

MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, September 15, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School - Resource Room
125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Adam Emerson, John Duval, Andy Przystanski, Robert Tetlow, Fred Lora, Tracey Tierney

ABSENT: Erin Milne

OTHERS: Aaron Dean

104362 Call to Order

Vice Chairman Robert Tetlow called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

104363 Public Comment or Question - None

104364 Approval of Minutes - August 25, 2025

MOTION: On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by John Duval

VOTED: to approve the August 25, 2025 School Committee minutes. The vote was Unanimous

104365 Report of Business Manager -

A. Certified E&D - Business Manager relayed information in regards to certified E&D - Dept of Revenue certified E&D at \$962,836 which represents 4.16% of the current fiscal year budget. Superintendent Dean noted that we will need to keep a close eye on this as we get closer to borrowing as our E&D will impact our bond rating.

104366 Report of Sub-Committee -

A. Maintenance - Fred Lora relayed that things are looking good for the winter months in regards to HVAC. Projects looking forward will include roof projects and getting ready to apply with the MSBA. Would like to get word out to the towns and get support for this project. Also in process is the middle school basketball hoops. Engineers currently working on schematics for having the hoops reinstalled safely. Fred also recognized our newly appointed facilities manager who was promoted from a head building custodian to this new role. We are also maintaining fields with district staff which is a savings to the district. Superintendent Dean said early estimates of a roof project will be upwards of 8 million for the middle / high school and another 4 million for the elementary school. Maintenance also discussed field usage in the spring if softball were to have a JV team. There was a discussion about timeline and relaying information to the towns.

104367 Communications

A. Introduction of Food Service Dir. Ben Acquista - Ben took some time to speak about what he has been exposed to over the first few months on the job. He spoke of a review on policies and procedures that has taken place and one finding is for the lack of a wellness committee, which the District was aware of and has addressed. We have also had a review of the summer food service program and our procurement policies which has only aided him in learning and creating good habits with his staff. Fred addressed Ben to discuss the potential for some nutritional support with our sports teams and athletic department to support our student athletes. Adam also welcomed Ben and asked that he continue to serve our vulnerable population in the great way we have been priding ourselves in doing over the years. Making sure our children are fed is important to everyone in the school population.

B. Spotlight on Applied Learning - Monica Zanin introduced Rebecca Cohen - Substantially Separate Classroom Teacher at HVHS and Jeff Gagnon and Katie Herst with Community Access Through the Arts (CATA). Jeff spoke about their current and past collaboration with our Substantially Separate programs district wide. The goal is to promote inclusion within the classroom and it has been found that arts offer that opportunity within the schools programs. The goal of CATA is to provide arts experience while promoting expression through different forms of art. Katie outlined what a typical day within the schools would look like including welcome and goodbye songs, the naming of everyone within those songs, warm ups with a volunteer leader. She also spoke about a classroom sharing that takes place at the end of the year to showcase their form of art to caregivers, staff and their peers. Goals of the program are self confidence, expression in new ways, social building skills, and goal setting with the intention of achieving those goals by the end of the school year. Monica encouraged the committee to attend all events and will send out formal invitations for the end of the year showcase as it gets closer. She also noted that the unified basketball team will have their first game Oct 1st and encouraged everyone to attend and show their support of that program as well.

C. School Opening Updates - Principals were in attendance to discuss their school opening updates. Each Principal communicated their enrollment and classroom configurations for their buildings - including number of sections, summer enrollments, transfers out and students returning from a prior year choice out. Numbers are high in Middle School and there was a discussion around what has triggered that increase. Large class sizes in addition to the hard work being done by the administration and staff welcoming the students to the middle school to break down any fear that may come with the notion of the students attending a larger school. Principals spoke about their open house schedules and activities that are included in those nights. Each Principal then spoke about new positions and faculty members in each building and the excellent new hires each building has gained this year. They shared what their professional development focus would be for this year in addition to what has been carried over from last year and will be built upon. There was a share-out of what each building is doing to promote and maintain enthusiasm among students and staff as well as what the plan is for promoting community and inclusion in each building. In regards to operations, each principal spoke about what the opening week looked like and what worked, what didn't, and what changes have been made to make for a smooth day and a smooth transition for those students new to the building they are in. Each principal spoke about their method of communication with families for the new year as well as how teachers will communicate with parents. Community partners such as Optimal Healing, Brien Center, NBCC, Ramblewild, Audubon Society, Adams Library and Specialty Minerals were highlighted by each principal in regards to how they will be utilized and play a role in the student's school experience. A large population of high school students are set up with internship opportunities which also is due to the community partnerships created through the pathways programs.

D. Fire Marshall - Fred Lora shared a potential agenda for the Fire Marshall visit to the schools and the contents of what that day may look like. A date will be set for the spring once all parties are agreeable to the proposed agenda. Superintendent Dean suggested this could be looped into career day or as suggested by Principal Byrd, the applied learning showcase would be an opportunity to make a connection to curriculum. Invitations and logistics with the Fire Dept and Principals will be handled by the Superintendent's Office.

104368 Report of Superintendent - Next meeting will have a large amount of share out from the Superintendent. Data will be presented at the next meeting.

104369 Chairman's Report -

A. Committee Strategic Planning Retreat - Materials have not yet been shared out and location was not secured. Committee believes it would be in their best interest to postpone this meeting in order to hear data at the next school committee meeting

MOTION: On Motion of Fred Lora and second by Tracey Tierney

VOTED: To Postpone the strategic planning retreat to a later date. 5 in favor Andy Pzystanski abstained.

104370 Unfinished business -

A. Superintendent's Contract - Erin Milne and legal counsel are in possession of proposals from the Superintendent. Adam explained to the group the process for approving the Superintendents contract.

104371

New Business -

A. SRO - Superintendent outlined where the town and district are in regards to this position. The town ultimately provides this position and the district contributes towards the funding of it. The town has not yet decided what direction it wants to take and the District has had to utilize funding sources that would otherwise be funding such a position for immediate needs within the buildings. The town is responsible for the personnel portion of the hiring and maintaining of that position. It is not clear what direction the town will want to go in the future and what funding the district will have available in order to make that position a possibility to return. Tracey noted that it may be important to take data into consideration and see if the data supports having one and why. The Superintendent spoke about crisis vs criminal calls and that crisis calls far outweigh the criminal calls within the buildings. The perception vs reality will need to play a large role in our decision making moving forward.

B. Items for Future Meetings - None

104372

Action Items - None

104373

For the Good of the Order - Fred Lora applauded the girls soccer team and their coaches for volunteering their time with youth soccer over the weekend. Tracey appreciated the warm welcome and looks forward to visiting the schools in the next month. Andy announced his resignation from the committee. Family and workplace commitments no longer allow him to give his full attention to the role on the committee. John Duval gave Andy thanks for his service on the board and congratulations on his achievements. Adam applauded the elementary school and has heard nothing but great positive things about the new energy in that building. Bob noted that he was impressed with the mentor program at the high school and hopes that tradition continues for years to come.

MOTION:

On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Andy Pzerstanski :

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Erika Snyder, Recording Secretary