Ashland School Committee Minutes
October 8, 2025

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present:	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
Absent:	Laurie Tosti, Chair

Agenda Review and adoption
Mr. Terry opened the meeting, took attendance and reviewed the agenda. The Vision and Mission Statements were read aloud, emphasizing the district's commitment to equity, inclusion, safety, and academic excellence for all students. The agenda was approved without modification.

Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE

Public Comment
Claudia Bennett, representing the Ashland Day Committee, thanked the School Department and its volunteers for their major contributions to Ashland Day 2025.

- Over 140 student volunteers participated from various clubs and activities.
- Ms. Bennett extended specific appreciation to Mr. Adams, Mr. Murray, Mr. Mathieu.
- She praised the strong partnership between schools and the broader community, noting how events like Ashland Day showcase the district's values in action.

Student Advisory Council Report

Student representatives: Abhishek Karthik (senior), Zoha Syed-Ali, Ojal Patil, and Sophia Warnetski (juniors).

Highlights:

- **Ashland Day:** Strong participation from student groups such as National Honor Society (NHS), Bio Club, and Make-A-Wish.

- **Upcoming Events:**

    - Homecoming Football Game — October 24
    - Homecoming Dance — October 25

- **Fundraising:**

    - Class of 2026 sold popcorn and cotton candy.
    - Class of 2027 sold crochet pumpkins, raising over $300.
    - Classes of 2028 and 2029 are selling class t-shirts.

- **Academics:**

    - PSAT testing next week for sophomores and juniors; students not testing will do college/career exploration or community service.
    - AP Biology labs are ongoing, with more hands-on experiments.
    - AP Physics is being offered in-person, with enrollment increased due to a STEM grant.
    - NHS applications open for students with GPA ≥ 3.5.
    - College visits, sports seasons, and senior events are underway.

Committee members commended the students for their enthusiasm and initiative.

Warrant Approvals
Between September 11, 2025, and October 08, 2025, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature payable in the amount of $ 898,645.03. This includes General Fund expenses of $ 497,383.94, Revolving expenses of $ 400,169.12, Grants expenses of $ 1,084.62, and Meals Tax expenses of 7.35.

Superintendent's Report (Jim Adams)
Superintendent Adams discussed new DESE regulations affecting:

1. Graduation and Competency Determination Requirements

2. Middle School Pathway Exploration Policies (especially for vocational/technical options)

Key Points:

- Updated policies are due to DESE by Dec 31 (graduation/competency) and Nov 1 (Middle School pathway exploration).

- Ashland already meets or exceeds most state expectations, so only minimal updates are required.

- The district is preparing for a DESE District Review, which will include interviews, classroom observations, and evaluations of family/community engagement.

- Adams noted that while the review is often procedural, it provides useful feedback to improve operations and accountability.

He emphasized maintaining high graduation standards, which currently surpass state minimums.

Assistant Superintendent's Report (Mike Caira)
Dr. Caira provided instructional and curriculum updates:

- Curriculum Nights across all schools were well attended.

- Ongoing vertical alignment meetings for ELA, math, and science.

- Focus on data-driven instruction using i-Ready and DIBELS results.

- Monitoring the accelerated math program's success.

- Professional Development (Oct 10 Early Release):

    - Elementary: report card updates and standards review.

    - Secondary: curriculum collaboration and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

- Continuing to strengthen MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) for academic and behavioral interventions.

- Announced an upcoming student survey on equitable access to advanced courses, extracurriculars, and athletics.

Student Travel Proposals

A. Germany & Austria Educational Tour (April 2027)

Presented by:

- *Mary Nemeth* (Music Teacher)
- *Mike Wurster* (History Teacher)

Highlights:

- A custom EF Educational Tour to Berlin, Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna.
- The trip combines music and history, with experiences such as:
    - Topography of Terror Museum
    - Mauthausen Concentration Camp
    - Mozart's birthplace and a classical concert
    - Sound of Music tour
- Teachers will prepare students academically before the trip through integrated lessons.
- Equity and affordability efforts: EF Global Citizen Scholarships, individual fundraising pages, and local "Helping Our Own Fund."
- 18-month preparation period for families.

Ms. Culverwell moves to approve the Europe April 2027 trip as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

B. Ashland High School Boys' Basketball Trip (December 2025)

Presented by: Coach Mike Normant

- Boys' basketball team to participate in a leadership training and pre-season scrimmage on Cape Cod in early December. About 12-15 players will be invited to attend.
- The weekend includes leadership training and athletic experiences.

- Players will miss minimal class time.

- The majority of the cost will be funded through team fundraising and boosters. The cost per player will be about $50.00 to $75.00.

Ms. Culverwell moves to approve the trip as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion.

Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

2026-2027 School Calendar Discussion
Labor Day falls late on the calendar, on September 7, 2025. Two Calendar options for 2026-2027 were drafted for AEA's review – one where students start the Wednesday before Labor Day, the other where students start the Monday before Labor Day.

The AEA took a vote, and 85% chose Calendar Option 2, with students starting the Monday before Labor Day. The AEA have signed a one year adjustment to their contract.

Mr. Terry moves to approve the 2026-2027 Calendar, Option 2 as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconds the motion.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Mr. Kendall moves to authorize Mr. Adams to enter into an agreement with the AEA to execute the 2026-2027 School Calendar Option 2 as presented. Ms. Fitanides seconds the motion.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Policy Reviews and First Readings

Mr. Adams presented updated versions of the following policies for first reading:

- IKF – Graduation Requirements

- IKFA – Competency Determination

- IJE – Career and Technical Education Pathway Policy
  Minor edits were suggested; second readings and votes are scheduled for the next meeting.

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

Committee Member Updates
Members expressed appreciation for staff and community engagement during Ashland Day and recognized students' ongoing achievements in academics, athletics, and service.

Mr. Adams noted that the next School Committee meeting, scheduled for Wednesday, October 22 will start at 5:00 pm. The Tri-Board Meeting will begin afterwards at 6:00 pm.

Adjournment
With no further business, Ms. Culverwell moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:18pm. Ms. Fitanides seconded the motion. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
Boys Basketball, 12/13/25-12/14/25 - Overnight and Out of State Travel
Competency Determination Guidance July 2025
Copy of Copy of Policy IKFE - Competency Determination
Copy of Copy of Redline IKF - GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
Copy of Policy JEC - Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy
Memo on Graduation Requirements and Competency Determination
ms-pathway-policy-guidance (2)
Nemeth Wurster Euro Trip 2027 Field Trip Form - Overnight & Out of State Travel
School Calendar 2026-2027_Option 1 (1) (1)
School Calendar 2026-2027_Option 2