

The Business Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on June 23, 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 (*attended virtually, left at 7:50 p.m.*)
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

Ms. Christine Pemberton, Executive Director of Talent & Human Resources recognized staff retirees and staff years of service.

- The following staff were recognized as retirees for the 2024-2025 school year
 - Gloria Rodriguez
 - James Fitzmaurice
 - Sarah Willey
 - Felicia Bullock
 - Debra Bienkowski-Ferino
 - Peggy Cherrick
 - Tedman Martinez
 - Francesca Kortfelt
 - Stacy Perez
 - Laurelle Texidor

- Carla Andrews
 - Michele Tackett
 - Peter Kiefer
- Staff were also recognized for the following years of service:
 - 40 Years
 - 30 Years
 - 25 Years
 - 20 Years
 - 15 Years
 - 10 Years
 - 5 Years

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

4. Reports and Communications

- Board Chairperson's Report

Ms. Maynard-Adams thanked Board Member Danni Cruz for this time on the Board and all that he has done during his tenure. Mr. Cruz gave a farewell speech to all. *A copy of his statement can be found at the end of these minutes in its entirety.*

The Board recessed from 7:14 p.m. – 7:19 p.m.

- NLPS Strategic Plan End-of-Year Review
 - Dr. Ritchie, Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti – Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Carrie Rivera – Executive Director of School and Family Supports, Rob Funk – Chief Financial Officer, Miguel Gautier – Executive Director of Operations, Christine Pemberton – Executive Director of Talent & Human Resources, and Kristea Francolino – Manager of Executive Support Services presented to the Board the end-of-year updates of the District's Strategic Plan.

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

Ms. Blake left the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

5. Approval of the Minutes

- June 9, 2025

Motion by Ms. Bergin, seconded by Mr. Cruz, to approve the June 9, 2025 Business Meeting minutes.

Motion carried, 6-0

6. Board Election of a Board Member to Replace the Resignation of Board Member Danni Cruz

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Bergin, to elect Mr. Richard Martin as a Board of Education Member to fulfill the role vacated by Mr. Danni Cruz's resignation.

Motion carried, 6-0

Mr. Martin was sworn-in as a Board of Education Member by Ms. Kristea Francolino. Ms. Francolino is a Notary Public of the State of Connecticut.

7. Board Discussion and Potential Creation and Appointment of a Community Information Committee

Ms. Bergin shared that she would like to propose a sub-committee of the Board which would be tasked with:

1. Identifying issues of concern from the educational community that may benefit from broader examination and/or discussion;
2. Providing timely information or data in response to public comment or question;
3. Examine means to support/improve communication across the city, finance departments and public,
4. Routinely asking what do we know? What do we need to know?
5. Other items the committee deems relevant.

She suggested that this committee be comprised of 2-3 Board members, staff, and a community member.

Ms. Maynard-Adams suggested that through this committee, one of the members could on a rotating basis attend every City Council Meeting and provide a "did you know" during public comment. Mr. Gautier, Executive Director of Operations, asked if the goal was to be more collaborative with Council, or to be in front of the public more. Ms. Bergin responded that it would be both. Through this committee there could be a raised awareness for what is happening within the district, and have an opportunity to share good information and correct wrong information.

Mr. Martin shared that including a community member is a good idea for getting the information out.

Dr. Ritchie stated that there are different ways to share information, and that people do not want to read long memos. She suggested that it might be more helpful to push information out rather than responding.

Ms. Maynard-Adams stated that she would be happy to create this subcommittee if the Board would want to do so. Ms. Hambey shared that this sounds promising, but that it would be important to attend the Council meetings to share information as well.

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Caron, that a Community Information Committee be created. The Chair will be Ms. Bergin, with Board members Ms. Hambey and Mr. Martin included. Mr. Gautier volunteered and will be appointed to the committee, and a community member will be determined.

Motion carried, 6-0

8. Board Comments, Questions

Mr. Caron thanked Mr. Cruz for his service and welcomed Mr. Martin to the Board.

Mr. Martin thanked all for their votes and noted that he has a lot to learn. He asked for help and asked that others share information with him to prepare.

8. Adjournment

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Alexis, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathan Caron
Secretary, Board of Education

Good evening, everyone.

Tonight, as many of you may have seen, the board will be accepting my resignation, effective at our next meeting. I want to take a moment to reflect on this important journey in my life.

It all started four years ago, right after my high school graduation. I was a student representative on the curriculum committee and would sometimes attend Board of Ed meetings—or, like I did a few times throughout high school, speak up about issues that mattered to students. Just a couple of weeks after graduating, I got a call from Elaine. She shared that a vacancy had opened on the board—and that there was strong interest in having me step into that role.

I was just eighteen years old, full of passion to make change in my community and use my voice and experience to further the work already underway. I was honored to join the board—and I'll always be grateful for that moment. I soon found myself chairing the very committee I once sat on as a student rep. It was a full-circle moment.

I was elected at 18, and I never imagined what this journey would teach me—not just about policy or governance, but about people, relationships, and resilience. I've learned the importance of always centering our children and their future in every decision we make—whether we're reviewing budgets, curriculum, policies, or even planning school construction projects.

This is an incredible board—one that genuinely strives to represent and advocate for our entire community. A board that doesn't shy away from the challenges presented by our counterparts on the City Council or in the Mayor's Office. Together, we've accomplished so much: from opening new school buildings, to welcoming students into this very space we're in now, to strengthening our relationships with state partners. New London is lucky to have you all serving.

Now, I know this year's budget cycle was tough. We faced real challenges from city leadership. But one thing we've always done is unite in excellence, push forward, and stay focused on providing the best education possible for our kids. Even when things get difficult, remember—we owe it to our community. As long as we stay aligned with the people, the people will stand with us. Don't let the voices of those with personal agendas derail the mission we all share: to set our students up for success and a future full of possibility. You've got this—and I'll be cheering you on all the way.

To Dr. Ritchie—your visionary leadership, your ability to bring people together, and your dedication to transforming how we teach and support our children is truly admirable. I've seen your leadership as a student, a board member, and now I get to continue witnessing it as a community member. I believe in you. I believe in your mission. And even if people don't say it enough—New London is lucky to have you.

To all our department heads—thank you. Your dedication and commitment to every person in our buildings, from staff to students, makes a real difference. Your work does not go unnoticed, and I'm deeply grateful.

To Elaine—my friend, my mentor. I wouldn't be here without that call you made four years ago. I'm proud to have served on this board—but more than that, I'm proud to have found a lifelong friend in you. I'll see you soon.

To my fellow board members—you all ask the hard questions, you advocate, you care. You've become lifelong friends. Keep being the voice for this community. The people chose us—let's always honor that trust. Sue, Nate, Karen, Bianca, Elaine, and Alisha—thank you.

And to the youth of this city: your voice matters. You don't have to wait to lead. Use your voice, and never let anyone silence it. Reach for the stars—there are endless opportunities waiting for you.

To everyone who's supported me: thank you. This isn't the end. It's just the beginning of a new chapter of service—still grounded in the same love for New London and our schools, and still fighting for a fair, fully funded, and equitable education system for every child.

Thank you.