



**DISTRICT COMMITTEE
OPEN MEETING MINUTES
MEETING #1903
September 23, 2025**

<u>Members Present</u>	Thomas Hatem	Methuen	Chairperson
	Julio Mejia	Lawrence	Vice Chair
	William Tarbox	North Andover	Asst. Treasurer
	Zoila Disla	Lawrence	
	Annemarie Faris	Andover	
	Bradley Jones	Methuen	
	Edison Mercedes	Lawrence	

Members Absent

<u>Others Present</u>	John N. Lavoie	Superintendent-Director
	Brenda Richardson	Assistant Superintendent
	Melissa Martel	Director of Finance
	Gerry DiStefano	Treasurer
	Cheryl Dennis	District Recorder

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hatem called the meeting to order at 6:00PM. Roll Call by District Record: Ms. Faris (present), Ms. Disla (present), Mr. Jones (present), Mr. Mejia (present), Mr. Mercedes (present), Mr. Tarbox (present), Mr. Hatem (present).

2. FINANCE REPORT

a. Cash Balance Report

Mr. DiStefano presented the Cash Balance Report.

MOTION: Mr. Jones moved to accept the Cash Balance Report as presented.

2ND: Mr. Tarbox

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19015

3. MINUTES

a. Minutes of August 26, 2025

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to approve the minutes of August 26, 2025.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19016

b. Consolidated Cash Reconciliation Report

c. Revolving Fund Report

d. Budget Report

e. Budget Transfers

Ms. Martel asked the DC to approve the Budget Transfers.

MOTION: Ms. Faris moved to approve the Budget Transfers as presented.

2ND: Mr. Mejia

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19017

f. Budget Calendar

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to approve the Budget Calendar.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Supt. Lavoie recognized the Director of Finances for ensuring all members have input. The calendar will represent a more understanding of the budget and clarify any confusion that has happened in the past.

Mr. Mejia questioned if it was referencing FY26 to which Ms. Martel indicated it had been corrected, it's for FY27.

Mr. Mejia asked if personnel from each department would meet with supervisors to which Supt. Lavoie responded yes after which the District Committee would receive a tentative budget.

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19018

4. COMMUNICATIONS

a. Donations

- Ms. Jennifer Sapuppo, Groton, MA donated a 2011 Buick Encore for the Automotive Technology Department

b. Articles

- Learning to Fly, Tech School's Aviation Program takes off, Eagle Tribune
Supt. Lavoie stated it was on the front page of the Eagle Tribune and represented the program well.
- WBZ NewsRadio, Article about the Aviation Program. Supt. Lavoie stated it was then aired on WBZ radio which was good publicity – a link to listen was emailed to DC members.

c. Public Participation

Supt. Lavoie requested the District Committee reconsider their vote on the public safety program. He invited Detective Sergeant Higginbottom from the Andover Police Department and Professor Scott Joubert, Criminal Justice Program from Northern Essex College to speak in support of the effort this evening.

Detective Sergeant Higginbottom from the Andover Police Department addressed the DC stating he had attended a training safety session and discussed having a public safety program with Supt. Lavoie. Det. Sergeant stressed the importance of recruiting – in the last 5 to 10 years there's been a sharp decline in successful recruiting and therefore in filling positions. A school-based career exploration program in various law enforcement areas would be a valuable pathway to engage students in law enforcement. Mr. Jones questioned if GLTS would be competing with Northern Essex and whether it was appropriate for a high school program or something that would be more suited for college? Det. Sergeant responded that a program such as this could be a pathway to college. An individual has to be 21 years of age to become a police officer. Mr. Jones indicated he'd spoken with the department chief and fire chief about it and questioned if GLTS would focus specifically on the police? Supt. Lavoie responded no, GLTS would be focusing on public safety. Det. Sergeant mentioned that he personally found the exploration of programs extremely helpful.

Professor Scott Joubert from Northern Essex College addressed the District Committee and stated Northern Essex educates everyone that works in criminal justice, not for just the police - from law enforcement to victim advocates, etc. cross spectrum of positions. Mr. Mercedes questioned the number of credits a student would receive to continue to further their education. Prof. Joubert indicated that 63 credits were required for a degree. Northern Essex adheres to 3 credits per semester which is typically regulated to juniors and seniors. They would earn a total of twelve credits and we encourage our students to continue their education. Supt. Lavoie if we had a program that aligned with your programs, we would build our curriculum to align to your courses. Would you say having a high school experience in this would it be beneficial to which Prof. Joubert responded absolutely, it would prepare them to move on to a college course. Supt. Lavoie pointed out that one could work in the court system at 18 years of age - a lot of opportunities – students could work part time and attend Northern Essex. Prof. Joubert indicated one could work at 18 in a number of offices. The age of 21 is for employment in corrections and police.

MOTION: Mr. Jones moved for discussion.

2ND: Mr. Tarbox

Mr. Jones feels there is still a lapse time involved from graduation. There is a need but not certain GLTS is an option for it. Mr. Mejia questioned if there are any other vocational schools that have an existing criminal justice program. Supt. Lavoie said there is but didn't have that information on hand. Mr. Mejia said DC members originally didn't agree due to multiple concerns for academics and the addition of more programs. Given what was shared this evening by the professor and the Det. Sergeant, it's something we should consider for the future school year. I stand on my position that I'm in favor of reconsidering the vote but have concerns

about the school's ability to handle the space, Supt. Lavoie stated GLTS is applying for a grant which can be utilized for three programs. We have the barn and the grant would allow for an addition to GLTS itself. Mr. Mejia questioned if the vote were reconsidered, could the grant be used to strengthen existing programs? Supt. Lavoie responded yes, and we have other options. Mr. Mejia asked, outside of the three programs don't we have something in place to strength our existing programs, we want to ensure these are strong prior to adding more. Supt. Lavoie responded that every year we have an advisory committee making changes in the curriculum and addressing equipment needs. Ms. Faris indicated she supported this but some concerns - the lapse, how many other schools have this and the maturity level of the students. I think students that age should be educated on the do's and don'ts of the law. I'm not opposed to this but its another program requiring more space, more people to tend to the program and there are a lot of other things that need to be done before continuing to add more programs. Mr. Mercedes believes it would be more appropriate as an after-school program. Twelve credits after two years are not a lot to get to the required 63 for a degree. Mr. Hatem stated our surrounding communities are demanding Spanish speaking employees. I believe our students can do this but I am concerned about the two years in between and would like more information specifically about public safety. Mr. Mejia questioned the grant application due date to which Supt. Lavoie responded the end of October. Mr. Hatem questioned if Mr. Jones wanted to remove his motion to which Mr. Jones responded yes, I rescind to discuss.

MOTION: Mr. Jones moved to rescind the previous DC vote on the criminal justice program.

2ND: Mr. Mejia

Ms. Disla requested that the original motion repeated for everyone. Mr. Mejia read that it failed at the last meeting.

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Faris	Yes
Ms. Disla	No
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19019

MOTION: Mr. Mejia moved to table the criminal justice program.

2ND: Mr. Jones

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

#19020

Mr. Mejia clarified that the program had not been approved - this is to table it for the next meeting and gather more information. Mr. Mercedes requested the Superintendent consider looking into it as an after-school program as that option could influence the vote of some DC members. Mr. Jones requested information about which schools currently offer it, how many students GLTS would start in the program and more information about the barn. Do our health programs lead to EMT careers? Supt. Lavoie responded not specifically - we'll provide more information.

5. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT-DIRECTOR

a. Therapy Dog Presentation

Supt. Lavoie and Deborah Reyes (School Social Worker/Adjustment Counselor) presented to the District Committee on GLTS obtaining a therapy dog.

Asst. Supt. Richardson introduced Deborah Reyes and Katie Hebert.

Ms. Reyes, school social worker, addressed the DC on obtaining a therapy dog reviewing its benefits via slides. Mr. Tarbox questioned if there would be one dog per student? No, one dog would be for the whole school. Mr. Mercedes questioned the success of handling the need with one dog for the school. Ms. Reyes responded that time could be scheduled for separate settings within the school. Medical expenses for the animal would be handled by pet insurance. Mr. Mercedes expressed his concern about aggressiveness and the possibility of lawsuits due to dog bites. Ms. Faris voiced the same concerns. Ms. Reyes stressed that the dog goes through extensive training for temperament noting there is liability insurance in the school policy. Ms. Faris expressed her opinion that she was not in favor of providing students with a possible gimmick to get out of class. There is a small population that has a need for this type of comfort and for that I would be in favor. Mr. Mejia reported that Lawrence High School has one and it has benefited the school. Aside from the handler being licensed Mr. Mejia questioned who would be handling the dog? Ms. Reyes there is interest in taking on that role but that is still to be determined. Asst. Supt. Richardson said I worked at another technical school for 17 years where the guidance department had a therapy dog which proved to be a huge benefit. Ms. Reyes said that having the presence of a therapy dog can assist a student to reach a calmer state of mind which can hopefully open the door for the student settle enough to open up to an adult.

b. Cafeteria Update

Mr. Hamel, Director of Facilities reviewed the various problems within the existing cafeteria which led to the conclusion that it made no sense to purchase new equipment when it was readily available to keep the existing cafeteria running and put the new cafeteria project on hold. A full upgrade was made to the cafeteria and the new equipment was installed in there – there has been no waste. The summer is only five weeks and we dealt with the heating and air conditioning, fifteen classrooms, the IT department, etc. Ms. Faris appreciated what was presented but indicated her concern that the café was to have open within one or two months of her sitting on the Committee and it was continually delayed. What I don't understand is why wouldn't we have addressed the issues of the existing cafeteria throughout the year? Mr. Hamel stated he was at town hall yesterday and it's still an issue with the health department for approval. When we do proceed, we'll have to go out to bid and we can't do it during the school year – the finance director mentioned going out on the street and I think that would be the best solution, put out an RFP. Mr. Jones asked if the feed to the cafeteria had been completed? Mr. Hamel said no, that's where the issue with the health department lies. Mr. Mejia questioned the timeframe to get back to the project? Once we receive approval from the health department the infrastructure will need to be improved.

c. Out of State Travel (2)

Mr. Jean Gomez, Plumbing Instructor and Students will travel to Viega Training Center in Nashua, New Hampshire to learn how to install Propress and Megapress fitting and get certified, November 3rd & November 5th, no cost to the school.

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to approve.

2ND: Mr. Jones

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19021

Senior Class Advisors, Ms. Pamela Clark and Martha Carrasco are requesting Out of State Travel, Sunday, May31, 2026-Monday, June 1, 2026 for the Senior Field Trip to Hershey Park, PA. No cost to the school.

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to approve.

2ND: Ms. Faris

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

d. New Admissions Policy Update

Supt. Lavoie and Assistant Supt., Richardson updated the District Committee on the new Admission Policy. Asst. Supt. Richardson reviewed the amendments made by the Board of Ed for admissions based on a lottery process rather than selected criterion via slides which will be emailed to all DC members. GLTS policy must be submitted by November 1, 2025. We don't have a lot of time but we can ask for an extension. We're looking for feedback on where the School Committee stands on this. Mr. Mejia asked if prior to this change, did the Dept of Ed gather information from the districts or ask for input? Asst. Supt. Richardson indicated this conversation has been going on for several years.

Supt. Lavoie stated that administrators have been working on and fighting this for a number of years. The House added a bill to eliminate the lottery that passed the House but not the Senate. Representative Moran submitted a new bill and we've sent several letters to the Dept and the Board of Ed and to all our representatives and senators but there's so much push from the governor's office. Mr. Mejia stated vocational schools are not in favor of this. I feel this is a racist practice and it doesn't help a district such as ours. This system, put in place by the state, was a total shame to all vocational schools. Supt. Lavoie stated it will be brought to the DC for a vote - moving up the next meeting of the DC to October 14, 2025, to get this to the Dept of Ed.

e. Aviation Opening Event

Supt. Lavoie updated the District Committee on the Aviation Opening Event scheduled for Wednesday, October 15, 2025, stating an invite had been sent out to all DC members.

f. T-shirts:

Supt. Lavoie requested approval from the DC to purchase two t-shirts and a sweatshirt for all students to start things off and make the process go a lot smoother at a cost of \$60,000.

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes

2ND: Mr. Tarbox

Ms. Faris I never expected the school would buy every student their uniform and what's going to happen when someone does not have their shirt, how will it be dealt with? Supt. Lavoie the same policy in place. Ms. Faris feels the consequences are not enforced to everyone's liking now. Mr. Mercedes, I don't feel a burden on any student, it would be 24 dollars for shirts. If we want to give it ok but if we require them to buy it, they have to buy it. Supt. Lavoie it's not just the money. It's implementing the policy and everyone has them. There could be 100's of excuses in the initial implementation of it. Ms. Faris there's never anything in place to enforce it. Mr. Mercedes suggested finding a local store to sell the shirts and sweatshirts so benefits to the local school.

VOTE: Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Jones	Yes
Mr. Tarbox	Yes
Mr. Mejia	Yes
Mr. Mercedes	Yes
Ms. Faris	Yes
Ms. Disla	Yes
Mr. Hatem	Yes

6. REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE

7. OLD BUSINESS

a. District Committee Priorities

b. Policy

8. NEW BUSINESS

9. TABLED MATTERS

10. PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS/REPORT

a. Resignations

b. Leaves of Absence

c. Retirements

d. Appointments

- Ariana Melo, Child Care Assistant, Effective 9/17/25
- Frederick Monroy, Long Term Sub-Math, Effective 9/15/25
- Audra Durkin, Cooperative Education Coordinator, Effective 9/10/25

e. Job Postings

- After Dark SPED Teacher, \$70/hr. for teaching and \$50/hr. for prep time, Mon-Fri, 3-5:30PM, half hour per day for prep, New Position (Attached Job Description)

MOTION: Mr. Mejia moved to approve the job posting as presented

2ND: Mr. Jones

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19025

- After Dark Administrative Secretary, Mon-Fri, 3-5PM, additional hours for meetings, New Position, Clerical Hourly Wage, New Position (Attached Job Description)

MOTION: Mr. Mejia moved to approve the job posting as presented

2ND: Mr. Jones

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19026

- CTE Mentor Facilitator, Stipend Position (\$2,000), SY2025-2026, New Position (Attached Job Description)

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to approve the job posting as presented

2ND: Mr. Jones

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19027

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Change of October 21st District Committee Meeting to Tuesday, October 14th, 2025.
Supt. said its here for informational purposes

- Measures of Academic Performance (MAP) Presentation at October Meeting.

MOTION: Ms. Disla moved to add the Superintendent's letters that were included in this package regarding the open meeting law as an agenda item for the next DC meeting.

2ND: Mr. Mercedes

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19028

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: Mr. Jones moved to enter into Executive Session at 8:44PM

2ND: Mr. Mejia

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19029

ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION

ENTER OPEN SESSION

MOTION: Mr. Jones moved to accept the contracts for non-reps.

VOTE: Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Tarbox Yes

Mr. Mejia Yes

Mr. Mercedes Yes

Ms. Faris Yes

Ms. Disla Yes

Mr. Jones Yes

Mr. Hatem Yes

#19032

MOTION: Mr. Tarbox moved to accept the contracts for the paraprofessionals.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Mejia Yes

Mr. Mercedes Yes

Ms. Faris Yes

Ms. Disla Yes

Mr. Jones Yes

Mr. Tarbox Yes

Mr. Hatem Yes

#19033

MOTION: Mr. Tarbox moved to approve the coach's positions under Appendix B.

2ND: Mr. Jones

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Mercedes Yes

Ms. Faris Yes

Ms. Disla Yes

Mr. Jones Yes

Mr. Tarbox Yes

Mr. Mejia Yes

Mr. Hatem Yes

#19034

MOTION: Mr. Tarbox moved to accept the New Teacher Orientation contract proposal

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Faris Yes

Ms. Disla Yes

Mr. Jones Yes
Mr. Tarbox Yes
Mr. Mejia Yes
Mr. Mercedes Yes
Mr. Hatem Yes
#19035

MOTION: Mr. Mejia moved to approve the daycare director proposal.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Ms. Disla Yes
Mr. Jones Yes
Mr. Tarbox Yes
Mr. Mejia Yes
Mr. Mercedes Yes
Ms. Faris Yes
Mr. Hatem Yes

#19036

MOTION: Mr. Tarbox moved to accept the cafeteria unit contract as presented.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Jones Yes
Mr. Tarbox Yes
Mr. Mejia Yes
Mr. Mercedes Yes
Ms. Faris Yes
Ms. Disla Yes
Mr. Hatem Yes

#19037

MOTION: Mr. Mejia to approve the custodial unit contract as presented, Chapter 3.

2ND: Ms. Faris

Roll Call by District Recorder

Mr. Tarbox Yes
Mr. Mejia Yes
Mr. Mercedes Yes
Ms. Faris Yes
Ms. Disla Yes
Mr. Jones Yes
Mr. Hatem Yes

#19038

12. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mr. Mercedes moved to adjourn at 9:46PM

2ND: Ms. Faris

VOTE: Unanimously Approved

#19040

Respectfully Submitted



Cheryl Dennis
District Recorder

Minutes Reviewed



Supt. Lavoie N. Supt. Lavoie
Superintendent-Director