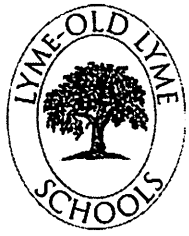
LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience  ***in a Public School Setting***

Regular Board of Education Meeting
August 6, 2025

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge

Absent by Previous Arrangement: Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Anna James; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology

Others Present: 5 community members from LOL

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Jason Kemp. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

I. Consent Agenda
1. Approval of Minutes
MOTION: Christopher Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Gavin Lodge, to approve the minutes of Regular Meeting and Executive Session of June 4, 2025; Special Meeting of June 12, 2025; Special Meeting of June 17, 2025; and Special Meeting of July 1, 2025.

VOTE: the Board unanimously approve the motion.

II. Visitors
1. Report from Student Representatives
These reports will resume at the September meeting.

2. Public Comment

Emily Bjornberg, a former Lyme resident, addressed the Board to express deep concern about issues of elitism, classism and racism in the Lyme-Old Lyme School District. Her statement, in its entirety, is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

Mr. Staab questioned the 23 minutes of reviewed footage of a basketball game where Mrs. Bjornberg claimed that LOL students were making racist remarks, and he questioned why Ms. Bjornberg did not initially approach a Region 18 staff member with her concerns. Mr. Neviaser clarified that the administration reviewed several hours of content and confirmed that the four students identified by the Hartford Schools were not affiliated with the Lyme-Old Lyme school district, and surrounding students did not report hearing inappropriate remarks from them. Ms. Bjornberg acknowledged she could have handled the situation differently. Mrs. Fogliano expressed appreciation for the clarification that the students involved were not part of Region 18. In response to questions about internal racism, Mr. Neviaser emphasized the district's ongoing efforts to promote inclusivity through programs like Second Step, implemented beginning in kindergarten and discussions that occur throughout all grades. Mr. Staab acknowledged that policies addressing bullying and harassment are in place district-wide. Mrs. Shoemaker recommended implementing a presentation at the beginning of the school year to reinforce expectations around behavior and bullying. Mr. Neviaser noted that such messaging is already embedded in age-appropriate curriculum across all grade levels.

III. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

IV. Administrative Reports

1. Superintendent's Report.

Mr. Neviaser reported that they are on track to starting school on time, but the administration has developed a backup plan if needed should construction derail the planned start time of school.

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the August personnel report which reflected the following:

Vacancies	
Instructional Assistants	PreK, Elementary, Middle and High School levels
Payroll Clerk	Business Office
First Grade Teacher (long-term substitute)	Mile Creek School
Secretary	LOLHS

Appointments			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Melanie Lee	Secretary (part-time)	Mile Creek School	August 26, 2025
Francette Donato	Preschool Teacher (.5 FTE)	Center School	August 22, 2025
Thomas Abatemarco	Science Teacher	LOLHS	August 22, 2025
Nichole Beckwith	Secretary	Mile Creek School	August 2025
Kathleen Bergamo	Instructional Assistant	Center School	August 26, 2025
Erin Breitenbach	4th Grade Teacher	Lyme School	August 22,2025
Thomas Bushnell	Assistant Principal	LOLHS	July 1, 2025
Kristen Furano	School Nurse Supervisor	Center School	August 26, 2025
Ariana Spearin	4th Grade Teacher	Mile Creek School	August 22, 2025
Jayne Capuciati	Special Education Teacher (long-term substitute)	LOLHS	September 2, 2025
Tatum Lakowsky	Special Education Teacher	Mile Creek School and LOLMS	August 22, 2025
Sarah Hart	Instructional Assistant	Center School and LOLMS	August 26, 2025
Daniel Atkinson	Instructional Assistant	Transition Program	August 26, 2025
Jeffrey Lewis	Instructional Assistant	LOLHS	August 26, 2025

Resignations			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Marci Hasenfeld	Instructional Assistant	Mile Creek School	June 17, 2025
Cindy Green	Instructional Assistant	Mile Creek School	June 17, 2025
Brendan Atkins	Custodian	LOLHS	June 30, 2025
Dawn Colonni	Secretary	LOLHS	June 30,2025
Mary Beth Schreindorfer	Instructional Assistant	Mile Creek School	June 17, 2025
Joy LaSorsa	Payroll Clerk	Central Office	July 25, 2025

Mr. Neviaser reported that the first enrollment report of the school year will occur at the September Board meeting.

Mr. Neviaser discussed the lower enrollment numbers for the preschool and kindergarten for the 2025-2026 school year, but that it should increase the following year.

Mr. Neviaser reported that, as expected and discussed during the budget preparation for the 2025-2026 school year, kindergarten numbers are down and preschool numbers are slightly higher than previous years.

Mr. Neviaser reported that Jim Wygonik, Principal of LOLHS, will do a presentation of the SAT/AP scores at the October Board meeting, which will reflect some significant increases in scores.

2. Business Manager's Report

Mr. Neviaser, filling in for Mrs. McCalla who was not present at the meeting, reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of July 31, 2025. Fluctuations of note:

While the spending as a percent to budget is higher than last year, the year is too young to identify any trends or concerns. Variances are due to timing of invoices and encumbrances as the year is just starting.

	2025-2026 Received YTD
Town of Old Lyme	$ 1,056,812
Town of Lyme	$ 233,435

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. There was no new spending so the balance remains at $200,000.

V. Educational Presentation

There was no educational presentation scheduled this month.

VI. Chairman & Committee Reports:

a. *Facilities*. No report.
b. *Finance*. No report.
c. *Communications*. No report.
d. *Policy*. No report.
e. *LEARN*. No report.
f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. No report.
g. *PreK-8 Building Committee*. Mrs. Fogliano gave the following report:

As my fellow Board members and the general public are likely aware, while there is a great deal of summer activity continuing at all three schools, the most visible changes are at the Mile Creek location. The weather has been generally favorable these past weeks, and much of the storm water drainage system has been installed on the Mile Creek School site. If you drive past the site, you will see heavy equipment creating a level surface as we prepare to re-open school.

Downes Construction has set a date for August 6 to commence paving (binder course only) on the bus loop side of the MCS parking lot (weather permitting). The new parent drop-off portion of the parking lot at Mile Creek School is set to be finished next summer, and the final top paving of the entire site will be

completed in summer of 2026. The new generator is on site, and the new water heater will be installed on August 15, with the new fuel pump in the boiler room going in on August 13.

The Mile Creek School addition exterior and roofing is complete, such that this portion of the building is water tight and ready for commencement of interior work. Connecticut Water Company has installed a new tie-in line from Mile Creek Road, and the piping has been laid to bring water from this connection to the new addition to service the sprinkler system. The temporary switch gear which will provide electricity to the addition during construction is installed and has been inspected by Eversource.

Speaking of inspections, the Fire Marshall for the Towns of Lyme and Old Lyme, David Roberge, has been working closely with Downes Construction and the architects and engineers. As the four buildings are essentially empty of personnel, there have been disruptions to the existing fire prevention systems in order to install ductwork and wiring in the buildings. The Fire Marshall is being informed in real time. On August 8, Downes will meet with the Fire Marshall and any other appropriate town officials to create a punch list to be completed in order for the District to safely reopen the schools later this month.

To be clear, Downes Construction is committed to being ready to turn the buildings back to us in time for school start. Our Superintendent, out of an abundance of caution, has wisely prepared a "Plan B" which might include bringing our students in after Labor Day to allow for any unforeseen circumstances.

At all four buildings, work continues on the security vestibules, the rooftop platforms for the HVAC units and the interior ductwork and wiring. Ceiling grids are being reinstalled wherever possible. This includes work on the roof, in the ceilings, in the boiler rooms, and sometimes in the basements. Once again, Downes is committed to completion of the HVAC systems at Lyme, Center and Middle School to allow the District to apply for the HVAC grants from the State of Connecticut in a timely manner.

As always, I encourage you to bring your questions or those of your constituents to the Superintendent or myself regarding this project. We will do our level best to answer promptly.

VII. New Business

1. Tuition Student Request at LOLHS

Mr. Neviaser reviewed a tuition student request for a 12th grade student at LOLHS.

MOTION: Susan Fogliano made a motion, which was seconded by Martha Shoemaker, to approve the tuition student request as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

2. Increase in Lunch Prices

Mr. Neviaser provided the following background information on this agenda item:

Each year LEAs (Local Educational Agencies) participating in the NSLP (National School Lunch Program) must ensure sufficient funds are provided to the nonprofit school food service account for meals served to students not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This requirement may be met through the prices charged for 'paid' meals or through other non-Federal sources provided to the non-profit school food service account.

Requirements: LEAs must annually review paid lunch prices by completing the USDA Paid Lunch Equity Tool. When the average paid lunch price is less than the target paid meal price (adjusted annually based with inflation), the LEA must take action by:
• Increasing the prices charged for paid lunch meals or
• Providing non-Federal funding sources to the non-profit school food service i.e. moving funds from another district account to the foodservice account.

This year's USDA target for the weighted average paid lunch price is $4.01 Currently Lyme-Old Lyme's weighted average paid lunch price is $3.59.

For 2025-2026 the USDA is offering an exemption from increasing lunch prices to districts that have a positive balance in the nonprofit school food service account. Lyme-Old Lyme qualifies for the exemption. It is a recommendation that we raise prices to avoid a drastic increase in the future when the target paid lunch price will increase on average by CPI each year.

Below are current and proposed paid lunch prices. Proposed for next year is a $.15 increase on lunch prices. This will bring the weighted avg to $3.74, still below the recommended/required $4.01.

	Current	Proposed 2025-2026
Elementary	$3.25	$3.40
Middle School	$3.75	$3.90
High School	$3.75	$3.90
Weighted AVG	$3.59	$3.74

Inflationary costs have impacted everyone, while steps are in place to limit the impact to the dining program, we are not immune to the increase in food and labor costs.

With the prices at the grocery store, I am sure families will appreciate knowing their students will receive a high quality, nutritious meal at a very reasonable price.
MOTION: Martha Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Susan Fogliano, to approve the increase in lunch prices as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

VIII. Old Business

There was no old business to report.

IX. Executive Session

MOTION: Martha Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Christopher Staab, to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing pending legal claims. Mr. Neviaser was invited to attend the executive session.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

X. Adjournment

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. upon a motion by Martha Shoemaker and a second by Christopher Staab.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

Public Comment: Emily Bjornberg

When I started these discussions with this Board, I read you the following words:

My name is Emily Bjornberg. I have lived in the town of Lyme for the last 43 years. My children were the fourth generation of my family to graduate from this district. I know this district well and my entire family has invested in it generously.

I want you to know that I stand before you - on your turf and in compliance with your regulations - out of respect. I am not trying to hurt Old Lyme. In fact, my honesty here tonight is meant to be an act of deep love and respect for the community and for the elected officials that are charged with running our schools. I believe we must do better for the sake of our children.

I then told you about my experience in the Lyme Old Lyme School system as a student in the 1990's. Then I told you about the experiences of my children, which ended in 2024. And then I talked about my own experience at a basketball game in our gym last March.

Each of these times I have come directly to your board. And played by the rules imposed by your chairman, which included me breaking my thoughts into five minute clips and returning to several months worth of meetings.

I care about this district. I care about the schools and the children who go here. I have many relatives and friends in this system. I am a proud graduate of this school system, having won three state championships for Lyme Old Lyme myself. I have sacred memories that include me wearing the Lyme Old Lyme royal blue on my chest.

And for the record, my desire to make Lyme Old Lyme and even better place to raise children does not in any way shape or form call my loyalty into question. Pushing my hometown to be better is a part of who I am, and who Lyme Old Lyme taught me to be.

You don't like my questioning? Talk to the teachers who formed the basis of my worldview. Many of them still work for region 18 today. You want to call my story into question? Talk to Scott Brown, a member of your board and principal when I attended LOLHS. He and I spent many hours discussing these very same topics, and those conversations happened almost 30 years ago.

Since I attended that basketball game in March I have been asking for one thing: for Lyme Old Lyme to have a conversation with its students about racism. That was what I asked your superintendent for when I called his office the day after the game. When he refused, I brought my request straight to the people who were in a position to do something: the Lyme Old Lyme Board of Education.

I will reiterate my request again to you this evening: please empower your administrators to discuss race and racism within region 18. They currently will not discuss race and feel confident about that position. I

believe that they are wrong, and I believe that you are exactly the people who can insist the conversation finally take place.

No one else can make this change. It is solely up to you - the folks who ran for public office under the idea that you could make region 18 the strongest and best school system it can be.

The last time I was here, when I finished speaking I stepped out into the hallway where I heard additional remarks from one of your board members. It was a little bit hard to make out what he was saying about me but I gathered three basic messages: "we watched hundreds of hours of tapes. We did nothing wrong. She is spewing lies."

My friends in Hartford are not even remotely surprised by this reaction. They had told me from the very beginning that the Lyme Old Lyme Board of Education would not be able to hear me. They told me I was wasting my time. I had disagreed of course. I had assured them that LOL was a small community that knew me well, and they would know I was not trying to hurt them but to strengthen them. I had explained that there may be a few people who shouted obscenities my way, but that I was confident there were enough good people on this board who would genuinely want to do the right thing. I still believe that to be true.

I want to make one point before I continue. Your board member said "we watched hundreds of hours of tape. We did nothing wrong."

Since then, I sent a freedom of information request to Region 18 for all security videos from the game. Your board secretary sent me exactly 23 minutes and 58 seconds of video. It had no sound. None. And yet your board member feels confident not only claiming that hundreds of hours of tape were watched, but that I am the one who is lying here. That somehow a 23 minute tape with no sound should conclusively paint me as a liar would be laughably stupid if not for the fact that it was said by a sitting elected official in the town of Old Lyme. And for the record, I don't blame him. I know where he got that bologna story. Ian Nevisar said the exact same thing to me months ago. Repeating it does not make it true.

Along with FOIAing the videos that Old Lyme referenced, I also FOIAd any district emails that mentioned the basketball game in the month that followed the game. On March 11, six days after the game, Jim Wygonick wrote an email to Ian Nevisar with a "plan for a stand-up meeting." In bold at the bottom he has both a "conclusion" and a lesson." The conclusion is "A journalist and newspaper ran an irresponsible story that has taken on a life of its own." The lesson? The danger of unvetted accusations and irresponsible spreading of misinformation. It says the message to inquisitive town citizens should be: the district has conducted an intense and thorough investigation and have not been able to corroborate these charges."

One of the bullet points Jim has on his plan is "Hilde, Ian and I reviewed the video footage... there was not video evidence to corroborate the charges." Then below that, in another bullet point, Jim says "what video?"

So Jim Wygonick and Ian Nevisar declared that a thorough and intensive investigation had taken place and concluded within 6 days of the game. That is even before Hartford wrapped up its investigation. Nowhere do Ian and Jim explain this decision to wrap their investigation so quickly with YOU - the board of education. In fact, it isn't until 10 days later that Ian emailed this Board to tell them that Hartford wrapped up its investigation.

In that email, Ian reports that Hartford believed there was "racial animus" at the game without any specific concerns. He does not mention that an alarming number of the Hartford players and cheerleaders identified the exact same 5 Old Lyme fans as instigating the harassment. Apparently that was not important information for you to have access to.

One can pinpoint in district emails exactly when this board started to be fed misinformation, and by whom. The real question becomes - do the members of this board care?

I have done my job here. I have delivered my story honestly and directly to the people who are in the position to make a change. And now it's up to you to decide the best course of action.

I know that this world feels overwhelming. But this is a problem that we can bth identify and solve. Region 18 has both the ability and the responsibility to talk to its students about racism. If not for the children of Hartford, please do it for the children of Old Lyme. Please, I beg of you, continue this conversation and please insist that Ian Nevisar do his job properly.

Please do not allow the final response of this board to be "we watched hundreds of hours of tape and we did nothing wrong." You know better, I know better, and your students know better than that.

As I step out of this auditorium this evening, I will hope and pray that my friends on this board finally find their voice and lift up a conversation that has desperately needed to take place for the last 30 years. The future students of region 18 depend on you. Good luck and thank you for allowing me to speak with you again.

Emily Bjornberg