Ashland School Committee Minutes
October 22, 2025

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present:
Laurie Tosti, Chair
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

Agenda Review and adoption
Ms. Tosti opened the meeting, took attendance and reviewed the agenda.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment
None.

Student Awards
Superintendent Adams presented three awards to current high school seniors. NSDC Awards were presented to Maximo Gamboa and Taylor Kotch. The MASS award was presented to Zia Kashwan. The School Committee congratulated these three students for their achievements.

Ashland Middle School
Erin Lachapelle presented an update report on the schedule and curriculum changes that took place for the school year 2025-2026.

The theme for the middle school this year is, “positivity, flexibility and grace”. To recap, the Discovery block was not determined to be equitable in meeting the needs of all students, so it was eliminated from the middle school daily schedule. Administrators made changes to the schedule of each grade level. Each grade level has 5 core classes, with changes of core content by grade. In place of Discovery, a new core class was added to the daily schedule.
Grade 6 added ELA - Writing as an additional core class.
Grade 7 added Engineering as an additional core class.
Grade 8 added Spanish as an additional core class.

Grade 6 Chorus students meet for the entire school year. Because of high numbers, Grade 7 and Grade 8 Chorus classes are semester-based. Staff went from teaching 4 content classes a day to 5 content classes. It represents one additional class of students and one additional class to grade. It is more work for teachers, but they are settling into a routine and are absorbing it well, for the most part.

Ms. Lachapelle wants to acknowledge the two teachers who are now teaching Engineering: Chloe Dignacco and Kaitlyn Gentile. They are former Math and Science teachers, respectively, and have developed a project-based Engineering class.
In Grade 8, Spanish teachers are now a part of a team of teachers. The Spanish I curriculum is being followed.
For Special Education – compliance is far improved.
A "flex" block, or a "Catch-Up" block is missing from the schedule. It is possible that this could be added into the schedule for next year on a 1x weekly (or 2x weekly) basis.

Mr. Terry asked, What are the measures of success you are looking for to determine if this schedule change is having a positive effect on student outcomes?
Ms. Lachapelle responded that she will be looking for significant growth on Grade 6 iReady scores and eventual improvement on MCAS Science scores for Gr8.
Mr. Kendall asked how the staffing changes have worked out. She reviewed that the ½ teams have been dissolved and teachers on that ½ team were re-assigned to the new classes for each of the grades. Ms. Fitanides asked how does the former Academic Support block fit in the daily schedule. Ms. Lachapelle explained that a student who is scheduled for Academic Support will have that class in place of a Unified Arts class several times during a week. Students will still be able to take Unified Arts courses (such as Music, Art, STEM, Drama and Library), but they may have them fewer times a semester, than a student who does not have Academic Support in their schedule. The School Committee Members appreciated the update from the Principal.

Warrant Approvals
Between October 9, 2025, and October 22, 2025, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature, payables in the amount of $ 472,682.54. This includes General Fund expenses of $ 193,416.62, Revolving expenses of $ 273,889.00, Grants expenses of $ 5,290.37, and Meals Tax expenses of 86.55.

Superintendent's Report
Mr. Adams had no report.

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

- ELA Curriculum Meeting – Ryan VanWyhe, Gr 6 Writing teacher at AMS reported that the new writing course has allowed them to teach writing ahead of pace. In October, they are covering topics that were covered in December of previous years. At Mindess in Grade 3, they have shared Data Team learning goals for each student, with due dates attached. At the high school, the English Department is reviewing the results of the MCAS open response questions.

- For Professional Learning: The Learning Walks for Year 2 staff took place with Milford, and Mendon/Upton districts.

Superintendent's Evaluation
Last year, Mr. Adams had 7 Superintendent Goals, 4 of which were not completed. Those 4 remaining goals have been rolled over to this current school year. School Committee members should review these draft goals and give any feedback to Mr. Adams. He would like to approve his goals during the next meeting.

An additional goal that has been added to his list this year is to manage the school's athletic fields as rental properties for community groups and teams. A framework needs to be developed on this by April 2026.

Eagle Scout Service Project Proposal
Joshwin Gracias is proposing to build a storage rack with totes for the Storage Room at the high school. Currently, the storage room is disorganized and in need of an improved organizational system. The totes will be labeled for each team, to store uniforms and gear.

Mr. Kendall asked if Joshwin had met with the Athletic Director, the Principal and the Facilities Director to discuss his proposed project. Joshwin confirmed that he had. He initially discussed it with the former Athletic Director, Kevin Anderson. After Mr. Anderson's departure, he also reviewed the proposal with the new AD, Peter Connery. Mr. Connery reported that a similar project was done at his former school, and it was successful. He is in favor of the project.

Mr. Terry moved to approve the service project proposal as presented. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

AHS Environmental Club: Storm Drain project proposal
Club members presented a proposal to create storm drain art to raise pollution awareness and promote clean water. The club is proposing to add art to the storm drain at the back of the high school, near the parent pick up area for greater visibility. Tentative project date is Saturday, November 8 with a rain date of Sunday, November 9. The group leaders met with the Ashland Stormwater Advisory Committee in the town. There are about 20 active members in the Environmental Club.

A second project proposal is to create an art installation using collected bottle caps from the high school cafeteria in January or February 2026.

Create an educational campaign to convey why this is important. Suggestions from committee members were to consider submitting information about this project to the Town Manager's Newsletter. Also consider checking to see if senior high school students have any available leftover paint from the parking lot painting event to donate to this project.

Mr. Terry moved to approve the service project proposal as presented. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Policies - Second read and vote:
IKF - Graduation Requirements
IKFE Competency Determination
JEC - Middle School Pathway Exploration

Mr. Terry moves to approve all three policies as presented. Mr. Kendall seconds the motion.
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

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

Report of School Committee Members
Abishek Karthik reported that Homecoming football game is Friday, with the Homecoming Dance on Saturday. Seniors are busy applying for college's Early Action deadline of November 1st. Fall sports seasons are starting to wrap up.
Ms. Culverwell attended a recent AMS Site Council meeting where the Principal presented a similar update on the schedule changes for this current school year. The Keefe Tech showcase will be upcoming for middle school students.

Ms. Fitanides attended a recent Unified Basketball game at AHS.

Mr. Kendall attended a Mindess Site Council meeting and a Policy Sub-Committee meeting.

Ms. Tosti attended a Warren Site Council meeting. There were several new parent members and a good level of participation. They discussed parent volunteer needs at Warren and how to re-engage parents.

At 5:56pm, Mr. Terry moved to adjourn. Mr. Kendall seconded. Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
Final Policy IKFE - Competency Determination
Awards for School Committee
School Committee Agenda October 22, 2025
Copy of Copy of Redline IKF - GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
Copy of Policy JEC - Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy
Draft Superintendent Goals 2025-26
EagleScoutProjectWorkbook
Environmental Club Presentation
AMS Schedule Update-SC Meeting 10.22.25
FY 26 10.23.2025 School Committee G&D Acceptance Log.docx
Minutes - September 24, 2025
Minutes - October 8, 2025