Ashland School Committee Minutes
February 26, 2025

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present: Laurie Tosti, Chair - *attended remotely*
Marc Terry, Vice Chair
Paul Kendall, Member
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
Marcy Culverwell, Member
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Agenda Review and adoption
Mr. Terry reviewed the agenda items for the meeting. He took roll call and asked the School Committee members to approve the agenda as presented.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment
None

Student Presentation: Mindess Community Learning
Four third grade students, Dhanush, Aubrey, Jananhi, and Emmett presented about Community Learning projects at Mindess. Small groups of students from grades three, four and five meet with a teacher that is different from their classroom teacher. They meet monthly during the school year to make new connections, get to know a new teacher, and enjoy a fun activity. Some example activities have been, “Drop Everything and Play”, the Feather project, inspired by the book, “Wings”. All third grade students created their own feather. Ms. Glynn, Mindess Art Teacher, then collected all the feathers and displayed them as a pair of wings and an art installation at Mindess School.

Warrant Approvals
Between February 13, 2025 and February 26, 2025, I, Paul Kendall, authorized by my signature payables in the amount of $511,904.00. This includes General Fund expenses of $ 363,369.27, Revolving expenses of $ 133,384.03, Grants expenses of $ 15,073.16 , and Meals Tax expenses of $77.54.

Superintendent’s Report: James Adams

Mr. Adams wanted to publicly thank Esmer Casas, Media and Communications Director, whose last day will be February 28, 2025. She is taking a new job at Marlboro Public Schools.

A TriBoard meeting will be held on Saturday, March 1st with the School Committee members, Select Board members and the FinCom members.

Superintendent Adams met today with Senate President Karen Spilka at her offices in Boston, along with 6 other school Superintendent's in her district. They discussed that it is a tough year financially at the state level. Mr. Adams asked if there might be guidance in the future for school districts on the issue of high school Competency Determination.

Assistant Superintendent's Update: Dr. Michael Caira, Jr.
Dr. Caira congratulated the Boy's Wrestling team with their recent Division III State Tournament results: Logan Costello and Adrian Guzman were both state champions in their events.
The Clocker Classic basketball game is scheduled for tomorrow night. It's a fun fundraising event where teachers from all schools play against each other. The AHS Theatre Society will be performing Anything Goes this weekend. Shows are Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and tickets are available for sale at the door. Casino Night, sponsored by AEFI, is scheduled for Saturday, March 8 at the Warren Conference Center. Tickets are on sale for $75.00.

Superintendent's Contract
The contract extension is for six years and will start July 1, 2025 and extend through June 30, 2031. Mr. Terry appreciates all that Mr. Adams has done for the district, and for their working relationship. Ms. Tosti also noted how much she appreciates Mr. Adams' leadership. Mr. Adams noted that he is honored to have the school committee's support. Ms. Fitanides moved to approve the Superintendent's contract as presented. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

FY'25 Budget Update and Adjustments
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations reviewed details on a favorable $1.2M budget variance. There are 7 budget categories. Ms. Matheiu's reviewed the current balances of each budget category. He is proposing that the committee move $629K from the $1.2M variance from the School Choice category into the General Operating Fund. Ms. Culverwell asked if need be, could we move this money back? Mr. Mathieu's confirmed yes. Mr. Kendall moved to approve $629,000 of the School Choice funds to be moved to the General Operating Fund. Ms. Culverwell seconds the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti had dropped off the call at this time.

SY2025-2026 Calendar Update
An early release date was originally scheduled for May 15, 2026 to accommodate professional development and the high school junior prom. The high school was able to reserve a venue for

Friday, May 8, 2026, instead. Ms. St. Coeur is requesting to change the scheduled early release date to be May 8, 2026. Mr. Kendall moved to approve the calendar change for school year 2025-2026 as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Consent Agenda

Mr. Kendall moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: AYE

Ms. Fitanides: AYE

Mr. Kendall: AYE

Mr. Terry: AYE

Reports of School Committee Members

Ms. Culverwell attended a recent Middle School Site Council meeting with the principal, Mrs. Lachapelle. Mrs. Lachapelle reported that the school held their first all-school assembly since Covid-19, and it went well. Students overall had good behavior, and the principal is interested to have assemblies approximately once a quarter. In December, the students hosted a Toy Drive, and collected 1,200 toys to support Toys for Tots. The student council is sponsoring Spirit Days every Friday. Grade 8 course recommendations are going out soon for students going to high school. There will be a Class Meeting next week for eighth grade students to learn more about this process. There will also be a meeting with eighth grade parents to review the scheduling process for the high school. Some students are applying to Keefe Tech or other private schools for high school. The Site Council discussed homework expectations for each grade level. There was some discussion on the new schedule changes for next year. There was also some discussion about Individual Student Success Plan (ISSP) letters and how these plans can be communicated to parents in a more effective way. Ms. Culverwell reports that Ms. Lachapelle is a very thoughtful principal as she serves in her first year as principal at the middle school.

Mr. Kendall attended a Mindes Building Committee meeting last night. As an update on the tax rebate – the committee's tax advisor has been in touch with the IRS. He is hopeful that there will be some movement on that issue, but there is no timeline yet. Mr. Terry asked when the Building Committee will officially complete its work, now that the school is open and running. Mr. Kendall indicated that typically, a building committee may continue to meet for two years after a building is opened. There is still no grass yet, and there are maintenance issues. For the MSBA process, currently 8 committee members are needed for each meeting to constitute a quorum. Going forward, Mr. Kendall noted that the committee may be able to reduce the number of people who need to participate in a vote.

At 6:43pm, Mr. Kendall made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen King

Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
Mindess Community Learning - School Committee Presentation
Copy of Warrant Approvals - FEBRUARY 26, 2025
School Committee 2.26.25
School_Calendar_2025-2026-1
02/26/25 G&D School Committee Acceptance Log
February 26, 2025 SC Meeting Grant Funds
Minutes - February 12, 2025