

## MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee  
School Committee Meeting - Budget Vote  
Monday, March 24, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.  
Hoosac Valley High School - Resource Room  
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

**PRESENT:** Adam Emerson, Erin Milne, John Duval, Andy Przystanski, Robert Tetlow, Fred Lora

**ABSENT:**

**OTHERS:** Superintendent Aaron Dean, Student Representative Corey Charon

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**104301 Call to Order**

Chairman Adam Emerson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**104302 Public Comment or Question**

**104303 Approval of Minutes - March 10, 2025**

**MOTION:** On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Andy Przystanski

VOTED: to approve the March 10, 2025 School Committee minutes. The vote was unanimous.

**104304 Report of Business Manager - Under budget vote**

**104305 Report of Sub-Committee**

**A. Maintenance - Roof Update** - Fred Lora: major issues were the spring thaw and leaks that occurred in both buildings. Public concern in this building in terms of the leaks. Bob, Aaron and Fred looked at all the areas - walkthrough last Monday, raining during the walkthrough, didn't observe any active leaks. Seams along the beams can leak when 3 inches of ice thaw. Area of concern was the auditorium, some in the hallways and some in the classrooms. Recommendations from the subcommittee, we make a statement, address the leaks, they are being addressed. Important to make that statement. The administration, committee and roofing contractors all did inspections and we have a plan. Address misinformation out there. We are going to maintain, patch and repair - in the next 5 or 10 years or so we will need a new roof. To ignore comments would be a mistake. Aaron: we have some areas where it came through the HVAC, looking at seam leaks in the middle school hallway and the hallway to the auditorium, the flashing around the fire doors in the auditorium. This is nothing new, every year in the spring, we manage the water, roofing company comes to assess the situation and make the repairs. This will be the course until we do a capital project. Last year the roofs came out of warranty. We are now going to have to start paying for the repairs. Next maintenance meeting we have a roofing representative to come and discuss the roof. At this point and time, it's water management. Putting out a statement will just reignite social media. Erin Milne: this year, there was a very public incident this year, during the concert, even though the problem is ongoing, the perception might be a little different, happening at an event in a very visible way. Aaron will do whatever the committee would like him to do with this. Adam thought if this gets put in the monthly updates from the social media committee, we can have the message, but how and who it gets delivered to. Does the statement open up more questions or concerns, or if it is delivered in a certain manner, is it just information, keeping people updated. Don't know the answer to that. Fred read his prepared statement to the committee - outlining the issues in the last couple weeks, addressed the age of the roofs, outlined the potential plan for the future. Aaron stated he can send it out on messenger email and post it on the website. Adam stated that if we put out a formal statement, we have to vote on it. The language can be tweaked. Erin suggested it be sent out on school messenger, just to families that way it isn't in a commentable format. Andy agreed to send it out through messenger. Robert Tetlow: we are going to commit to the community that we are going to take care of their property. We are not going to neglect it. Some of these repairs could be substantial. Aaron asked who the statement will come from Aaron or the committee? Fred thought it should come from the Superintendent, if a parent has a question, it can be directed to you. John Duval suggested it comes on behalf of the school committee instead. Adam: sent out as a letter,

endorsed by the School Committee but through the Superintendent's communication. Aaron will draft and send it to the committee for their review. Fred will send a cleaner version to Aaron.

Motion: On Motion of Fred Lora and second by Robert Tetlow:

Voted: On behalf of the school committee to direct the Superintendent to make a statement regarding the status of the roof and the strategic maintenance plan and our vision for the future of the roof. The vote was unanimous.

#### **104306                      Communications**

**A.                      Mr. Geer 7th grade music video** - Aaron - as we talk about our vision for the District for applied learning, Mr. Geer is here to discuss the music video you will see. Mr. Geer talked about the video that was made by his 7th graders. Kristen Palatt: Clear example on how even music instruction has shifted.

**B.                      FY26 School Calendar** - see attached calendar - Still waiting for the vote from ACTA, contractually to start before Labor Day, we need approval by them. Wanted to get this out to the committee, ACTA should be fine with the calendar. Looking to start before Labor Day - 2 inservice days for staff will be August 27th and 28th, no school on Friday, August 29th - First day of school for all students will be Tuesday, September 2, 2025. Adam, if ACTA doesn't approve the start before Labor Day, are we looking for a new calendar to approve? Aaron stated yes. This model worked really well last year.

**MOTION:**                      On Motion of John Duval and second by Andy Przystanski:

VOTED: To approve the FY26 school year calendar. The vote was unanimous.

**C.                      FY26 School Choice Numbers** - see attached school choice slot openings

We try to maintain class size in a certain range, some grade levels we don't have the space, as we get to the high school, we have more space. The pathways are going to be attractive enough that we will get those choice students. Aaron went over the projected class sizes. Recommended: Kindergarten and grade 1 open 5 slots; Grade 2 - 2 slots; Grades 3 & 4 no open slots due to projected enrollment in grades 3 and 4; Grade 5 - 6 openings; Grade 6 - no openings; Grade 7 - 8 openings; Grade 8 - 5 openings; Grades 9, 10 & 11 - ten slots per grade; Grade 12 - 5 openings.

**MOTION:**                      On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval:

VOTED: To approve the recommended FY26 school choice slot openings. The vote was unanimous.

**D.                      Regional Agreement Committee - vote to enter into amendment process** - had discussion about amending the regional agreement, in particular how the assessments are divided up by the Towns. In some years it has created a problem for some. The 5 year average ratio is a better option in terms of making those shifts from Town to Town less dynamic. Looked at the impact - The past 5 years have had an up and down effect between the communities, it did soften that curve for people, it made it a little easier in terms of being able to predict what the following years assessment might be. Looked at elections, a desire for each community to elect their own officials, without doing a districtwide election, but the law threw a wrench in that, the representation has to be per population, if we did that method, Adams would have 5 representatives and Cheshire would have 2. Guessing that we are going to stay on path with our current election process. The committee needs to vote for the amended process. Bring those amendments to the committee to vote on and then to go to both Town meetings. Tonight, we need approval to have our attorneys craft the language.

**MOTION:**                      On Motion of Andy Przystanski and second by Fred Lora.

VOTED: to approve to enter into the Regional Agreement amendment process. The vote was unanimous.

**104307                      Report of Superintendent** - Aaron doing a recap - since the last meeting, nothing has changed. State numbers have not changed. Theme is balancing reductions and investments \$1 million increase in out of district tuition; 16% increase in insurance costs; limited resources to fill the gap between revenues and costs. Strategic response: consolidations and strategic partnerships; use of revolving funds (short term solution); focus on maintaining critical student programming.

Budget Reductions: Reduction of 12 positions primarily through attrition, retirements and movement; Reductions impact student support systems; Movement of Dean positions to Rural Aid funds.

Athletics program consolidation: examining consolidation of athletics programming and leveraging of more Northern Berkshire co-ops; currently maintain 13 interscholastic sports programs; Co-ops for baseball, lacrosse, golf, track and nordic ski. Strategic investments in curriculum - leveraging grant funds; PLTW, Open Sci Ed, Investigating History; POG/Portrait of a Learner; building thinking classroom, updating math curriculum; maintaining curriculum staff that we put in place.

Partnerships for Effective Programming - collaborating with NECC - establishing models for substantially separate programming; Walker Education, BIRCH, Optimal Healing - exploring new structures for program effectiveness.

Alternative Funding Use: \$500,000 school choice funds for out of district tuition; \$275,000 circuit breaker funds for out of district tuition; \$215,000 school choice funds for NECC partnership; \$340,000 rural aid funds for Data Specialist, Pathways Coordinator, MS Student Support, ES/MS Deans of Students; \$275,000 form E & D - primarily for building maintenance.

Operating Budget Summary: Total budget putting forward \$23,136,636 Increase \$654,917 (2.91%);

Town Increase within the level \$240,164 (2.756%)

Adams Assessment within Levy \$5,958,203; Adams Increase \$135,391 (2.325%); Cheshire assessment within Levy \$2,996,643, Cheshire increase \$104,773 (3.623%)

We did a lot of work to make it respectful for the Towns. Made some hard decisions and we have a budget that will work and will allow us to continue to move forward as a district. If we didn't get hit with \$1 million in tuition, we wouldn't have to make these difficult decisions. We are responsible for everyone from age 3 to 22. Every child deserves an education. Aaron spoke about all the grant funding that we get, 5.2 million that our associate director brings in. 1.4 million that our Director of Curriculum brings in. Those positions are extremely important to our District.

John Duval applauded everyone that worked on the budget. Commend the partnership with NECC and sees a fiscally responsible budget and sees a quality education for our kids.

Fred Lora: if the school committee doesn't look at the organization of the district who does? In terms of the review of the structure of this district, it is the S.C. to review the structure. It doesn't make sense to vote on the resources when you are not reviewing the organization, it doesn't capture the change Aaron is proposing. Holds himself to a higher standard and so should the School Committee. Still never received an organizational chart. Believes it doesn't exist. Fred stated he could sit down and have it done within an hour for all the positions in the school. There is nothing on paper that actually defines what this organization looks like other than the budget sheet - don't believe there is enough information for the School Committee to make an educated vote on spending \$23 million. Approximately 40% of the \$23 million is provided by our 2 towns. Looking at big numbers for our tax payers. Aaron disagreed- we go through each of these positions and what value they have. That is the role of the A & E. We discuss in A & E what they do and the need. Look at how we are going to utilize them in the current year. An organizational chart is complex. Aaron went over the organization chart. John Duval stated that staff come to these meetings and present what they are doing, their own specialties, we see the principals, director of curriculum, Assistant Principals of teaching and learning. Aaron: went over and over all these positions and why they are required. You have several levels of need in every classroom. This is not 1990 anymore. We are in 2025 and the complex nature of education is unbelievable. Aaron is looking at all kinds of data, around behavior, student performance, and needs to make educated decisions. This is not the first time he has done this. Has been an administrator for 12 years. It is his role to take care of the organizational part of this. We have done a lot of great work over the past several years. It is worth every penny in terms of what we are doing. Erin Milne: A & E subcommittee, spent a very long time, looking over every budget line, has a very good idea, without ever seeing the organizational chart, we can see what all these positions do. Very comfortable, as someone who has been on A & E, working closely with Aaron, that the money proposed in the budget is very responsible and very student centered and makes sense. Fred stated that the chart is incomplete and it shouldn't be. It is not an unreasonable expectation that this chart could actually be complete. That a table of organization could define every one of those positions with a couple of bullets. That's what an organizational chart is all about. Nothing for him to see other than this one budget document. Aaron suggests if he wants a chart a certain way, make an appointment with him, sit down, go through what you are looking for then we can put it together. Discussion back and forth with Fred and the committee.

**A. Budget Vote**

**School Committee Order SC2503 - FY 2026 Budget** - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2026 School Committee Budget totaling \$23,136,636. The FY2026 Budget consists of:

|                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Foundation Budget     | \$ 21,038,650       |
| Transportation Budget | \$ 1,013,986        |
| Capital Budget        | <u>\$ 1,084,000</u> |
| Total:                | \$ 23,136,636       |

**MOTION:** On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval

VOTED: to approve school committee order SC2503. The vote was 5-1-0. Fred Lora opposed the motion.

**School Committee Order SC2504 - FY2026 Assessment Town of Adams** - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2026 Assessment to the Town of Adams for its portion of the Adopted FY2026 School Committee Budget in accordance with the Hoosac Valley Regional School District Agreement. The Assessment is as follows:

|                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Foundation Budget     | \$5,503,389       |
| Transportation Budget | \$ 454,813        |
| Capital Budget        | <u>\$ 662,198</u> |
| Total:                | \$6,620,400       |

**MOTION:** On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval

VOTED: to approve school committee order SC2504 - Assessment to the Town of Adams. The vote 5-1-0. Fred Lora opposed the motion.

**School Committee Order SC2505 - FY2026 Assessment to the Town of Cheshire** - Submitted herein for your approval is the FY2026 Assessment to the Town of Cheshire for its portion of the Adopted FY2026 School Committee Budget in accordance with the Hoosac Valley Regional School District Agreement. The Assessment is as follows:

|                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Foundation Budget     | \$2,849,221       |
| Transportation Budget | \$ 147,422        |
| Capital Budget        | <u>\$ 209,439</u> |
| Total:                | \$3,206,082       |

**MOTION:** On Motion of Erin Milne and second by John Duval:

VOTED: to approve school committee order SC2505 - Assessment to the Town of Cheshire. The vote was 5-1-0. Fred Lora opposed the motion.

**School Committee Order SC2506 - Appropriation from Certified E & D** - Submitted herein for your approval is a request to appropriate \$275,000 from E & D as certified by the Department of Revenue for the purpose of reducing the FY2026 Budget assessments to the member towns.

**MOTION:** On Motion of John Duval and second by Andy Pryzstanski:

VOTED: Be it hereby ordered that \$275,000 be appropriated from certified E & D for the purpose of reducing the F2026 Budget assessments to the members Towns of Adams and Cheshire. The vote was 5-1-0. Fred Lora opposed the motion.

**104308 Chairman's Report** - None

**104309 Unfinished business** - None

**104310**            **New Business - None**

**104311**            **Action Items**

**104312**            **For the Good of the Order**

John Duval: congratulations to the girls basketball team, state champs.

Erin: saw the musical, apparent how much work the students and staff put into it. Great Show

Adam: Today there was a meeting at UMass regarding the budget. Commissioner was there, he was asked about Chapter 70 funding, and when we can expect the Administration to do something about it - he said the Healy administration and DESE are waiting for the legislature. Encourage you all to push to legislatures to get Chapter 70 looked at. They do recognize there is an issue with rural - but nobody wants to take the ball and run with it.

**MOTION:**            On Motion of Erin Milne and second by Andy Przystanski

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Lisa Bresett, Recording Secretary