

AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 24, 2025

Present were Mayor Gove, Maryann Welch, Kate Slater, Abigail Jurist Levy, Greg Noyes, Kurt Mansperger, and Superintendent McAndrews.

A recording of this meeting can be viewed here: <https://imd0mxanj2.execute-api.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/ssr/watch/67bf53e59abd8600085b32c9>

- I. Call to Order/Mission Statement/Pledge of Allegiance (0:15)
- II. Comments by Visitors & Delegations (1:25)
 - Lindsay Pappas – Wrote an email stating her opposition to the moving of AIHS to the High School.
 - Mo O'Mullane – Wrote an email asking the committee to support the Superintendent's level services budget.
 - Lauren Snay – Spoke about the negative effects of ongoing budget cuts within the schools.
 - Cindy Yetman – Spoke as the AFT Amesbury president in support of a level services budget.
 - Roger Deschenes – Encouraged the committee to trust the district's teachers.
 - Evan Melanson – Spoke in opposition to the plan to move AIHS.
 - Karin Bryne – Asked the committee to visit the school and speak with staff members.
 - Jonathan Kezer – Spoke in opposition to the moving of AIHS
- III. New Business (19:12)
 1. 2025-2026 School Year Calendar – The Superintendent summarized the proposed changes to the calendar including the moving of PRT days to Friday, the changing of the preschool week, and having elementary conferences being offered districtwide. The committee discussed the proposed changes to the calendar including logistics surrounding districtwide conferences.
Dr. Slater moved to approve the calendar, second by Ms. Welch. Approved unanimously.
 2. Appointment of Martha Robinson as Director of Student Services – The Superintendent summarized the hiring process used for the search and introduced Ms. Robinson to the committee.
Mr. Noyes moved to approve the appointment, second by Dr. Slater.
Ms. Robinson thanked the committee for their consideration and briefly shared her goals for the role moving forward. *Approved unanimously.*

IV. FY26 Budget Workshop/Discussion (29:15)

- Superintendent McAndrews shared her FY26 Initial Budget Presentation with the committee. The presentation touched upon the following areas:
- Highlighted the need for a “level service budget” (maintaining current services with adjustments for inflation) and the financial pressures due to contractual obligations (e.g., a 3.25% increase across all units, totaling \$1,232,924).
- Proposed reductions to achieve a 3% or 5% budget increase over FY25 are outlined, including cuts to staff positions (e.g., teachers, secretaries, paraprofessionals), programs (e.g., world language, art), and services (e.g., busing, late bus), totaling over \$2 million.
- Cumulative reductions from FY23 to FY26 amount to \$4,913,760, affecting 55.7 FTE positions.
- Options to address budget shortfalls include increasing the city’s contribution, using free cash (with \$5,350,204 remaining after other appropriations), or pursuing an override (e.g., \$1.8 million would increase the average single-family tax bill by \$288.11).
- State-level advocacy for increased Chapter 70 funding was noted but deemed unlikely for FY26.
- Community Feedback: Results from long-range planning meetings highlight strengths (e.g., individualized student attention, whole-child approach) and areas for improvement (e.g., funding, academic expectations).

The committee discussed the Superintendent’s presentation and discussed strategies for addressing budget shortfalls including overrides and surplusing of unused property. The committee also discussed the proposed move of the Innovation High School and what other options are available to the district. The discussion included looking at class sizes and opportunities to use the school as a revenue generator by accepting out of district students.

Dr. Slater moved to adjourn, second by Dr. Jurist Levy. Approved unanimously.