

GOVERNOR WENTWORTH REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING
GWRSD SCHOOL BOARD – EFFINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
OCTOBER 6, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Deshaies called the Governor Wentworth Regional School Board meeting to order at 6:02 pm in the gymnasium of Effingham Elementary School.

Members Present: Tom Bickford, Kirsten Burke, Brodie Deshaies, Kayla Hewitt, Dr. James Manning, Mary Schillereff, Dr. Elizabeth Sheckler, Danielle Van Dusen, Nate Williams

Also present: Superintendent Caroline Arakelian, Assistant Superintendent Katey Hills, and Business Administrator Kathy O'Blenes

Motion: At 6:02pm a motion was made to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A: 3, II (a) and 91-A:2 I (b) to discuss personnel and legal matters.

Moved: Dr. Manning – **Second:** Dr. Sheckler

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Members of the Board moved to room 106. Ms. Van Dusen rejoined just after the vote. Personnel and legal matters were discussed.

Motion: To approve the leave requests of two support staff members as presented.

Moved: Mr. Deshaies – **Second:** Mr. Williams

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Motion: To accept with sincere gratitude the retirement notifications of Deborah Bunting effective June 30, 2026, and of Mercedes Warren effective June 30, 2027.

Moved: Mr. Williams – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Ms. O'Blenes left the meeting at 6:24pm.

Motion: To empower the Human Resources committee to engage with the three collective bargaining units (GWAT, GWEA, GWSSA) to explore other insurance options.

Moved: Mr. Williams – **Second:** Mr. Bickford

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Motion: At 7:00 pm a motion was made to end the non-public session.

Moved: Dr. Manning – **Second:** Dr. Sheckler

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

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The Board members resumed the meeting at 7:03 pm in the Gymnasium. Student Representative Bryce Sandlin and community members joined the meeting. Ms. O'Blenes rejoined the meeting.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Manning.

AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Deshaies added an agenda item to read a public statement and Dr. Sheckler added a meeting announcement to the Academic Affairs Update.

STUDENT PRESENTATION

Principal Morrissey welcomed the Board and community members to EES and thanked everyone for their attendance. She introduced 4th grade student Quinn Murphy who presented a North American Landmark project on Pearl Harbor. Quinn described the historic importance of the attack on Pearl Harbor, its location, the memorial, and statistics of the December 7th day and answered questions posed by School Board members and the audience.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To approve the minutes of the August 27, 2025 School Board meeting as written.

Moved: Dr. Sheckler – **Second:** Ms. Schillereff

Vote: Ms. Burke, abstain (not present); Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, abstain (not present); Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 8, 2025 School Board meeting as written.

Moved: Mr. Bickford – **Second:** Dr. Sheckler

Vote: Ms. Burke, abstain (not present); Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 15, 2025 Academic Affairs Committee meeting as written.

Moved: Dr. Sheckler – **Second:** Ms. Schillereff

Vote: Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes

Motion: To approve the accounts payable (\$3,488,336.58) and payroll (\$2,397,814.50) manifests totaling \$5,886,151.08.

Moved: Dr. Manning – **Second:** Ms. Hewitt

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

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PUBLIC INPUT

Aaron House, Wolfeboro – Thanked the School Board members with whom he was able to meet; described his experience with the budget process as the former Athletic Director in 2023; and questioned the way the purchase of athletic uniforms is reflected in the budget.

Motion: To extend the time allowed for Mr. House's statement.

Moved: Mr. Bickford – **Second:** None

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

Student Representative Bryce Sandlin shared a report on the activities and events happening at the High School. Superintendent Arakelian played a "Coffee and Connection" video that she and Bryce recorded together with WCTV and is available on the WCTV website for viewing. Bryce's report is attached to these minutes.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent's District Update

Superintendent Arakelian thanked Bryce for joining her at WCTV to record the video and for his informative update on the activities at the high school. She reviewed the enrollment figures for the District as of October 1, the winter weather procedures for the coming season, the continuation of the temporary restraining order on DEI certification, and the progress being made with the Strategic Plan.

Carpenter School Update

Superintendent Arakelian reported that Bauen Corporation has been secured to serve as project manager and is projected to begin work in mid-October. She thanked Carpenter staff and families for their flexibility, dedication, and cooperation during the transition to modular classrooms and limited building use.

Winter Weather

Superintendent Arakelian referred to her earlier winter weather procedures.

Budget Timeline

Superintendent Arakelian reviewed the budget preparation process for FY2026-2027 that includes team meetings on October 14, 15, and 17, followed by Finance Committee meetings on November 18, 19, and 20. The Preliminary Budget Adoption is scheduled for December 8th and the Final Budget Adoption Hearing is scheduled for January 5th. The Brookfield, Tuftonboro, Wolfeboro, and At-Large School Board seats are up for election in March.

Crowdfunding Request

Superintendent Arakelian presented a crowdfunding request submitted by Jennifer Murray do Carmo for the annual James Foley Freedom Run per Policy DFGA.

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Motion: To approve the crowdfunding request as presented by Ms. Murray do Carmo.

Moved: Ms. Schillereff – **Second:** Mr. Bickford

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Mr. Deshaies shared that condolences were sent to the family of former School Board member, Ernie Brown. Dr. Manning shared background on several different initiatives Mr. Brown was instrumental in implementing for the District and expressed sympathy for his passing.

Mr. Deshaies shared an update on HB154 regarding hand counting of voting ballots. He also revisited the letter drafted to state legislators regarding the cell phone ban during the school day.

Motion: To discuss the topic of the letter.

Moved: Mr. Bickford – **Second:** Dr. Sheckler

Discussion: Student Representative Sandlin offered that KRHS has seen very few infractions and that teachers have been complimentary about student compliance. The Board does not see the need to send the letter after all.

No Vote Taken

Mr. Deshaies reported that the NHSBA Annual Convention has been delayed until October 25th.

Mr. Deshaies read aloud a prepared statement regarding SchoolCare that will be sent to local papers and posted online.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Academic Affairs Committee:

Dr. Sheckler reported that she has received messages from constituents requesting review of policies GBD, GBK, and BCA. These policies will be reviewed at the Academic Affairs Committee meeting on October 22nd. She requested comments from the Board on policies BBBE and IKFC as adoptions for 1st Read. The Board agreed to send policy BBBE back to committee for further revision. Dr. Sheckler requested comments from the Board on the policies listed on the agenda as revisions for 1st Read. The Board discussed classroom size as addressed by policy IIB, agreeing to keep the last two paragraphs of the current policy in place, and asked for an explanation of the language change suggested for policy IKEA. Dr. Sheckler requested comments from the Board on the four policies listed on the agenda as withdrawals for 1st Read. The Board had no comments.

Building & Maintenance Committee: Dr. Manning reported that the next meeting is on October 9th at 4:00pm.

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Community Relations Committee: Mr. Williams reported on the PTO Roundtable discussion held prior to tonight's meeting to discuss fundraising efforts.

Finance Committee: No report.

Human Resources Committee: Mr. Deshaies reported that the Board has empowered the HR committee to engage the Collective Bargaining Units to explore healthcare options.

NON-COMMITTEE REPORTS

Wolfeboro CIP: Ms. Burke read her report on the meetings she has attended. Her report is attached to these minutes.

WCTV: Ms. Schillereff reported on the continued fundraising efforts underway by WCTV.

CLOSING ACTIVITIES

Advanced Planning

Mr. Deshaies read the upcoming activities from the bottom of the agenda.

Public Input

Patti Morrissey, Principal EES – Thanked the Board for its thoughtful discussion of class sizes and consideration of student needs during the Academic Affairs Update portion of the meeting.

Terri Drew, Ossipee – Asked how many entities are members of SchoolCare and how the assessment cost will affect individual members.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: At 8:37pm a motion was made to adjourn the meeting.

Moved: Dr. Sheckler – **Second**: Mr. Deshaies

Vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Ms. Hewitt, yes; Dr. Manning, yes; Ms. Schillereff, yes; Dr. Sheckler, yes; Ms. Van Dusen, yes; Mr. Williams, yes; Mr. Bickford, yes; Mr. Deshaies, yes

Respectfully submitted,



School Board Secretary

Approved by School Board: **11/3/2025**

Good evening everyone,

Today was the first day of spirit week for homecoming, where the theme was Salad dressing. Seniors were assigned Caesar with Greek attire, Juniors Ranch, Sophomores Hawaiian, and Freshmen Cilantro Lime. After today the spirit days are as follows: Denim Day, breast Cancer awareness day, Mathletes vs Athletes, and class color day on Friday. There seemed to be plenty of student participation today, and hopefully it continues. Students and faculty have done a good job of adjusting to the new grading and scheduling platform, with Task being scheduled as normal. The cell phone ban has also continued to prove effective, with there being very few infractions despite some backlash from students. Last Friday after school, the student council decorated the lunchroom with balloons and a big poster in celebration of homecoming. Tickets have begun to sell at lunch for 10\$ and are limited. This past Thursday and Friday the club fair was held, where tables were set up to introduce students to the variety of clubs we offer. This Wednesday the college fair will be held, where 27 different colleges will be there for students to look into. Now, I'd like to introduce this video with Dr. Arakelian that provides further updates.

(As of Tuesday 9/30)

This past month, the student council went on a team bonding trip to downtown Wolfeboro where we competed in a scavenger hunt and began planning for homecoming week, which will begin next Monday October 6th. Everyday there will be a theme for students to participate in by dressing up. Thursday night will be the hallway decorating for each class, where each class has a different theme that they will decorate according to, and judging will be the following morning. The pep rally and homecoming football game will also be on Friday the 10th, where the football team will play Merrimack Valley after starting out the season 2-2. Following that will be the homecoming dance on Saturday night to round off the week. In other recent athletic news, the boys soccer team is now 4-2-3 after picking up recent wins over John Stark and Kennett. They play Coe brown at home today. Girls soccer have had their struggles, unable to pick up a win so far however they play away today at Coe Brown as well. The golf team are holding their senior night tonight where they'll be hosting souhegan, goffstown, and Winnacunnet. Girls field hockey is now 5-4 after winning 2-1 against Lebanon yesterday, and they will face John Stark tonight away. Girls volleyball are having a great start so far, with a 7-2 record and sweeps in all of their victories. They lost a close 2-3 game to Somersworth yesterday but will face Gilford next on Saturday. Looking ahead, deca has their fall leadership conference on October 2nd at Unh and FBLA will have theirs on October 28th also at unh. Finally, Kingswood Theatre will be producing Cinderella from November 21st to the 23rd

I'd like to thank everybody for giving me this opportunity to be the voice for our student body and thank you for your time

Dear Governor Wentworth Community,

On September 23, the Governor Wentworth Regional School District received correspondence from SchoolCare informing us that SchoolCare has a projected \$4.5 million deficit to close their fiscal year, which ended on June 30, 2025. SchoolCare is a governmental risk management program, also known as a risk pool, to which our school district, other school districts, towns, cities, and other public or governmental entities are members. SchoolCare manages a risk pool that purchases health insurance and submits claims on behalf of its members and their employees.

When SchoolCare announced to members its projected \$4.5 million deficit and ongoing financial issues related to health insurance claims and pharmacy costs, which continue to outpace their estimates, they also informed Governor Wentworth and other members that they would be issuing a \$30 million pro-rata contribution assessment to all member entities who were members as of June 30, 2025. SchoolCare told members that this action will restore its reserves to a level of 12% of member contributions. For most members, this assessment will roughly equal one and one-half months of contributions.

Governor Wentworth received a bill, or assessment, a week later, on October 1, for \$1,642,316.20. SchoolCare has requested payment upon receipt but is providing all members with a 90-day 'grace period.' After January 1, 2026, SchoolCare will charge members 0.5% interest per month for any unpaid balances.

The School Board met with legal counsel on October 1 and had further legal discussions during our non-public session tonight. We are also receiving ongoing legal guidance as more information becomes available and the situation develops. Additionally, the Superintendent has spoken with superintendents in other school districts, and I, as the Board Chair, have communicated with the New Hampshire School Board Association's Executive Director and legal counsel.

At this juncture, the Board has not yet received sufficient legal justification from SchoolCare that it has the legal authority to assess its members or that members are contractually or legally obligated to pay an assessment issued by SchoolCare. The Board has instructed its legal counsel to request additional justification from SchoolCare regarding its recent actions and to request other relevant information for the Board and counsel to review. In the coming weeks, the Board will determine if it is legally or contractually obligated to pay SchoolCare's assessment.

The School Board has requested that the Superintendent and administrators begin making plans for how Governor Wentworth would pay for this assessment in the case that it's legally or contractually required, or if the School Board deems it necessary and in the best interest of the school district. The School Board will ensure that any plan has the least impact on students and existing services, considers ongoing fiscal constraints, and is thoughtful of taxpayers. We will also ensure that the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration and the state Education Department are consulted. If the School Board does decide to pay, it will approve a plan at a future school board meeting, likely our regularly scheduled meeting in November or December.

The entire situation has further encouraged the already ongoing strong consideration of exploring other health insurance options. In the coming months, the Board plans to reach out to all three unions to initiate discussions about potential approaches. This will be an initial, collaborative exploration aimed at identifying what may best serve the district, its employees, and taxpayers.

If anyone has any questions about this ongoing legal matter, please do not hesitate to contact me, the Board Chair, and/or the Superintendent.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brodie S. Deshaies
GWRSB Chair
Member, At Large