

ASHLAND SCHOOL BOARD REGULAR MEETING
Ashland Elementary School – Heffernan Media Center
Tuesday, May 6, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER
Chair Heath called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. RECORD ROLL

Members Present:

Mr. Stephen Heath, Chair
Mrs. Sandra Coleman, Vice-Chair
Mr. Jesse Farris
Mrs. Jennifer Foote

Administrators Present:

Mrs. Mary Moriarty, Superintendent
Mrs. Ashley Dolloff, Business Administrator
Mr. Guy Donnelly, AES Principal

Members Absent:

Mr. Stephen Felton (with notice)

Others Present:

Mr. David Ruell, Press

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Opened at 6:03 p.m.*

V. MINUTES

A. Regular School Board Meeting of April 1, 2025

Mrs. Coleman moved, seconded by Mrs. Foote, to approve the minutes of the Regular School Board meeting April 1, 2025, with edits.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

VI. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

A. Enrollment/Principals Report

Mr. Donnelly presented the enrollment report to the School Board, noting that there are no changes at this time. He then shared his Principal's Report, highlighting that the book fair will begin next week; an event students eagerly anticipate. He reported a major win for the baseball team against Inter-Lakes and announced a "Muffins in the Morning" event on May 16, where parents are invited to join their children for breakfast before school. The hydroponic farm near the main entrance has successfully produced lettuce, which is now being served in the cafeteria. The robotics team is preparing for the Spring Scramble in Pembroke at the end of the month. Students have been working hard for the upcoming Spring Concert, scheduled for May 29. End-of-year NWEA testing is currently underway and will continue throughout the month, marking the final assessments of the school year. Mr. Donnelly also recognized Teacher Appreciation Week, praising the dedicated Ashland staff and noting that several special activities are planned in their honor.

B. Year-to-Date Financial Report

Mrs. Dolloff presented the School Board with a year-to-date financial report, noting that our financial position remains similar to last month. The budget continues to be tight, and we are closely monitoring expenditures.

Mrs. Dolloff invited questions from the School Board.

There were no questions.

VII. CURRENT BILLS PAYABLE**A. General Operating Expenses**

Mrs. Dolloff presented to the School Board manifests #2013 and #2014.

Mrs. Coleman asked what is the Professional Development Registration Fee?

Mrs. Dolloff explained that the expense is for the School Nurse's membership in the Nurses Association.

Mrs. Moriarty stated that this provides a lot of resources for us. It is more for the school than the individual.

Mrs. Coleman stated everywhere she has worked she always had to pay her own to join any association. She asked if we have always paid for the nurses to belong to the New Hampshire Nurses Association?

Mrs. Moriarty responded that the expense is included in the budget and has been since the beginning of her tenure. She explained that the membership serves as a valuable resource for the school, particularly when addressing specific health concerns, as it provides access to relevant policies and facilitates important professional connections. Mrs. Moriarty also noted that school nurses often work in isolation. Unlike teachers, who have more structured opportunities for professional learning and support, nurses require different approaches. She emphasized that this line item is part of the current budget process and suggested it be considered by the School Board during next year's budget planning.

Mrs. Foote stated that the nurse is under a teacher contract, so she does have access to professional development funds.

Mrs. Moriarty confirmed that the information is correct; however, she is unsure whether memberships are included, as they are budgeted separately. If the expense were for a course, it would fall under the Professional Learning and Development funds.

Mr. Donnelly stated that the Principals Association membership fee has its own

budget line as well.

Mrs. Foote moved, seconded by Mr. Farris, to approve the payment of bills, manifests #2013 and #2014.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Historical Electricity Comparison

Mrs. Dolloff presented a historical electricity usage comparison, as requested by Mrs. Coleman during the previous meeting. The report spans the past 20 years and includes an average of the last five years. Notably, in fiscal year 2023, there was a significant decrease in electricity charges, which is reflected in the overall total billing. Although we reached out to the electrical company to verify the billing, they confirmed its accuracy. In contrast, fiscal year 2024 showed a marked increase in electricity costs, primarily due to rising energy prices and the operation of the HVAC system.

B. Preschool Feasibility Study

Mrs. Moriarty began by expressing her gratitude to Mrs. Holiday, Director of Student Services; Mrs. Soney, Special Education Teacher; and Mr. Donnelly, Principal, for their dedicated efforts on Project Mountain. She then invited Mr. Donnelly to provide an update on the current status of the project.

Mr. Donnelly reported that the committee has been meeting twice a month with facilitator Shelli Roberts to advance the work on Crotched Mountain. They conducted a facility readiness review and identified the Ashland School as a site for the preschool program, noting the need for playground improvements to ensure accessibility for all students. Staffing considerations were also discussed, including the availability of qualified preschool educators. The committee engaged with community stakeholders, reviewed regulatory requirements, and explored licensing scenarios for the Ashland Elementary School building. They also researched funding models and examined how other districts successfully implemented preschool programs. Stakeholder feedback has shown strong support for a full-day preschool option. The next steps include an internal review of the draft report to incorporate any new information, followed by final edits to the executive summary and preliminary report, which will be presented to the School Board in June. The full report will include findings, data summaries, and preliminary recommendations to support an informed decision regarding the future of preschool programming in Ashland.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2025/2026 School Year Calendar

Mrs. Foote moved, seconded by Mr. Farris, to approve the 2025/2026 School Year Calendar amended.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

B. Staffing Update

Mrs. Moriarty provided the School Board with a staffing update letting the School Board know there will be two Special Education Teacher openings.

C. Planning for the 2025/2026 School Year

Mrs. Moriarty noted that Mr. Donnelly has been working diligently with the leadership team and teachers on planning for the upcoming school year. She then invited Mr. Donnelly to provide a brief overview in preparation for the next meeting.

Mr. Donnelly, now in his second year, shared that his understanding of the students and school operations has grown significantly. He has engaged in ongoing discussions with the middle school team about grading practices and how student progress is communicated. Through conversations with other elementary school principals in SAU #48 and administrators at Plymouth High School, he discovered that our middle school students are the only ones entering Plymouth High School with a different grading system. He believes this puts them at a disadvantage, as they need time to adjust to a completely new approach. Mr. Donnelly acknowledged that no grading system is perfect but emphasized the importance of aligning ours to better support student success. With the full support of the middle school staff, he plans to present an update on the grading system at the next meeting, aiming to ensure our students have the same advantages as their peers. More information on the rollout of the new system will be shared in June.

D. Preliminary Fund Balance Report

Mrs. Moriarty explained that this discussion serves as a preliminary conversation, with a final decision expected in June. The School Board currently has an unassigned fund balance of \$54,034. During the budgeting process, \$5,000 was designated to be returned to taxpayers to help reduce the tax burden. Priority items under consideration include replacing the lawn mower and renewing the WatchGuard system, which is part of the district's internet filtering and was not included in the original budget. The draft proposal also suggests allocating \$20,000 toward a facilities assessment, with specific concerns such as paving near the gym entrance being noted but left flexible for further evaluation. Anticipated increases in Special Education costs are also being taken into account, as those expenses have consistently risen. Additionally, there is a plan to establish a regular cycle for updating furnishings, with the Principal determining priorities for replacement.

Mrs. Dolloff stated these are estimates at this point, the numbers we are presenting to you are considerations up to that amount.

E. General Assurances FY 2026

Mrs. Moriarty shared that although the NHSBA advised that some districts may choose to delay signing the General Assurances, she does not believe there is a need to wait. After thoroughly reviewing the assurances with Mrs. Dolloff, Mrs. Koch, and Mrs. Taggett, she is confident that there is nothing within them that would prevent

her from signing. She emphasized that the General Assurances are required in order for the district to receive funding.

Mrs. Foote moved, seconded by Mr. Farris, to approve General Assurance FY 2026 as presented.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

X. POLICY

A. First and Final Readings

Mrs. Foote moved, seconded by Mr. Farris, to approve the first and final readings. As presented.

- DAF-3 Business and Non-Institutional Operations
- JRA – Student Records and Access FERPA
The School Board asked to have this brought back to Attorney Loughlin for none for directory information pending legal counsel consultation with no students' names and information.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

XI. Public Comment – *Closed 7:02 at p.m.*

XII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Tuesday, May 20, 2025

SAU #2 Board Meeting @ Ashland Elementary School – Cafeteria

- Regular Board Meeting – **6:00 p.m.**

B. Tuesday, June 3, 2025

Ashland School Board Meeting @ Ashland Elementary School – Heffernan Media Center

- **Regular Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.**

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Farris moved, seconded by Mrs. Foote, to adjourn meeting at 7:03 p.m.

The motion carried 4 – 0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Briggs, Recording Secretary*