

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on April 28, 2025 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center and via Zoom Webinars.

1. Call to Order

President Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams
Vice-President – Bianca Alexis-Sylvain
Secretary – Nathan Caron

Board Members Present: Karen Bergin
Alisha Blake (*joined at 7:08 p.m. & attended virtually*)
Danni Cruz
Susan Hambey

Present for the administration: Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools

Due to Board members attending virtually, votes were taken by roll call vote.

At the start of the meeting, Ms. Maynard-Adams read a statement for the record. This statement can be found at the end of these minutes, in its entirety.

2. Student of the Month Recognitions

The Board of Education recognized the Students of the Month from each school:

- Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission: Angel Castro Trochez
- Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School: Edward Espinoza
- Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School: Joshua Luque
- C.B. Jennings International Elementary Magnet School: Carlos Garcia
- Bennie Dover Jackson Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus: Jose Hernandez Colon
- New London High School Multi-Magnet Campus: Isaias Suero
- New London Adult Education: Marie Judeline Saint-Aime

3. Public Comment

Sarah Turner, New London: Ms. Turner came this evening to say that she is concerned with what feels like a lack of transparency. It may not be intentional lack of transparency, but it seems that there are some conflicting messages. There are things that are voted on at the Board and it sounds like there are buildings being closed in the summer to cut back on the budget, and then on the news there is recruitment for year-round programming and expanding those programs. She learned that the program is being expanded through the

middle school. If it is such a success that is great, but she is surprised that she had not heard about this. As a parent and having concerns, there are things voted on and happening and they are not the same. This makes her question the integrity of the Board when things are voted on in public but then appear to change in private, it makes her question as a parent.

4. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that the last month had been quite busy. She was contacted by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut Housing Coalition in regards to the increased homeless population in New London. They had a desire to connect to help to provide more resources. Flyers were shared that can be distributed to our families. Ms. Maynard-Adams and Ms. Hambey also recently had the opportunity to tour the new community center. She gave kudos to the city for a well thought out community center. She shared that the City's Board of Finance will be entertaining the Board of Education's appropriation on Wednesday night. She noted that she found this information out from a reporter, rather than from anyone at the City.

5. Information and Reports

- i. Superintendent's Report

- Operations Department Update

- Mr. Miguel Gautier, Executive Director of Operations, provided an update on the Operations Department.
 - This presentation included information on the following topics:
 - The Team
 - HVAC
 - Facilities
 - Technology
 - Construction, North Campus
 - Construction, South Campus

A copy of this presentation in its entirety is available upon request.

6. Approval of the Minutes

- April 7, 2025 – Business Meeting

Motion by Ms. Hambey, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to approve the April 7, 2025 Business Meeting Minutes.

Motion carried, 6-0

(Ms. Blake was temporarily disconnected during this vote.)

7. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Alexis-Sylvain, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of April 28 2025 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

A. Action Items

- I. Approve Policy 5245.2 – Freedom of Speech/Expression for its First Reading as Recommended by the Policy Committee.
- II. Approve the proposed Changes to Special Education Rates as Recommended by the Finance & Audit Committee

Motion carried, 7-0

8. Executive Session Pursuant to Connecticut State Statutes: Title I, Chapter 114, Section 1-200(5), Connecticut Freedom of Information Act

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Alexis-Sylvain, to move into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing:

- Attorney-Client Communication Regarding Pending Litigation.

Motion carried, 7-0

The following people were invited into Executive Session: The Board as a Whole, Superintendent Cynthia Ritchie, Executive Director of Talent and Human Resources – Christine Pemberton

Time into Executive Session: 8:05 p.m.

Time out of Executive Session: 8:47 p.m.

No votes were taken while in Executive Session

9. Action Following Executive Session

- Motion by Ms. Maynard – Adams, seconded by Mr. Cruz, that the Board approve a negotiated settlement in the matter of an administrator, and authorize the Superintendent to sign said settlement agreement.

Motion carried, 7-0

10. Board Comments, Questions

None

8. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Cruz, seconded by Ms. Hambey, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 7-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Caron
Secretary, Board of Education

Elaine Maynard-Adams Statement for the Record

We heard at the April 23 special council meeting that the mayor did not know what our budget gap was. To be clear and fully transparent, the budget that was approved by the BOE and sent to the Mayor on March 15 requested an increase in the general fund appropriation of \$7,645,604. That budget was based on revenue estimates from information that was available prior to the release of the governors recommended budget – a budget that is still unlikely to pass exactly as he proposed. Since then there has been activity to suggest some different revenue projections for some of the funding sources. As the BOE studies the potential impact of possible revenue stream outcomes, the BOE continues to work to identify ways of balancing the budget.

Recently the BOE was made aware of an additional \$925,000 grant that the state intends to award the district, and that information was provided to the mayor by both the Superintendent and the Board President. We have not received an official award but have nonetheless factored that additional revenue into our active projections. Another change involves health insurance rates for FY26. The budget as submitted used rate assumptions because the final insurance rates were not available at that time. Final rates proved to be higher than what we estimated, and we have adjusted our proposed budget accordingly.

Other projected changes include some minor increases in two of our smaller grants. It appears that when the FY24 audit is completed we will be able to deposit more funds into the non-lapsing fund, but this is not definite yet. Regardless, we have included this in our active projections.

The FY26 budget book assumed that the city will keep its promise and appropriate additional funds to education in FY25 as a result of additional ECS received by the city. This has occurred, but the city has not appropriated the additional funds. The mayor's proposed FY26 budget ignores this additional appropriation. While we disagree we are reducing our projections as if the additional ECS is not received.,

Be aware that Active projections can change on a daily basis. Also be aware that the legislature's Appropriations Committee released its budget on April 23. It does not contain any additional ECS but MAY provide extra support for special education costs. Its passage is of course not guaranteed so we have not added any of this projected revenue increase.

The budget as submitted to the mayor indicated that the BOE needed \$7.6m in additional funds appropriated in the general fund. When considering that the mayor's recommended budget would fund the General fund at a rate that is less than what we anticipated the FY25 final appropriation to be, this means that the amount being requested is an increase of \$8.3m over FY25. Based on updated assumptions, the BOE has been able to decrease that projected need to \$4.5, (\$5.2m if the FY26 gen fund appropriation is lower than what was promised for FY25 (as is reflected in the mayors proposed budget)). If we update our projection to information as of yesterday – 4/23/25 – that need grows to \$5.5m.

That number will continue to change, but clearly it will not change to a point where any amount by which the city might consider increasing our general fund appropriation could be more than the final need. Projections continue to change throughout every year. Budgets are projections and guidelines that are based on the information known at the time that the budget is approved. This is evidenced by the fact that the city unassigned fund balance has grown over the past several years despite no budget projection for this. It is perfectly normal that budget changes occur throughout the year. That is the purpose of line item transfers. What is important to note is that our overall budget never exceeds our total budget.

We don't know the origin of the \$2.5m number that many speakers advocated for at the special council meeting.. While \$2.5m would be a very welcome increase, we would still have to cut large amounts from our budget in order to balance it. No projections have come even close to closing the total gap with only a \$2.5m increase in our general fund. The BOE has been clear that we submitted the budget that we need, but that we have no expectations that the full need will be funded. We are aware that we will have to cut essential services in order to balance the budget. We have communicated this all along. While our projections indicate a likelihood of an improvement, under the best-case scenario we still have to cut from services that the BOE has deemed necessary.

The fluctuations in projections are irrelevant when considering the requested increases. Our budget crisis is primarily from the effects of the city not funding inflationary costs, and the expiration of grant funds that the BOE used in place of these increases that did not happen. We have heard no one suggest that the city fund the BOE general fund at the full amount that was requested.