

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2025

The warrants for bills payable were reviewed and signed by the School Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chris Oliver at 6:00 p.m. in the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center.

On a roll call the following members were present: John Nunes, Mary Beckwith, Kathleen Amaral, Elizabeth Coughlin and Chris Oliver.

Haley Zexter, DHS Senior and Student Representative to the School Committee was present.

Also present: Dr. Saba-Maguire, James Kiely and Ms. Genthner.

The Chair announced the meeting is being recorded for future broadcast over DCTV.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the Regular Session Minutes of March 3, 2025 as written. The motion passed: 4-0. Mrs. Amaral Abstained

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Executive Session Minutes of March 3, 2025 as written, with the stipulation that they be held until the matters under consideration are resolved. The motion passed: 4-0. Mrs. Amaral abstained.

PUBLIC HEARING

FY26 Budget

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to open the Public Hearing on the proposed FY26 Budget at 6:05 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Mr. Oliver invited those who wish to speak on the matter to come forward.

Nathan Silva asked the Committee to vote down the proposed FY26 budget and provided his reasons.

Jody Parisi, Co-President of the Dartmouth Educators Association, stated her concerns regarding the FY26 budget specifically class size and what positions are being cut.

Renee Vieira, Co-President of the Dartmouth Educators Association, commented on the FY26 budget including positions to be cut and administration salaries.

Zack Tavares, DeMello School Council member and Town Meeting member, provided comments asking the leaders in this community to support public education.

Robin Delafuente, a parent of Dartmouth Public School students, asked the Committee to consider the budget carefully and support our teachers by protecting their jobs.

A concerned parent of a DeMello 5th grader gave comments about Dartmouth's reputation as a community that prioritized education and encouraged the District to "ask for what you need"; you have support in the community.

Elizabeth Kavanaugh Murphy, a lifelong resident of Dartmouth and parent of a Dartmouth High School graduating school senior, asked the Committee to vote down the draft budget and to send a message to Town Departments and residents that our schools must be fully funded.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to close the Public Hearing on the FY26 Budget at 6:33 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Renee Vieira made comments pertaining to the high school program of studies specifically grade level credit requirements, sustainable pathways, electives and class sizes.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Haley Zexter reported on activities and events happening at Dartmouth High School (DHS).

- Academic calendar update.
- Dartmouth's Finest* update: congratulations to Charlotte French who won the competition.
- World Language Week update
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) visit to DHS and thanked all students and staff who participated
- TedX update
- AP Art Show at the Dartmouth Cultural Center
- DHS Blood Drive
- DHS Theater Company is hosting *Comedy Bingo Fundraiser* on March 29th; tickets are available on ParentSquare.

SPOTLIGHT ON KIDS – Dartmouth Middle School: Peter Rossi, Dartmouth Middle School (DMS) Principal, stated tonight's *Spotlight* focused on the middle school's Unified Sports Program noting the program is directed by Bill Garcia, DMS school social worker, with the assistance of many others noting the program recently added bocce and cheerleading to its list of activities.

A short video, produced by Temple Mitchell, DMS Instructional Technology Specialist as well as a coach for the Unified Sports program, was aired wherein students and staff were seen enjoying program activities.

Mr. Rossi "plugged" for the middle school's spring production of *Once Upon A Mattress* (performances are scheduled for April 11th and 12th).

Mr. Garcia highlighted the program and dedication of students and staff to build an inclusive community and described how the program funds itself through different events and programs (including *Puzzlepaloosa* and Half Day Café).

Mr. Garcia stated the Unified Sports Program is not just about sports; it is about being part of something “big” and noted the recently held “Spirit Week” and green day initiative and the “spirit shop” where students in the P.A.L.S. program participated in by taking orders and delivering “green” items to classrooms providing a vocational opportunity for students.

The following student members of the Unified Sports Program were in attendance: Victor Morency, Michael Simas, Maddie Pavao, Olivia Sorenson, Addison Leary and Bennett Ross.

Addison Leary, a middle school sixth grade student, provided brief comments about her experience as a member of *Learning Partners* and the Unified Sports Program.

PRESENTATION

Dartmouth High School – Program of Studies: Dr. Saba-Maguire introduced the matter stating it is her hope the presentation clearly demonstrates what the expectations are for students at Dartmouth High School (DHS) noting it became clear when MCAS was removed as a graduation requirement or competency determination (CD) that DHS’s program of studies is one the State holds as an exemplary programming path.

Ryan Shea, Principal of DHS, and Bridgit DaSilva, Director of HS Counseling and Support Services, presented the proposed 2025-2026 DHS Program of Studies noting the process to create the program was a collaborative effort between Ms. DaSilva and lead teachers.

Mr. Shea noted a “sub-section” to make the “document” more user friendly and to help with the transition to the high school specifically for incoming freshmen.

Mr. Shea stated MCAS is still being administered noting it is required in order to receive the “Seal of Bi-literacy” as well as the John and Abigail Adams scholarship.

Mr. Shea briefly highlighted areas of the Program of Studies including the 27 AP class offerings and how all students are being encouraged to take AP courses noting the AP Capstone Pathway.

Mr. Shea continued highlighting things that didn’t change within the program of studies (ie Internship and Dual Enrollment) and things that did (graduation credit requirements courses changes in the following departments: English; Business, Innovation and Technology (BIT), Science, Social Studies, Art and Wellness.

Mr. Shea stated “we” follow the MA core standards.

Mr. Shea noted that some course offerings were driven by student and DHS graduates’ comments.

Ms. Coughlin asked about the changes in graduation requirements.

Mr. Shea explained the reasoning behind the changes which was done in order to include courses in the BIT Department and to allow students more options without taking away choice.

Ms. Beckwith asked how Dual Enrollment works.

Ms. DaSilva explained the eligibility requirements in order to participate in Dual Enrollment and how it must work with a student's school schedule and noted that students cannot take courses as a Dual Enrollment class if they are offered at DHS.

Student Representative Haley Zexter asked if guidance will be recommending to incoming freshman when to take courses.

Ms. DaSilva responded students should be meeting annually with guidance counselors to go over their four- year plan at which time course levels should be discussed.

Mr. Nunes asked about the number of students to "run" a course.

Mr. Shea responded it comes down to what the schedule can "build" and not necessarily the number of students.

Ms. DaSilva stated "we" also look at the core content graduation requirements first as a priority to know how many sections we need to offer.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Coughlin to approve the graduation requirements as presented under the Program of Studies. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Proposed FY26 Budget – Further Discussion: Dr. Saba-Maguire thanked those who came "out tonight" to make statements about the proposed FY26 budget.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated the District acknowledges school costs continue to rise and the pressure that puts on our Town's resources.

Dr. Saba-Maguire continued stating it must be clear the issue is not that "our" spending is out of line; the issue is that "our" costs are increasing due to factors beyond our control.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated the District is committed to working collaboratively with the Town to find responsible and sustainable solutions while ensuring Dartmouth students receive the education they deserve.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated this is not just a school department problem it is a Town wide discussion about priorities and how we invest in Dartmouth's future.

Mr. Kiely talked about a "common thread" in comments made about the budget this evening; to figure out to have a sustainable budget pattern moving forward.

Mr. Kiely provided a different School Choice Budget Plan (which was included in the member's meeting packet) and noted the plan is based on an alternate scenario presented by a member of the Finance Committee at their March 6th meeting.

Mr. Kiely explained the scenario would require the Town to commit an additional \$245,000 to the School Department's budget over the next five years; Mr. Kiely stated the budget shows that after the five years all of the additional costs over and above \$700,000 would have been reincorporated into the Dartmouth Public School's operating budget.

Mr. Kiely stated with an increase of \$245,000 - approximately a quarter of a percent of the Town's overall budget - we could solve the salary issue and the summer and after school program issue which are funded through school choice noting it doesn't solve all of our problems; it does mean if this solution was considered by the Town it would solve one big problem.

Mr. Kiely stated the only other way he can see to solve the problem is with an override or "cutting" staff.

Mr. Kiely stated he shared this alternate scenario with the Finance Committee member who brought it up and with Gary Carreiro, the Interim Town Administrator, adding there is an interest to know what this Committee's thoughts are about this idea as a potential solution.

Mr. Oliver stated his concerns about increasing class sizes specifically at the elementary level and the need for more Education Support Professionals while noting the District's financial constraints adding he likes the solution Mr. Kiely has put forth as it helps remove "our" need to rely on school choice funds noting an override still may be necessary.

Mr. Oliver stated he cannot support a Human Resource Director position at this time noting the position is necessary adding he would like to see collaboration with the Town with an HR position.

Mrs. Amaral agreed with Mr. Oliver's comments.

Mr. Nunes stated his reasons for supporting the alternative budget scenario as presented by Mr. Kiely noting school choice is an annual vote and not a given source of revenue asking are we "putting a band-aid" on the problem; Mr. Nunes stated he supports the Human Resource position at this time.

Ms. Beckwith stated we should look at "this" as a start adding she is a big supporter of an HR person but agreed with the Chair and suggested we look at the position again next year.

Ms. Coughlin stated she loves this "idea" and noted it does not solve our problems but it makes them "smaller"; Ms. Coughlin stated she agreed with most of the public comments this evening including class size and getting rid of teachers and explained why she did not agree with the comment on administration salaries adding she would recommend the items that were requested that were not put in the proposed budget not be added at this time because the Town cannot afford it adding she believes it can afford this alternative scenario and hopes that they see it is.

Ms. Coughlin made comments that as a Town, if we agree on the benefit of smaller class sizes and better benefit packages for all Town employees, “we need to tax ourselves more” and noted the need for an override adding, because of where we are financially, we should put off getting an HR person; I think it is a responsible budget we are putting forward.

Mr. Oliver asked what the next steps are if “this” is something the Committee would be willing to entertain: approving a budget with a \$245,000 reduction out of school choice going into the operating budget.

Mr. Oliver stated if a position is “desperately” needed and the money is available then school choice funds should be used to fund the position.

Mr. Nunes added if the position is required and needs to be funded in FY26 out of school choice the position should be rolled into the FY27 budget.

Mr. Kiely reiterated that the Interim Town Administrator did want to hear from the School Committee and what the plan was from us; I will communicate that tomorrow morning and ask that there is consideration from the Finance Committee and Select Board to support this.

Mr. Kiely stated we would normally vote our budget at the next School Committee meeting noting there is not a lot of time between now and then explaining that “we” can make a change to our budget right up until Town Meeting noting, ideally, we want the “correct” number to be on Schedule A of the meeting warrant.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral that we approve the adjustments to school choice as presented using \$245,000 rolled up the next six years as presented. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Superintendent’s Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire provided information of work being done in the district that is aligned to the District Strategic Plan as well as current activities and events that are happening.

-Teacher and Learning Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire reported she attended the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) sessions offered: Health and Wellness, Student Well-being, Restoring Public Trust in Education, Strategic Planning as well as Building Stakeholder Buy-In noting its relevance in light of the possibility of requesting an override.

Mr. Nunes left the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Ross Thibault, Executive Director of Teaching and Learning/Secondary Level, provided an update on the following matters: Carnegie Math curriculum pilot at DHS; explanation of the recent NEASC visit listing the strengths, areas that need improvement and recommendations per the NEASC Committee adding there will be a formal report; update on DMS author visit; World Language professional development event hosted by DHS.

Mr. Nunes return to the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

-Budget and Capital Improvement Update: HR: Update on search for Associate and Assistant

Principal vacancies.

-Family and Community Engagement Update: *Dartmouth's Finest* was an event that showcased student talent, school spirit and community engagement.

-Safe and Supportive Schools Update: update on the re-establishment of School Crisis Teams lead by Kim Redlon, Assistant Director of Student Services.

Report of the Chair: The Chair reported he received a letter from Michael Watson, Superintendent of Greater New Bedford Voke Tech, notifying the Committee that Cynthia Marland's term as one of Dartmouth's representatives to their School Committee is expiring on May 1, 2025 and that she is seeking reappointment; Mr. Oliver asked that the matter be placed on the next meeting's agenda for consideration adding he would like to hear from Dartmouth representatives about Voke's lottery admission policy.

-Mrs. Amaral provided an update on the Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC) and stated a meeting is scheduled for April 10th at 6:00 p.m. at Quinn School.

-Sports Update.

-Band Update.

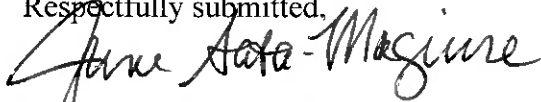
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The next regular session of the School Committee will take place in the Library Media Center at Dartmouth High School and via live stream at www.youtube.com/dhstvmedia on Monday, April 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to adjourn at 8:27 p.m. into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining where an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position (DAA and DEA) and, in addition, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to litigation where an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the School Committee's bargaining position and not to reconvene in open session. On a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



June Saba-Maguire, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

Agenda

Brief

Regular and Executive Session Minutes for March 3, 2025

DMS Spotlight on Kids Video

DHS 2025-2026 Program of Studies Presentation

Proposed FY26 Budget – Additional Information on School Choice Budget