Ashland School Committee Minutes
September 10, 2025

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present: Laurie Tosti, Chair
Marc Terry, Vice Chair
Paul Kendall, Member
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
Marcy Culverwell, Member
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Agenda Review and adoption
Ms. Tosti opened the meeting, did introductions of the School Committee members, took attendance and reviewed the agenda.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment
Brandi Kinsman, Select Board member, reported that the 39th annual Ashland Day will be held on October 4, 2025 from 11am-4pm at Stone Park (rain date October 5). The original Ashland Day committee determined that they did not have the funds to sponsor this event in July. A group of community members have banded together to organize this event for this year. Josh Wiczer, Math teacher from Ashland High School had an organizational framework from a similar event, Pumpkin Fest from three years ago. In 5 weeks, $15,000 was raised by the community. There are 60 booths signed up including entertainment and 15 food vendors.

New Staff Introductions
Superintendent James Adams reported that over 50 new faculty and staff were hired over the summer, including some new Administrative staff. Amanda Curley is the new Director of Pittaway Preschool. Kate Altman is the new Principal of Mindess School, promoted from Assistant Principal. Beth Jones is the Assistant Principal at Mindess. Kelli Meyer is the new Dean at Ashland High School and Peter Connery is the new Athletic Director at AHS. Each administrator introduced the new hires for their respective schools.

Warrant Approvals
Between June 12, 2025 and September 10, 2025, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature payables in the amount of $ 2,681,687.91. This includes General Fund expenses of $

1,679,093.93, Revolving expenses of $ 884,659.88, Grants expenses of $ 117,773.84, and Meals Tax expenses of 160.26.

Superintendent's Report
Mr. Adams reported that Mindess School had an incident at arrival on the first day of school. Students walked over a yellow jacket's nest in the ground and disturbed it by accident. 57 students were stung. Fortunately, no one had an allergic reaction, and no students needed to go home after the incident. The bus drivers, nurses, Ashland police officers and EMTs helped out and were calm and professional in handling the incident. Mr. Adams appreciated that Mrs. Altman handled the issue with professionalism and great care.

Mr. Adams attended the Superintendents and Chiefs of Police breakfast in Lexington hosted by the District Attorneys of Massachusetts. Phone usage in schools was discussed. Teen driver safety was also discussed, with an emphasis on distracted driving. Teen driver statistics were featured on the Mass Pike this summer.

The first Admin team meeting was yesterday. We have two new administrators at Mindess School. Mr. Adams and Dr. Caira have been spending time at this school to support them.

AEA meetings have started. Kristen Sculley is the AEA president.
Stipends and educator evaluations are still in progress and will be forthcoming to the committee for review and their vote.

Transportation at the start of the school year. Two to three buses are running late by 3-5 minutes.

Assistant Superintendent's Report
Dr. Caira reported the following updates:
Curriculum update – SEL High School team created a great presentation.
Safety review – ALICE procedures
Assessment – iReady assessments have begun. At AMS students took a couple of hours in the morning school-wide to work on their ELA iReady assessment. Next week they will tackle Math.
Educator evaluations – Principals and assistant principals will begin their unannounced observations next week.
Professional learning – New hire orientation happened with first year teachers the week before school began. Jane Guiney is the Mentor Coordinator.
MTSS – District-wide Multi-level Tiered Systems of Support processes and procedures.
Summer curriculum projects – 31 projects were submitted by teachers.

ACCEPT Collaborative: Board of Directors appointment
Mr. Terry moves to appoint Superintendent Adams to the Board of Directors for the ACCEPT Collaborative. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Nutrition Services - Proposed Adult Meal Increases
In June, the committee voted to increase the cost of a school lunch for adults to $4.95. However, in September, the reimbursement rates for an adult meal increased to $5.30. Regina Wilkinson, Nutrition Director, is requesting an increase in the price of an adult meal to $5.30.

Mr. Kendall moved to approve the school lunch price increases for an adult meal to $5.30.
Mr. Terry seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Appointment to Working Groups/Sub-Committees
Members discussed leadership roles and accepted the following positions:

Subcommittees:
Wellness Committee - Tina
Safety Committee - Paul
Policy - Paul and Laurie

Liaisons:
ASHPAC – Tina
Town Liaison Committee: Laurie and Marc
AREA - Marc
Decisions At Every Turn –Paul
Ashland High School Liaison to School Improvement Council – Marc
Ashland Middle School Liaison to School Improvement Council – Marcy
David Mindess School Liaison to School Improvement Council – Paul
Warren/Pittaway School Liaison to School Site Council – Laurie
Bilingual Parent Advisory Council- Tina
Comprehensive Plan Steering – Mike

MASC/MASS Joint Conference
November 12-14, 2025 in Hyannis, MA
Ms. Tosti and Ms. Fitanides will be attending the conference and staying one night. Mr. Kendall will be staying two nights. Ms. Culverwell is unable to attend. Mr. Adams and Dr. Caira will be attending and staying three nights.

School Choice Allocation for AHS Auditorium
The microphones and projector at the high school auditorium are not working well. Ms. St. Coeur relies on the microphones to dismiss students from the cafeteria at lunch. We originally had 2-3 microphones, we are down to one working microphone. With an increase of about 20 new School Choice students, we have a greater flexibility in our budget. Mr. Adams proposes

using $130,000 from the School Choice funds to fund the audio and projector costs at the high school.

Mr. Terry moves to allocate $130,000 from School Choice funds to the AHS Auditorium as presented. Mr. Kendall seconds the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Fiscal Year 2026 School Choice Allocations
Mr. Adams reviewed the total of $153,000 in School Choice funds to schools and departments across the district. The allocation amounts are the same as last year. Mr. Kendall moves to approve the School Choice allocations as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Consent Agenda
Mr. Terry moves to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Kendall seconds the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

School Committee Member Reports
Abishek reported that the Convocation ceremony for Seniors took place with a fun scavenger hunt. Students climbed on top of the Ashland Fire Department truck for a class photo, enjoyed a BBQ and had an early release. Class President Aaron Wolf received a key to the school.
Freshman and seniors began college planning seminars with the guidance department.
Ms. Fitanides, Mr. Terry, Ms. Tosti and Mr. Kendall were all able to attend Opening Day with teachers and staff and were pleased with the positive energy.
Mr. Kendall reports that an architect from the Mindess School project recently was awarded a citation award.

At 7:10pm Mr. Terry moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kendall seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
Appointment of Safety Sub-Committee members
2025-26 New Faculty and Staff
2025-26 School Choice Allocations
2025-2026 School Committee Leadership Roles
AHS Auditorium, Cafeteria, and Gym AV Upgrades
Appointment of Superintendent to ACCEPT Collaborative
FY 26 09.10.2025 School Committee G&D Acceptance Log
FY26 Meal Rate Increases (2)
MASS-MASC Joint Conference Guide 2025
September 10, 2025 SC Meeting Grant Funds
Warrant Approvals 09_10_25