taxes without direct citizen approval. At no point was 2.5% meant to reflect how costs actually increase. At no point was it a fiscal target. It was just a cut-off point after which the budget decision no longer rested solely with elected officials.

In Essex, we've turned that number into an unbreakable line. It's costing us. From FY21, when the budget corrected down after COVID, to FY25, the Essex operating budget has lagged inflation by 2.56%. In real dollars, that means that if the budget had simply kept up with inflation, it would be about \$573,000 higher than it is today. It's no wonder that we have shortfalls.

Essex leadership talks about the crisis but fails to deliver solutions. At public meetings, the current chair of the Finance Committee has jokingly offered to "pray," or "hope that no families with children move into town." I'm not kidding. These things were actually said out loud. When pressed for real ideas, even as recently as the January 29th joint FINCOM meeting with Manchester, they struggle to define a clear and executable course of action.

I will give you the only solution that will actually work, and that is to pass an override not just for the schools at 9%, but for the town operating budget as whole. I realize no one wants to raise taxes, but we are at that point. Reset and recover. Bring the budget in line with the real cost of goods and services. Address our problems—then move past them. Further, I suggest that any tax increase include paying for programs that help support endangered communities such as tax deferrals for the elderly. I would pay more to help them, because I have priorities that go beyond children.

For this to work, it requires the full buy in of town leadership. It requires them to get behind it 100% and actively campaign for it, not just stand on the side and complain, which is what happened the last time. Pass an override. That is your responsibility. Lead. Or step aside. If you won't, we will find someone who will.”

Betsy McKeen, 35 Lufkin Point Road, Essex. Dr. McKeen shared her experience as a primary care pediatrician. Several families have shared with her how failed overrides in their communities have led to lost services and struggling students. Dr. McKeen said that it is critical to pass an override and that she believes the failure of the previous override attempt in Essex was because many did not understand its dire consequences.

Robbie Bilsbury, 126 Eastern Avenue, Essex and MERHS world language teacher. Mr. Bilsbury shared that during his career he has seen both the list of cuts and the incredible work that goes into making things work after the cuts. He said that 2.5% does not work given growth and inflation and characterized overrides as normal. Essex has not had an override since 2004. Mr. Bilsbury said that a 9% budget may be the support the district needs. During his time at the high school, Mr. Bilsbury has seen a robust elementary world language program eroded and the difference is noticeable at the high school. Mr. Bilsbury questioned the outcome of continuing to chip away at other programs. He said that a facilities manager is necessary, and a dedicated principal is normal and helps kids to achieve.

Sally Berkowitz, 22 Friend Street, Manchester. Ms. Berkowitz said that she returned to Manchester to raise her family in order to experience the education opportunities of the district. Ms. Berkowitz's work in higher education has made clear that the need to mold students into informed citizens is critical. Although Ms. Berkowitz has heard some vocal calls to construct a tight budget, the district has reduced staffing as far as possible through attrition. External factors should not change the district's commitment to the Vision of the Graduate, constructed with input from the greater community. Ms. Berkowitz repeated the components of the mission of MERSD and its stated goals for student education and said that both the 2.5% and 5% budgets make that vision harder to achieve. They will result in cuts and impact the educational program. Ms. Berkowitz stated that continued reserve use is unacceptable, and reserves should be for unanticipated needs. Ms. Berkowitz voiced her support for a 9% budget increase to preserve course offerings, support diverse viewpoints, and preserve maintenance of the district's facility investments. Ms. Berkowitz said that a 9% budget will support the development of students who stand apart.

Sophie Johansson, 18 Bennett Street, Manchester. Ms. Johansson shared that her family includes three students with disabilities, and she has experience with several programs housed at both elementary schools. Ms. Johansson praised administrators for making these programs successful and meeting the needs of families who cannot afford to attend private programs. Ms. Johansson characterized the 9% budget as a "level-services" budget that preserves educational equity. Ms. Johansson shared how inclusion has meant acceptance for her children. She said that, although her son doesn't have a friend, he still deserves a place in the community and an education. The programs of which her children have been a part have given them an inclusive education and opportunities for acceptance that will carry them through. The programs also teach skills that all students will need as they join the workforce. Ms. Johansson placed value on the experience of the students in her children's school communities. Ms. Johansson feared that these programs will suffer because of budget cuts. Ms. Johansson said that only in good public schools do all kids who show up get a good/same education and begged attendees to support the 9% budget.

Lindsay Torres-Banks, 40 Forest Street, Manchester. Ms. Torres-Banks provided her comments: “I feel strongly M-E cannot endure further cuts without affecting our kids’ educations. We’ve lost so many positions with retirements, attritions, efficiencies. I am particularly concerned about changing the middle/high school model because of financial factors rather than pedagogical ones. We heard already about 15% of students cannot access media literacy courses - I’m afraid even more courses are cut they will have even less access. I’m even more concerned about drawing down district reserves and living off of savings. I believe 9% budget is best for kids and would vote for it.

However, given the financial circumstances for both towns and having listened this committee deliberate in recent meetings, I am resigned to accept that a 5.4 budget is a compromise budget that is a likely reality and that our kids’ education IS going to be affected. We are going to have to continue to advocate for our public schools in the coming months and years to get back what we are losing: prepare yourself for it.

However, with this acceptance, I also want to call for partnership. In order for our school district to function properly, it needs the support of OUR entire MERSD community when it comes to advocating and funding our schools. We're at the end of a 10 year cycle of a robust override when they normally take place in high performing districts every 5 years or so. And “we barely getting by year” and the Town of Essex continues to request 2.5% budget increases in spite of inflation and cost of living making this number unrealistic.

And yet, we need a new or renovated school building for Essex Elementary School.

As a Manchester resident I have vocally advocated for EES feasibility study. At our Town Meeting last spring, several Manchester residents made a comment against the new school building with valid concern about debt rolling off from previous building projects and some major capital projects coming up in town.

I made a public comment to go to bat for EES: I said, “EES is in desperate need of a refresh or rebuild. It needs a new roof, new windows, the boiler is failing, and there is standing water in the basement.

I encouraged the Town Meeting to think about our district as a united community- our children are in it together. I said, “Our size helps us to be a top school district in the country, and our size comes from the partnership between our two towns. A new elementary school for Essex is the right thing for our district community and therefore, it’s the right thing for our town- the Town of Manchester.

It passed.

I have heard too much from Essex Finance Committee about “our’ school building - what in the end is simply a shell, and almost nothing about supporting the educational programming that goes on inside of it or any of the other school buildings in our district. This way of thinking about Essex versus Manchester in a tit-for-tat IS NOT what is best for our children, and it has to end. The buildings were built in order of need. Essex is in the pipeline.

I went to bat for EES and will keep going to bat for it because I care about the children of our MERSD community: both Essex and Manchester together- getting an excellent education in functional and safe buildings.

The compromised and cut 5.4% budget that draws \$500K from reserves after the \$350K last year, does not set us up for success when it comes to favorable borrowing terms for a new Essex Elementary budget. And it puts us in a hole where we would need to draw even more from reserves next year. It puts the district in a detrimental position to pursue a new school building and favorable borrowing terms to fund it. This 5.4% is a compromise budget that, even if it has cuts, will require people to advocate and get out and vote for it in the Town of Essex at Town Meeting AND the ballot. And yet it is on the high end of what either town can afford.

Town leaders need to be hearing from the MERSD community that we support at minimum the 5.4% or the 9% budget because it's what is best for OUR kids- Essex kids and Manchester kids - it's best for our MERSD community."

Caitlin McShera, 27 Martin Street, Essex. Ms. McShera voiced her support for a 9% budget for continued services and said that it is eye opening to see what teachers are accomplishing with limited resources. Ms. McShera said there is a need for a dedicated facility manager to maintain the district's beautiful new buildings, including the pending Essex building project. Ms. McShera voiced support for a 9% budget for students and the educational program and also for the educators and administrators. While acknowledging the struggles of rising inflation, particularly as a small business owner, Ms. McShera said that healthy, high-performing schools are an asset to the community.

Antonella Muniz, 20 Harlow Street, Essex. Ms. Muniz said that the district has created two different types of elementary education and this was highlighted during the Covid pandemic. Ms. Muniz stated that the performance of Essex elementary students led to the inclusion in the budget of educational coaches who have since yielded improved performance. Ms. Muniz said that an override will mean paying more for less and asked how the inequity was being addressed beyond the elementary level. Ms. Muniz stated that upper school enrollment in advanced math, science, and engineering classes should be proportional between the schools. Ms. Muniz suggested busing students to Essex Elementary School to counter growing class sizes at Memorial School. Ms. Muniz stated that her concerns should be addressed before any conversation about an override.

Caroline Coshow, 84 Old Essex Road, Manchester. Ms. Coshow is a teacher of world language at MERHS and credited the success of college acceptance by MERSD students to their high school educational experience. Ms. Coshow said that education is a privilege that many do not enjoy around the world, and it should be cherished and maintained. Ms. Coshow voiced her support for a 9% budget and asserted that local taxes is where the public has visibility of where its money goes. Ms. Coshow emphasized that teachers at the middle and high schools do not distinguish between students from Manchester and those from Essex; they are all their students. In closing, Ms. Coshow praised the district's two-week holiday break and said that students returned to school well-rested.

Jennifer Coleman Michaud, MERHS social studies teacher. Comments provided by Ms. Michaud: “My name is Jennifer Coleman Michaud. I am a social studies teacher in high school, and this is my 15th year at MERHS.

First, let me acknowledge that budget season is not a fun time of year for any of us, especially you, so thank you for being here tonight to listen to the thoughts and the concerns of the community. I hope you take these anxieties to heart and do your part to rally the community to support increased funding to the district. I hope everyone in the room and listening at home does the same.

I am here tonight to address one specific component of the proposed budget: the reallocation of high school teaching positions to the elementary and middle school and the impact it will have on our students. This reallocation is mentioned first on page four of the proposed budget in the Staff & Capital Requests Summary with the claim that these requests align with Strategic, District, and School Improvement Plans and are aimed to support student achievement. I disagree.

One of these reallocations is to reintroduce world languages to the 6th grade program of studies which I enthusiastically support and does not require a high school teacher to lose their job. The second reallocation, however, does. There are currently two departments in the high school that have 6 members. One of these departments has four years of courses required to graduate high school, the other requires 3.5 years... potentially 3 pending your vote on high school graduation at the next meeting. Based on this information, it appears the cut will most likely come from the department with the current 3.5 year graduation requirement, which is the Social Studies department.

The Social Studies department experienced a cut in the FY 2025 budget. This cut resulted in 5 less sections of courses the Social Studies department could offer to students. This prevented our department from offering Evidence Based Argumentation, Diverse American Stories and Current Global Topics. It also led to two less sections of required classes, driving up class size. This year I teach two sections of US History I Honors and both sections have 25 students. This conflicts the School Committee’s goals for 19-22 students in high school course sections defined on page 15 of the most recent Unit A Collective Bargaining Agreement. These class size guidelines exist in order to provide a high quality educational experience to students. However, as class sizes increase, the quality of education decreases. In these larger sections I am unable to provide timely feedback to students on their work. Larger classes mean more student questions in a period, which I love and encourage, but leads to an increase in the amount of class time necessary to cover required content. It's more student behaviors to manage. Larger class sizes make it harder to build relationships with students and if you read any current educational article or textbook, the way to solve all problems in education is to build relationships with the students. As you can see, cuts to teaching positions lead to less opportunities for students and larger class sizes.

If another Social Studies position is lost this year, cuts cannot be made to sections of core classes since they are already at max capacity. The only 5 sections to cut would be from electives. The Social Studies department offers some of the most popular and successful

elective courses in the high school. These include Sociology, Facing History and Ourselves, 9/11 and the War on Terror, psychology as well as Advanced Placement Psychology, Comparative Government and United States Government and Politics. Almost all of these elective courses reach maximum capacity consistently each year. This year we offer 11 sections of these electives combined and next year would only be able to offer 6. Students are not going to be able to take the classes that they want due to the inability of our department to offer adequate sections to match demand. Social Studies department APs are essentially an open door and many students take their only APs through Ss. There has been talk that the Social Studies department should offer both AP Micro and Macroeconomics since a small number of students are taking those classes online, independently this school year. With this potential cut we will be unable to adequately provide opportunities to take the courses already in our program of studies, as previously mentioned, never mind adding additional courses.

Thank you for your consideration.”

Nadia Wetzler, 10 Moses Hill Road, Manchester. Ms. Wetzler stated that anything other than a 9% increase budget is punting the issue and called proposed cuts are “pennywise but pound foolish.” Ms. Wetzler said that the facilities manager is able to address issues early rather than when they have become a bigger problem and that eliminating the position is not fiscally responsible. Ms. Wetzler said that her family moved to Manchester because of the reputation of the school district and has been very happy here. She shared the positive experience of her family but said that one draw back has been the decrease in options for high performing students. The proposed budget will exacerbate this situation and lead to fewer AP opportunities. Ms. Wetzler said that, despite the cuts of the budget, next year the costs will again rise and there will be no reserves left to meet the gap. Ms. Wetzler urged support for a 9% budget.

Kerry McDonald Schaub, MERMS teacher. Ms. Schaub provided comments: “Good evening! My name is Kerri McDonald-Schaub, and I have spent the last 14 years of my career in the middle school's Intensive Reading and Written Language program under the skillful leadership of Superintendent Beaudoin and Dr. Collins. I am here tonight to read a statement on behalf of the middle school faculty based on the budget.

Before I begin, we'd like to publicly thank Principal Maino for her years of commitment and dedication to the children, staff, and families at Manchester-Essex Middle School. As Superintendent Beaudoin expressed at the last meeting, filling her shoes would be a monumental task. We love her and will greatly miss her guidance next year.

Dear Members of the School Committee,

As middle school educators, we want to express our strong support for maintaining the middle school model in Manchester-Essex, as we believe it is critically important to recognize young adolescents' developmental needs and characteristics and ensure that our middle school provides the best environment for their academic, social, and emotional growth. **The core of the middle school model is the concept of teaming.**

Middle school students thrive in an environment with supportive relationships. Our **grade-level and exploratory teams**, where students have the same group of teachers for core subjects, meet during team time to discuss students and plan instruction. Teaming creates a **smaller, family-like environment** that allows teachers to know your child and provide personalized support. It also fosters a student's ability to build relationships with their teaching team.

Middle schoolers undergo **significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes**, and the middle school model ensures that the learning environment promotes their development. Our students grow in learning environments that stretch, support, and motivate them. Our teachers leverage the middle school model to collaborate on student-centered and project-based learning.

Teaming also ensures educators can create **extracurricular opportunities within the school day based on the needs of a middle school child**. These offerings encourage students to explore interests that contribute to their well-rounded development. Over the past several years, based on the New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) recommendations, the middle school instituted ME blocks and clubs where students have time to connect with peers and teachers outside of the demands of the classroom.

Finally, and most importantly, our middle school model **helps students transition smoothly from elementary to high school** by gradually increasing academic rigor and personal responsibility while providing needed social-emotional support. This support leads to academic success. Teaming is foundational to our middle school teachers in fostering independence while offering essential student support.

Our district has long been committed to providing a **high-quality middle-level education** that recognizes and respects the needs of young adolescents. We urge the school committee to consider the extensive research and proven benefits of the middle school model as they make decisions that will shape the future of our schools and students and urge citizens to support a budget that preserves this model. Like all of you, we aspire to give your children the education they deserve. Thank you for your time and commitment to our schools.

Very truly yours,

The Manchester-Essex Middle School Faculty”

Ryan Beltramini, 22 Woodcrest Road, Manchester. Mr. Beltramini expressed support for a 9% budget. He said that, of the budget options presented, he did not see an option that pursued growth and asked about what could be added to the program. Looking to the future, Mr. Beltramini stated that the 2.5% budget is inadequate and suggested consideration of a smaller, yearly override to meet the remaining need.

Brian Parker, 40 Pine Street, Manchester. Mr. Parker expressed concern about large class sizes at Memorial Elementary and proposed reconsideration of the Essex building project, given financial concerns. Instead of pursuing a new building in Essex, Mr. Parker asked if the district should explore combining the elementary schools in the Memorial

building. The cost-savings could be applied to the budget. Mr. Parker said this could address class size issues and support continued course offerings at the high school.

Sarah Conway, 7 Rocky Hill Road, Essex. Ms. Conway gave her support to a 9% district budget. Ms. Conway said that an override in Essex could also support the town budget, the elderly, and the wages of town employees. Ms. Conway urged town leaders not to position the override against the needs of the town and not to pit Essex residents against each other or against Manchester residents.

Annie Cameron, 23 Pickering Street, Essex. Ms. Cameron asked if the School Committee is actively collaborating with its town partners on the budget issue. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the SC is working to form a numbers-crunching group to review budget options. This group will have representation from the SC and include town administrators and representatives from the town boards. Ms. Cameron expressed concern that Manchester residents may not support the new school in Essex if an Essex override does not pass.

Sophia Johansson, 18 Bennett Street, Manchester. Ms. Johansson shared her experience with commuting to Essex when her son attended the elementary school. She said that it is a tough drive day after day and asserted that each town needs a community school.

Sarah Pierce, 9 Friend Street, Manchester. Ms. Pierce recounted that some of her most challenging years were during middle school and said that she cannot imagine not having a principal dedicated to the middle school. Ms. Pierce said that she just received information about mental health support and that it is critical to have strong support available for all kids. Ms. Pierce said that she wants to see both towns unified and does not want to see cuts to district programs or the positions of facility manager and principal.

Superintendent Beaudoin stated that some remote budget hearing attendees had placed questions into the chat. Although the meeting format does not facilitate responses to questions in this way, the superintendent said that most of the answers are included in the hearing packet available on the website. Superintendent Beaudoin welcomed email inquiries for any other questions.

In closing, Superintendent Beaudoin said that the term “pound foolish” has been used a lot lately. She said that cuts are a loss in opportunity for investment or growth in the program. The superintendent said that she has grown numb to the experience. Given the reality of the district’s financial situation, the elimination of the middle school principal can be viewed as an opportunity, but it is not optimal. Superintendent Beaudoin said that she would prefer to spend time in discussion in order to reach the just-right iteration of graduation requirements. Instead, budget challenges absorb most of the work each year. The superintendent said that she had hoped, by this point, to be building back programs previously cut during the budget cycle, better than they were before. Instead, she currently sees no pathway forward for the return of programs like the library. Superintendent Beaudoin said that stability is needed for innovation.

Superintendent Beaudoin expressed her respect for all viewpoints, including those encouraging that the district keep its budget tight. The superintendent said that all parties need to come together under a unified vision for the district.

Greg Federspiel, Town Administrator, Manchester. Mr. Federspiel said that this is a difficult budget environment, particularly with healthcare increases and inflationary years. The situation is compounded by the artificial levy limit of 2.5% growth. Mr. Federspiel said that he is a proponent of more frequent, smaller corrections and expressed doubt about the success of a large scale override. Mr. Federspiel urged work on a multiyear plan by the number-crunching group.

Mr. Reed emphasized that the School Committee puts in a lot of work and always puts the students first. However, SC members also consider the needs of all stakeholders – students, district employees, and their town partners. Mr. Reed asked attendees to aid the School Committee by speaking to neighbors to share the current struggle and encourage them to engage with the School Committee if they have questions.

3) School Committee Comment – None.

D. Adjourn

Ms. Whitman moved to close the Public Hearing; Mr. Foster seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Whitman moved to adjourn the School Committee meeting. Ms. Spencer seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 pm

School Committee Future Meetings

- March 4, 2025
- March 18, 2025