

**Ashland School Committee Minutes
May 14, 2025**

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present: Laurie Tosti, Chair
Paul Kendall, Member
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
Marcy Culverwell, Member
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Absent: Marc Terry, Vice Chair
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance

Agenda Review and adoption

Ms. Tosti reviewed the agenda items for the meeting. She took roll call and asked the School Committee members to approve the agenda. She changed the order of a few of the student presentations for efficiency. Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE

Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE

Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE

Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment

There was none.

Mindess School Student Presentation

Jenna Larrenage, Principal of Mindess School introduced the presentation of Fourth Grade Community Service jobs. Job program at Mindess School is part of an initiative to implement community service to the school. Next year, the third grade students will start gardening, and taking care of the raised beds and landscape of the school. Currently, the fifth grade students do the Morning News and participate in a Student Council program. Fourth grade students complete a written job application, and get to indicate which of the jobs they might prefer. Morning greeters, Dismissal guides, Bucket retrievers, Commons organizer are the four identified jobs.

Students Nia Sood, Daniel Chen, Mackenzie Foss, and Jack Callahan presented about their experiences doing these jobs and taking care of their school building.

English Language Learners Teacher Acknowledgement

Christy Arnold, ELL Director presented. Flashlight 360 is a product that we've been using in the District. Three Ashland teachers have been recognized by Flashlight 360 as having students who have demonstrated the highest gains from beginning to middle of the year benchmarks. These teachers are in the top 100 teachers in the nation for student growth. She acknowledged

three teachers from our schools for winning this award: Tricia Callahan from the Warren School; Polly Crnobrnja from Mindess School and Yolanda Williams from Ashland High School.

Out of State Travel Proposal: Make-a-Wish Cub, Ashland High School, November 2025

Sadie Gilhooley is a student representative of the high school Make-a-Wish club. She explained that the group partners with a non-profit organization called Give Kids the World. The group offers families with a medical needs child a vacation to Disney World. The student volunteers assist with rides to the park, serving meals and helping families with their needs. They are proposing to do the trip again in November 2025. If approved, it will be the 11 annual trip by AHS. Abby Amershek is the Community Service Coordinator of the club. Hanna Roberts is a Board Member of the club.

Ms. Pavia-Sheils reports that if any student is interested to participate in the trip and has financial concerns around the cost, they should speak with her privately. There are funds available through the Helping Our Own fund that can offset any financial need. Ms. Tosti has been a chaperone on this trip for several years, and can validate what a great opportunity it is for students. Mr. Kendall moved to approve the trip as presented, with the understanding that the exact travel dates are still to be determined. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: AYE

Ms. Fitanides: AYE

Mr. Kendall: AYE

Ms. Tosti: AYE

Pittaway Community and Family Engagement

Sara Davison, Preschool Director and Special Education Team Chair presented. One of her goals this year was to bring families in, and offer parent education. She started with a parent survey – What topics do you need more information on, What do you need help with? The preschool director then hosted a series of parent coffees, both in the morning and in the evening.

Community Events at Pittaway – typically the Pittaway has hosted one in the Fall (Fall Festival) and one in the Spring (Field Day). This year they added an additional Community Event in the Winter (Winter Wonderland), with thematic activities. Community Partnership with the town's fire department, police department and a local dentist.

Jess, a parent whose son is attending Pittaway, attest that her son's experience has far surpassed their expectations for preschool.

Ms. Culverwell had a suggestion that Ms. Davison contact the Ashland Youth Sports leaders to promote their programs for 4-year-olds in town. Ashland Youth Soccer, Basketball and Lacrosse are all options to promote the sports programs to preschool families.

School Improvement Plan - Pittaway

Sara Davidson reviewed progress made in four areas of the School Improvement Plan – Equity, Social-Emotional Learning, Resource Management and Curriculum and Programming.

Ms. Adams noted that there will be a transition at Pittaway in the future. Ms. Davidson will be maintaining the role of Special Education Coordinator and Team Chair. A new Preschool Director will be hired. Ms. Adams would like to publicly thank Ms. Davidson for all of her work.

School Improvement Plan - Mindess

Jenna Larrenaga, Principal of Mindess, reviewed the progress made in the four areas of the School Improvement Plan at Mindess. She also touched on the plan for the next school year, 2025-2026. Restorative Circles. Community Service – Grade 3 will start a gardening program next year. Grade 4 will continue with their jobs, Grade 5 will have the Student Council and the Morning News.

Ms. Fitanides applauded Ms. Larrenaga for implementing Community Service at her school. The jobs offer an opportunity for leadership development for the students, and an opportunity to take care of their school.

Mr. Adams noted that Mindess is the exemplar in the district around implementing community service for students by grade level.

Warrant Approvals

Between April 10, 2025 and May 14, 2025, Paul Kendall, authorized payables in the amount of \$ 939,198.39 . This includes General Fund expenses of \$ 649,228.73, Revolving expenses of \$ 283,330.88, Grants expenses of \$ 6,561.94, and Meals Tax expenses of \$ 76.84.

Superintendent's Report

Mr. Adams was able to attend the AHS trip to Europe over April break with about 40 students. It was his sixth time serving as a chaperone on this trip. He appreciates the opportunity to get to know students.

The Town Meeting took place where the school budget was approved for FY2026. Thank you to the voters in Ashland. The level of support for the school system in Ashland is amazing.

Today, Mr. Adams visited Boston to award Senate President Karen Spilka with an award from the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents. Dr. Cavanaugh, Hopkinton, Dr. Pires, from Medway, and Dr. Bourque from the M.A.S.S. presented Ms. Spilka with this award. She began this career as a School Committee member here in Ashland and has served for 25 years.

Assistant Superintendent's Report

Dr. Caira reported that there is a current opportunity for teachers to do curriculum development work to get funded over the summer. 15 curriculum development proposals have been submitted thus far. Middle School proposals for some of the new courses developed for the fall will take priority for funding.

Assessments – MCAS testing is still in progress. Middle School students are taking the MCAS Math test this week. AP tests are ongoing across the nation, and at AHS this week. As an example, in Science alone, Ashland High School has:

32 students taking the AP Chemistry test
25 students taking the AP Biology test
50 students taking the AP Environmental Science test
25 students taking the AP Physics test

End of Year Benchmarking with iReady and Amplify ongoing with staff. DIEBELs - Literacy. Evaluating growth data.

For Educator Evaluations and Professional Development – For developing teachers on a two-year plan, Summative Evaluations will be shared with them on Friday 5/16/25. The last early release for teacher professional development is scheduled for Friday, 5/16. Restorative Circles at Mindess, curriculum mapping work at AMS and AHS. Warren teachers will be doing S3 work and data team meetings.

ALICE safety training has gone well this school year. All students have had an opportunity to practice evacuating the building and walking to a designated safe place away from the school. Jon Murray, co-chair of the safety committee was able to connect with the community and find locations accessible to each school for a gathering spot.

Kindergarten screening will take place on May 28 and May 29 at the Warren School. It will allow teachers to get to know the incoming Kindergarten students for next year.

The 5 Town Special Olympics took place in Medfield this week. Ashland was the highest represented town among the five participating towns.

Dr. Caira wants to publicly thank the Ashland PTO, especially Cate MacDonald for Educator Appreciation Week with a coffee truck that came to each school, donations of supplies from teacher wish lists, and a free lunch for educators at all schools on Friday.

Second Read of School Committee Policies

BGB - Policy Adoption

Mr. Kendall moves to approve the policy BGB - Policy Adoption. Ms. Fitanides seconds the motion. Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: AYE

Ms. Fitanides: AYE

Mr. Kendall: AYE

Ms. Tosti: AYE

Consent Agenda

Ms. Fitanides moves to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Kendall seconds the motion. Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: AYE

Ms. Fitanides: AYE

Mr. Kendall: AYE

Ms. Tosti: AYE

School Committee Member Reports

Abishek reports that it's been a busy two weeks at Ashland High School. AP exams are underway with about 90 students scheduled to take the AP Computer Science exam. AP Exams end this Friday, May 16. The junior prom is scheduled for Friday. Sophomores recently took the MCAS test. It is the beginning of Final Exams, the departures of the seniors, Class Day and graduation.

Ms. Culverwell missed the last AMS Site Council meeting. Erin Lachapelle sent a survey to parents with questions around grading practices and make-up policies. She's in the fact-finding stage and any changes would be implemented in School Year 2026-2027.

The Middle school play is opening this weekend, Choose Your Own Oz.

Ms. Fitanides reports that she was unable to attend the most recent ASHPAC meeting, as it conflicted with Ashland's Town Meeting last week. The agenda was to finish preparations for the 5 Town Special Olympics event. Ms. Fitanides was able to participate in the Community Reader program at the Warren School in April, and read to some younger students.

Mr. Kendall attended the recent EL Family Night at the Warren School to help out. He also attended the recent Town Meeting. His daughter was able to attend the AHS Europe trip over April break, and he wanted to thank Cory McGann for his organization of a successful trip.

Ms. Tosti was also able to participate in Community Reading at Warren School. She missed the last Warren Site Council meeting. She was able to chaperone the AHS Europe trip with the high school students and found that it was an honor and a privilege to see how these teens from Ashland represented their school so well.

At 7:12pm, Mr. Kendall made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion.

Vote:

Ms. Culverwell: AYE

Ms. Fitanides: AYE

Mr. Kendall: AYE

Ms. Tosti: AYE

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting

5.14.25 G&D School Committee Final.docx

GKTW overnight and out of state travel request Fall 2025.docx

Mindess Parent Student Handbook 2024-2025

Mindess School Improvement Plan - 2025-2026

Minutes - April 9, 2025

Pittaway APS School Improvement Plan 23-26- Updated 2025

Pittaway SC Presentation on Community Engagement- May 2025

PROGRESS Mindess School Improvement Plan 24-25

School Committee - 4th Grade Jobs

Warrant Approvals - MAY 14, 2025