

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on June 9, 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 7:02 p.m.

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

Board Members Present: Karen Bergin
Danni Cruz
Susan Hambey

Board Members Absent: Alisha Blake

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

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

Please note that due to technical difficulties with the recording of this meeting, some minutes in relation to discussions may be brief.

2. Public Comment

None

3. Special Recognitions

The Superintendent presented the following Special Recognitions:

- Hybrid Substitute – Cordora Edwards
- New London High School Multi-Magnet Campus CABE Leadership Award
Winners:
 - Ashley Briceno
 - Hazel Poblete
- Bennie Dover Jackson Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus CABE Leadership Award
Winners:
 - Lesby Garcia
 - Bradyn Patterson
- National Junior Honor Society
 - Advisor: Betsey Russell
 - Members:
 - Gabriella Alston
 - Bibianna Cysewska

- Michael Edwards III
 - Lesby Garcia
 - Joel Gonzalez
 - Gabriella Gray
 - Melia Guilbert-Ho
 - Cecil Johnson
 - Bradyn Patterson
 - Dixon Portales Lopez
 - Elijah Rocket
 - Nayeli Sanchez
- Teacher of the Year and Paraeducator of the Year Recipients
 - Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission
 - Teacher of the Year: Kelly Pierce
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Madeline Barberan
 - Nathan Hale Arts Magnet Elementary School
 - Teacher of the Year: Johnna Clark
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Cynthia Salas
 - C.B. Jennings International Elementary Magnet School
 - Teacher of the Year: Mary Gaines
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Celeste Riley
 - Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School
 - Teacher of the Year: Emily Ellis
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Tanajiah Lesane
 - Bennie Dover Jackson Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus
 - Teacher of the Year: Kyle Flanagan
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Lizmarie Rivera
 - New London High School Multi-Magnet Campus
 - Teacher of the Year: Pallavi Vaswani
 - Paraeducator of the Year: Nadya Murphy
 - New London Adult & Continuing Education
 - Teacher of the Year: Kim Matson

4. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams reported that there is a Bill working its way through the State legislature which will provide a grant-type pot of money for schools to apply to for building maintenance issues. She is happy to say that it has passed the House and Senate, and was signed into law by the Governor. This Bill does need to go before the bonding commission to be funded. Hopefully by January or February an award letter will be received from the State for, what is expected to be, about \$220,000. These funds will need to be applied for and spent by June 30, 2026. She thanked our State partners who are doing what the City was not able to do. There is also additional money in the State budget for Special Education and Excess Cost. This is approximately \$500,000. Senator Marx was able to get another \$500,000 for PreK, Transitional K and Kindergarten. There was a scare that the Commissioner's

Network funds had disappeared, but thank you to the work of Senator Marx's Office, the district learned this was just a scare and these funds remain.

Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that she and Mr. Funk had a conference call with the Finance Specialist at the School & State Finance Project for a better understanding of how it came to be that New London is in a "hold harmless" category for ECS funding. This means that New London is overfunded, but the same level of funding will continue by state statute. It was determined that New London used to be 8th from the bottom in poverty scores, but we are now 12th from the bottom. The question remained that if we are wealthier than we used to be, why is there not more money. It was learned that as the City reduces the mill rate, it has a disproportionate affect on the reduction of ECS funding.

Following her report, Ms. Maynard-Adams allowed Mr. Cruz a moment of personal privilege to share comments with the Board. These comments can be found in their entirety at the end of these minutes.

5. Approval of the Minutes

- May 27, 2025

Motion by Ms. Bergin, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to approve the May 27, 2025 Business Meeting minutes.

Motion carried, 6-0

6. Approval of the Consent Agenda

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Cruz, that the following items, as set forth on the Consent Agenda for the Business Meeting of June 9, 2025 be approved unless removed by a Board member or the Superintendent of Schools:

A. Superintendent's Written Report

- I. Academics
- II. Human Resources
- III. Student & Family Support Services
- IV. Operations – Includes Magnet Pathways, Athletics, Facilities & Technology

B. Action Items

- I. Approve the Grade 6 Social Studies Unit 1 – Europe Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- II. Approve the Grade 6 Social Studies Unit 2 – East Asia Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- III. Approve the Grade 6 Social Studies Unit 3 – South Asia Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- IV. Approve the Grade 7 Social Studies Unit 1 – Africa Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee

- V. Approve the Grade 7 Social Studies Unit 2 - Oceania Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- VI. Approve the Grade 7 Social Studies Unit 3 – North America Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- VII. Approve the Grade 7 Social Studies Unit 4 – South America Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- VIII. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 1 – Establishing an American Identity Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- IX. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 2 – Westward Expansion Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- X. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 3 – Industrialization & Immigration Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- XI. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 4 - Sectionalism Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- XII. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 5 – Civil War Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- XIII. Approve the Grade 8 Social Studies Unit 6 - Reconstruction Curriculum as Recommended by the Curriculum Committee
- XIV. Approve Policy 5131.81 – Use of Private Technology Devices by Students for its Second and Final Reading
- XV. Accept the Resignation of Board Member Danni Cruz, Effective June 23, 2025

Motion carried, 6-0

7. Items Pulled from Consent Agenda

- Superintendent's Written Report – Business & Finance

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to receive the Superintendent's Written Report – Business & Finance for the record.

Ms. Maynard-Adams asked Mr. Funk to provide a brief update on the ARC/ESSER funds. Mr. Funk stated that he has reached out to the State Department of Education and to the State through local legislators. There is no update at this time regarding the extension. In the letter received back from the State Department of Education they said that they are looking into alternative plans. It is not a promise, but it would be prudent to put the expenses into that grant to show as receivable at the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Maynard-Adams asked if there was anything as a Board that he thinks they should be doing? Mr. Funk shared reaching out to Congressman Courtney would not hurt. Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that she is reiterating for the record that the Board sought and received approval to extend the date by which funds needed to be spent, submitted a budget showing the use of those funds, received approval from the State, and all was right until Secretary Linda McMahon cut the deadline short. This was after the administration had approved the extension.

Motion carried, 6-0

- Receive for the Record, a Letter from David McBride, City of New London Director of Finance, to BOE President Elaine Maynard-Adams, Superintendent Cynthia Ritchie, and Finance Director Rob Funk sent Thursday, June 5, 2025

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to discuss and frame a response to the letter from the City's Director of Finance related to School Crossing Guards

Ms. Maynard-Adams explained that this letter was received last week, and she wanted the Board to be aware of what the City has decided to do. It appears from this letter that the City will be putting out a RFP for crossing guard services, and they intend to submit the bills to the Board of Education for payment. She stated she believes this requires a written response from the Board.

Mr. Cruz stated that he thinks there needs to be a broader conversation on this topic because it is a public safety issue, not an education issue. The Mayor needs to provide the district with more money if he would like us to pay for the crossing guards. He asked if the Board can respond that they do not agree with their statement and then come to the table for a conversation? Ms. Maynard-Adams agreed that this is a public safety issue and does not belong in the education budget. She shared that it never used to be in our budget, and then at some point it appeared. To her, it is a public safety issue and she would agree that as such, it is an expense that should be borne by the City.

Ms. Hambey stated that if we respond, it should be emphasized that it used to be a city expense. She asked if the City legally could hold back district funds before they are deposited to a non-lapsing fund. Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that the only ones who can decide how Board funds are spent, are the Board members. The City has no authority to demand the Board pays them anything. This is an authority granted by the State, and in her opinion is a violation of state statute. Mr. Gautier shared that he had a conversation following the last Board meeting with NLPD Chief Wright, and that Chief Wright shared the transaction of the crossing guards going to the Board occurred approximately 2 decades ago, and they have no interest in taking them back. Mr. Gautier shared that in November of 2023 he received a quote after looking at privatizing crossing guards, and back then, the quote was \$203,000 a year. If that is what they are looking to do it will be extremely expensive.

Ms. Bergin asked if we could help the City be better informed about how the Board's funds can be spent. She mentioned being more clear about flat-funding, and explaining that when this happens there are places that cannot be funded.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that the Board's goal throughout the budget reductions was to keep teachers in front of students. She had been told that the Police

Department does not have the bandwidth to manage this, but they received an increase to their budget, significantly more than the education department did. She stated that the district cannot continue to be all things to all people. Crossing guards are a public safety issue and should be dealt with by the City.

Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that in her written response she will cite the specific state statute which gives the Board of Education the sole authority to spend Board funds. She will point out again that it is a public safety issue that should be dealt with by the City.

Mr. Caron stated that he believes there is value to point out the history of when it was taken from the City's budget and put into the District's budget. He stated that when he was the City Clerk he had to swear in the crossing guards. They have authority and power as it relates to safety and traffic control, and they can recommend issuing summons to anyone who violates those traffic instructions. It is clear that it is a public safety issue. Mr. Gautier shared that the crossing guards used to be sworn in, but that he had received an email in 2022, including Vernon Skau (NLFD) and the police department that crossing guards no longer needed to be sworn in, but there was no explanation as to why. He stated that they used to have a ceremony and a breakfast for them along with a refresher, and that email came in about two days prior to when this was supposed to occur.

Ms. Maynard-Adams summarized that she will try to get background as to how they came into the education budget, and she will draft a letter and send it to Board members for feedback. The letter will cite state statute and remind the Director of Finance that authority for spending Board funds is the Board, and that this is a public safety issue that should be addressed by the City and not the Board.

Responding to another section of the letter, it states that the City had not been officially notified. She stated that they get copies of the agenda and attachments. Had the emails been read, they would have seen it written out.

It was clarified that this letter will be sent to all who were included on the original letter from Mr. McBride. Ms. Maynard-Adams shared that she is open to any conversations that he would like to have. Ms. Maynard-Adams also clarified that the law has changed whereas Council no longer has to approve what moneys can be deposited into the non-lapsing fund. Mr. Funk stated that what makes a non-lapsing fund a non-lapsing fund is that no one can spend that money except the Board. While the Council has to authorize the expenditure, they cannot expend the money themselves. Ms. Alexis asked about any other local towns that utilize crossing guards and how they are paid for. Ms. Maynard-Adams responded that she had looked into this, Waterford has one which is paid by the town and Norwich has them which are in the Board's budget. It appears to be evenly split. Ms. Alexis clarified that Old Saybrook does not have any crossing guards, and New London would not be the only district to not have them.

Motion carried, 6-0

8. Board Comments, Questions

Mr. Caron highlighted, commended, and thanked Mr. Cruz. It is sad to accept the letter of resignation. He stated that he thinks the world of Mr. Cruz, and he appreciates the time and dedication that Mr. Cruz has given to the district, students, and his colleagues.

Ms. Hambey seconded what Mr. Caron said. She continued that she is jealous of his future colleagues who are blessed to have him.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Alexis-Sylvain, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Caron
Secretary, Board of Education