

Pembroke Public Schools

72 Pilgrim Road, Pembroke, MA 02359

www.pembrokek12.org

pembroke@pembrokek12.org



(781) 829-1178
FAX (781) 829-6957

PEMBROKE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

North Pembroke Elementary School Library

Call to Order

Mr. Chilcott called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

Present from Administration: Erin Obey, Superintendent; Marybeth Brust, Assistant Superintendent; Jessica DeLorenzo, Director of Student Services

Present from Committee: Patrick Chilcott, Chair; Allison Glennon, Vice Chair, Katrina Delaney, Clerk; and Susan Bollinger and David Boyle

Pledge of Allegiance

Public Comment

None

Acknowledge & Schedule Visitors

Mr. Chilcott welcomed the audience members.

James Conner – Eagle Scout Candidate Troop 105

James Connor explained that his project is a semi-outreach program at the Pembroke Community Center (PCC). We plan to set up a 3D printer and organize a maker fair featuring STEM activities such as building Paper Moon Landers, STEM trivia, and launching model rockets outside. We also want to provide advice to students and parents about career paths and STEM education. This project is essential because the educational requirements for jobs have significantly increased over the past 30 years. Helping teens cultivate a learning mentality can improve our community and nation. I would like to connect with teachers for advice and put up flyers about the project around the schools. Mrs. Obey said the district can also send the information out through a broadcast email and the committee can put it out via social media to help promote it. Mr. Boyle and Mr. Chilcott both offered \$100 toward the project. The committee agreed that it is a great project.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None

Communications

None

Approval of Bill Schedule

Warrants were circulated electronically.

Consideration for Approval: School Committee Meeting Minutes of February 25th and March 4th

VOTE: On a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Katrina Delaney it was unanimously voted to approve the school committee meeting minutes of February 25, 2025 and March 4, 2025 as presented.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

Superintendent's Report

Consideration for Approval – MIAA Middle Level Waivers – Boys Lacrosse & Softball

Mrs. Obey said the district is seeking a waiver for softball, as we've had an eighth-grade waiver for several years. This allows 8th graders to fill the junior varsity (JV) team at the high school. Currently, there are 15 students registered in grades 9-12, and the waiver would help form a full JV team. For boys' lacrosse, a waiver hasn't been requested 2023. Around 20 players are needed for both varsity and JV teams, there are currently 15 registered. The eighth-grade waiver would assist in forming a complete JV team, though 8th graders cannot play up. Regarding safety, equipment and checking levels was discussed during the 2023 waiver request, and seniors are not eligible for the JV team. Additionally, Pembroke's strong youth lacrosse program ensures that participants have experience and practice safe play.

VOTE: On a motion made by Katrina Delaney and seconded by David Boyle, it was unanimously voted to approve the MIAA middle-level waivers for boys' lacrosse and softball.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle

Voting No: none

Abstaining: none

Absent: none

FY26 Teaching and Learning Budget Presentation

Ms. Brust thanked the Content Supervisors for their assistance with this presentation. She thanked the committee for their support last year regarding the reorganization of her department. Previously the department had a Math Content Supervisor and a Science Content Supervisor. Through reorganization, the department was able to add an Elementary Content Supervisor, Mrs. Soliwoda, who has had a very positive impact on the students. She added that the committee was generous in supporting a DIBELS paid subscription and the expansion of Pear Assessment for the K-6 community. This investment has significantly impacted reading and math instruction in the district. The DIBELS subscription allows the reading specialists to push in and pull out more frequently and to form groups more easily because they can access the necessary data in a much more efficient manner, compared to when they were doing it by hand. Additionally, the Pear Assessment software has enabled teachers to transition many of their exams, particularly in math, to the online system. This shift has provided data-rich information, allowing for quicker identification of how students are performing. It also creates opportunities for collaboration with Mrs. Soliwoda in different schools, supporting teachers in utilizing the Pear Assessment tool and engaging in data discussions during common planning times or other group meetings.

Ms. Brust explained that last year the Pathways Program was expanded to include Global Citizenship, Music, and Information Technology Pathway. The district also added AP Spanish Literature and AP World History this year. Notably, 16 seniors completed an internship or certificate aligned with a College and Career Ready pathway. The district received the College Board AP Silver Medal; last year, we received a Bronze Medal, and we are striving for Gold. Furthermore, 47% of seniors scored a three or higher on an AP exam, which is very noteworthy and positive for a school of this size, especially considering the number of AP courses that are offered. We were also awarded an AP Access Award, which underscores the commitment to inclusivity and the efforts to eliminate as many barriers as possible to accessing these courses. Ms. Brust also mentioned that, percentage-wise, the students who are categorized as being in special populations, particularly those from low-income brackets, are accessing these classes.

This year, the focus areas for grades Pre-K to 6 have been on curriculum development and math benchmark provisions. Particularly examining writing, with some early adopters implementing a program called Simplify Writing. The district is trying to determine the best way to align the curriculum vertically across grades K-6. Additionally, science curriculum options are being explored to pilot next year and eventually adopt one for long-term use. It has been somewhat disjointed over the past few years, so a solid program is needed that everyone supports and can consistently rely upon for grades K to 5. Open Sci Ed starts in grade 6 and goes through grade 8. For grades 7 to 12, we are re-evaluating grading practices and student assessments. Given the extensive research on grading and its impact, we need to rethink how we assess and value feedback.

Ms. Brust said the district has also been accepted into a grant program funded through One8, which focuses on applied learning practices. This grant provides administrators a chance to visit other schools and observe how they are implementing different programs. Last month, we were fortunate to travel to Boston to observe classes at the John D. O'Bryant School and Boston Collegiate. It was a helpful and exciting experience to see those classes in action.

Ms. Brust stated this year's department goals focus on enhancing our science and literacy programs. The teachers are not entirely in favor of purchasing a large program but seek support to supplement their existing materials. They have created valuable resources within their grade-level teams, so the goal is to provide the necessary support to further develop student skills, especially in writing and grammar integration.

Ms. Brust stated that PHS will introduce AP Pre-Calculus and an AP Seminar. Additionally, a third year of our Project Lead the Way classes in Engineering and Biomedical science will be added. Also, graduation requirements have been revised to include World Language and Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) courses.

Ms. Brust stated the FY26 personnel budget requests include a part-time (.4) business teacher to allow Mrs. Gates, the Pathways Coordinator, to focus on student placements, coaching, supporting interns, and working with business partners. With double the number of seniors in biomedical and engineering pathways next year, the placement process will demand significant time and effort and the addition of a .4 business teacher would allow Mrs. Gates to continue this work. The second personnel budget request is regarding the addition of World Language at the elementary level. Given the current budget constraints, this may be a challenging request. However, the importance of considering this should be emphasized as we move forward, as it greatly benefits our students. The final personnel budget request is for three elementary math interventionists to mirror the support provided by the reading specialists.

Mr. Chilcott asked about the impact of the applied learning grant and what the district will see as a result, and Ms. Brust said everyone is moving towards an inquiry-based approach to learning. This method emphasizes applied learning, where students actively look at problems, solve them, and utilize their skills. Many classes are already adopting this approach, and there are even entire curriculums designed around it, which represents a significant shift in education. However, this can be quite exhausting for both students and teachers. Therefore, learning from those who are implementing this effectively and identifying areas where we can integrate these practices is a positive step forward for the district.

Mrs. Bollinger asked about the feedback and data of the OpenSciEd Program and Ms. Brust said it has been mixed. Some assessments and unit sequencing have posed challenges for teachers. However, they have adapted impressively to the new curriculum, which has demanded significant professional development and preparation time. The foundational elements focus on student-led inquiry and the development of soft skills related to collaboration and problem identification. In this approach, teachers are not just teaching science concepts; they are also fostering a set of essential skills. Our teachers have done an excellent job with this, but there have been challenges in adapting to the curriculum and understanding how it fits into our overall goals. This summer, the structure of the units will be evaluated to determine if there is a more effective way to organize them so that students fully benefit from this rich curriculum.

Mr. Chilcott said the committee has talked about having World Language at the elementary level for about 15 years. He added that financially, FY26 is going to be tough. He asked which language would be chosen for the language to focus on for the elementary level. Ms. Brust said that integrating a World Languages program will incur costs. She suggested beginning with a backward design: look at what is offered at PHS and then create an exploratory and enjoyable experience around vocabulary and cultures and go more in-depth for grades 5 and 6. Mrs. Glennon asked if it would be set up as a specialist model and Ms. Brust said that could be the starting point.

Ms. Brust said the summer curriculum development costs involve new courses. At the Middle School, there will be Drama, Art, and Strength and Conditioning. At the high school, there will be Music Technology and a Rock Band program. There are also summer professional development costs that will take place for AP courses and Project Lead the Way (PLTW).

Ms. Brust explained that costs for new instructional materials for next year are increasing at an alarming rate, but some of it is grant-funded. Mrs. Obey added that she hopes a few expenses can be covered through the pothole grants mentioned by the State Representatives. Mr. Chilcott said the good news is that about 30% of these costs are grant-funded.

Ms. Brust outlined the next steps for her department, which include reviewing and revising writing expectations by grade level, particularly regarding grammar instruction. Additionally, she emphasized the need to select a science program. At PCMS, the plan is to implement the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Medical Detectives program and revise the electives for drama, art, and physical education. The department will also continue the implementation of year four of Engineering and Biomedical Sciences, as well as the PLTW Capstone Course. There will be an ongoing focus on improving grading practices, with the aim of making recommendations for the 2026-2027 school year. Furthermore, the team will integrate applied learning principles to enhance student engagement. Finally, they will explore the feasibility of offering American Sign Language courses.

FY26 Student Services Budget Presentation

Ms. DeLorenzo highlighted several key points for FY 25, including the introduction of a new IEP form and an emphasis on educating families. Additionally, a more comprehensive preschool evaluation, which began last year, has now been fully implemented. The LIPS reading program, a multi-sensory approach to literacy, is one of the notable initiatives, along with the purchase of Pocket Talk devices. These two-way translation devices assist English Language Learners and are utilized by teachers, students, and coaches.

Further highlights include various training sessions that have taken place. The 18-22 Transition Program formed a partnership with the CVS Training Center in Boston, allowing participants to acquire valuable skills that they plan to apply in local CVS locations. Moreover, the Unified Sports program has expanded to include grades 5 and 6, with ongoing collaboration with the PCMS grades 7 and 8. Mr. Chilcott confirmed that the Unified Sports Program will continue to grow in the coming years.

A company named Understanding Our Differences visited PCMS to train the student council for grades 7 and 8 on disability awareness. The training covered how to work with students with disabilities, different profiles of students, and strategies for engaging with them and being a good friend. The PCMS students plan to train the 6th-grade Ambassadors as part of this initiative.

Ms. DeLorenzo gave an overview of the current staffing levels for her department. There are 485 special education students and that's about 20% of the population, which is the State percentage.

Section 504 plans are accommodation plans designed for students with disabilities, which may include mental or physical impairments that significantly affect their functioning in a school setting. These plans outline necessary accommodations to support the curriculum, instruction, and overall learning environment.

Over the past four years, the number of 504 plans has increased for various reasons, including a rising need for support related to mental health. The number of English Language Learners has remained around 70 over this period, although this number fluctuates weekly and monthly.

In terms of social-emotional and behavioral needs, several hundred students receive counseling services through both general education and special education. School social workers and psychologists facilitate counseling groups and provide individual counseling to both sets of students.

The district contracts with the Pilgrim Area Collaborative for Behavioral Consultant (BCBA) and Licensed Applied Behavioral Analyst (LABA) services for about 17 hours a week, primarily focused on students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). These professionals also offer consultation to substantially separate programs and teachers.

The Therapeutic Resource Rooms include the Compass Program at PHS, the Titan Compass Lab at PCMS, and Titan Labs at the elementary level. Approximately 150 students have accessed these resources throughout the year.

Mrs. Delaney inquired whether the teacher or parents refer their student to the Therapeutic Resource Rooms and Ms. DeLorenzo explained that it follows a collaborative model with a referral process.

Ms. DeLorenzo stated that her department's budget requests include the creation of a social/emotional substantially separate special education classroom. Additionally, she is requesting the addition of a .3FTE Out-of-District Coordinator to alleviate some of the responsibilities of the Secondary Special Education Coordinator. Although the number of students has remained steady in the 30s, the needs of these students have changed over the years, leading to an increase in meetings and coordination with families. Finally, there is a request for a full-time special education teacher at PHS to support that co-teaching model for Math and Science.

Mr. Chilcott inquired about the cost of the new program. Mrs. Obey explained that the majority of the expenses would be related to personnel. Mr. Chilcott expressed his support, stating that any effort to address this is a positive step. Mrs.

Delaney suggested that the program could potentially invite students from other districts for a fee, which could help offset the costs. Mrs. Bollinger emphasized that this program would be a great benefit for families in Pembroke.

Ms. DeLorenzo said there are several additional budget requests around social/ emotional/behavioral. One is a full-time coordinator of Behavioral Health, Wellness, and Counseling. This position would supervise and evaluate the Guidance staff 7-12 and align the mental health services and programming supports PreK-22. Mr. Chilcott asked about possible grant funding, and Mrs. Obey said there is some grant funding from the DPH, but the sustainability of the grant is in question. The last request is for three full-time Registered Behavior Technicians. RBTs implement the behavior intervention plans of the BCBAs and work directly with both the students and staff. Mrs. Delaney said as a former teacher, she believes this support can really transform a classroom.

Ms. DeLorenzo stated her department's curricular requests include online subscriptions, curricular workbooks, and additional Pocket Talks for English Language Learners. Additionally, curricular materials for the Transition Program to expand their life skills offerings. Finally, the purchase of special education assessments that are used for cognitive assessments for students 16 years and older.

Ms. DeLorenzo outlined the next steps, which include continuing to review the direct instruction curricular program/needs in special education and the associated PD for teachers. Second, there will be a focus on refining the substantially separate program models for special education if the new social/emotional/behavioral program cannot be created. Additionally, staff and parents will be surveyed about the new Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and further professional development opportunities will be explored. Finally, there will also be an effort to find more professional development opportunities for managing challenging behaviors. Mrs. Delaney suggested teachers visit other districts that have a program similar to what Pembroke is trying to create in order to get ideas.

Mr. Chilcott stated that many of the requested items through the budget process cannot be accommodated due to a lack of funding, but this process helps establish priorities. It is a constructive approach to budgeting that ensures the district is continually innovating and challenging itself. Through these two budget presentations, you can begin to understand how the expectations for schools and teachers today differ from those of 20 years ago. The district is fortunate to have dedicated teachers who strive to do their best for all students.

Subcommittee/Liaison Updates:

Mrs. Obey reported that she met with the Community Preservation Committee last night and the group voted to grant the district \$500,000 to replace the Hobomock playground, exceeding the request for \$400,000. This funding will be included in the spring Town Meeting article. She said there was a discussion about whether to complete the project in phases or all at once and ultimately, they decided that completing the project all at once was the best approach. Also, there was a discussion about the possibility of fundraising so that families and students could have a stake in the project. The district will explore options for a small-scale fundraising effort in the summer and early fall.

Mr. Chilcott recognized Mrs. Glennon for her efforts in bringing this matter to the committee, adding that she was determined to advocate for the playground, emphasizing that it was dangerous for kids. Her leadership was instrumental in making this happen, and the committee is grateful for her hard work. Mrs. Bollinger recognized Mr. Ciccotti from the Select Board, who initially proposed asking the CPC for the funds. Mr. Glennon mentioned that Mr. Brown from the Select Board also noted that the CPC had funded the Mattakeesett ball field, which helped spur some momentum for this project. Mrs. Bollinger also commended Mrs. Obey for her excellent work in putting the application together. Mr. Boyle emphasized the need for the committee to recognize Christopher Woods and his company, Safety Solutions, for their contributions as well.

Future Meeting Dates and Topics

3/25, 4/1, 4/8

4/15 – Joint with Selectboard & Advisory

5/6 – Public budget & School Choice

VOTE: At 8:39 PM on a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Katrina Delaney, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

APPROVED: March 25, 2025

MOTIONS

VOTE: On a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Katrina Delaney, it was unanimously voted to approve the school committee meeting minutes of February 25, 2025 and March 4, 2025, as presented.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

VOTE: On a motion made by Katrina Delaney and seconded by David Boyle, it was unanimously voted to approve the MIAA middle-level waivers for boys' lacrosse and softball.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none

VOTE: At 8:39 PM on a motion made by Allison Glennon and seconded by Katrina Delaney, it was unanimously voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Patrick Chilcott, Allison Glennon, Katrina Delaney, Susan Bollinger, David Boyle
Voting No: none
Abstaining: none
Absent: none