

Cohasset Public Schools
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025
Empower Students to Improve Communities

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
November 5, 2025
6:00PM**

Cohasset Middle and High School
Learning Commons
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025

Attendance

Committee Members in Attendance Jennifer Lesky, Chair
Craig MacLellan, Vice Chair
Corey Evans, School Committee Member
Jacob Squatrito, Interim School Committee Member

Others in Attendance Sarah Shannon, Superintendent
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations
Michael Stapleton, Director of Student Services

Call to Order

Chair Jennifer Lesky called the regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee to order at 6:03 PM.

Roll call: Mr. Evans, Mr., MacLellan, Mr. Squatrito, and Mrs. Lesky were present. Mr. Dial was absent.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

Invited Guests

Gift to Cohasset High School: New Softball Equipment Shed at Freedom Field

Head Coach **Andy Simms** presented a proposed gift to Cohasset High School of a new equipment shed for the Varsity Softball team at Freedom Field at the Barnes Complex. He explained that the shed is the result of several years of volunteer work by families of current and former softball players, including his own efforts. All raw materials for the project were donated by **Hingham Lumber of Cohasset**, and professional assembly was donated by **Dennison Construction of Hingham**. The shed will store approximately \$5,000 worth of softball equipment, including a pitching machine, an outfield fly ball machine, multiple sets of catchers' gear, and other team equipment.

Mr. Evans asked whether the School Committee could accept the gift because the shed is located on Town land rather than school property, and whether the Select Board should also act on the gift. Superintendent Dr. Shannon responded that, because the shed is dedicated to the Girls' Softball program, acceptance is clearly within the School Committee's purview, while the Select Board may also have a role given the location on Freedom Field.

The Chair noted and appreciated the strong level of community involvement that led to the project's successful completion.

A motion was made by Mr. MacLellan and seconded by Mr. Evans to accept the new softball equipment shed as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Evans – Aye; Squatrito – Aye; MacLellan – Aye; Lesky – Aye. Motion passed with unanimous support of all members present.

Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Dr. Sarah Shannon announced that Cohasset Middle School was ranked ninth in Massachusetts by *U.S. News & World Report* and congratulated staff, students, and families for their collective efforts. She thanked the community for supporting the use of School Stabilization Funds to advance the Joseph Osgood School roof project, noting that the MSBA-supported project will return with updated cost estimates after the new year. Shannon described efforts to refresh the Professional Learning Committee, which has met multiple times and is organizing a teacher-led professional learning day for December 2, along with designing a staff survey to inform future planning. She highlighted two recent examples of cross-school and intergenerational collaboration aligned with the strategic plan: Grade 5 students participated in Red Ribbon Week activities led by high school Safe Harbor Ambassadors, and two freshmen wellness students presented civics projects on coping strategies at Deer Hill School.

Shannon also provided an update on athletics, noting postseason participation across several teams including golf, volleyball, cross country, football, field hockey, and both soccer teams, with multiple teams advancing in tournament play. She shared that the Deer Hill 5th Grade Circus will take place Friday evening, offering students opportunities to take safe risks and build community. Families were reminded that schools will be closed on Tuesday, November 11 for Veterans Day. Shannon also noted that the Deer Hill PSO Homework Symposium will be held the next morning to support ongoing discussions around homework expectations and practices. Committee members expressed appreciation for the ways these initiatives build community, promote student-to-student connections, and strengthen engagement across grade levels

Teaching and Learning

Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy - First Read

Dr. Scollins presented the first read of the state-required policy ensuring that middle school students are informed about and exposed to technical education and other high-school career pathways. She explained that Cohasset Middle School uses MassHire 360 to support academic and career exploration and noted recent visits from South Shore Vocational Technical High School and Norfolk Agricultural School. The policy formalizes existing practices by outlining expectations for student information, tours, and integration of career planning into their educational experience.

Chair Lesky clarified that the district has already been providing this exposure in compliance with state requirements and that the policy primarily serves to codify and update current practices. She emphasized that vocational and agricultural schools are valuable options for students and expressed appreciation that all students will continue to have access to explore these pathways.

Update on Possible New Massachusetts Literacy Bill

Dr. Scollins provided an update on a new Massachusetts literacy bill that passed the House of Representatives on October 29, 2025, which would place parameters around the types of literacy resources and instructional

programs districts may use. The legislation emphasizes evidence-based literacy instruction, requiring materials grounded in scientific research with demonstrated positive outcomes, and would require districts to use state-approved programs unless granted waivers to pilot alternatives. She noted that the bill still must advance through the Senate and that she will continue to monitor developments as the process unfolds.

Student Services Update

Director of Student Services Michael Stapleton presented an update on student services, providing the committee with current data on eligibility evaluations and determinations. He also provided an overview of co-teaching as a special education service model. He explained that co-teaching is a model in which a special educator partners with a general education teacher to deliver IEP services within the inclusive classroom, with current teams operating at both Osgood and Deer Hill based on student needs in ELA, reading, writing, and math. The district's focus is on building long-term instructional partnerships that strengthen differentiation and support across grade levels. This year's professional development includes three PD days with Seaside Consulting, direct coaching for co-teaching teams, a January 30 workshop on differentiation for all elementary educators, and a dedicated session for ESPs on roles and collaboration in co-taught classrooms.

Ms. Scott and Ms. Saunders, representatives from the Special Education Parent Advisory Counsel, SEPAC, expressed deep appreciation for the district's recent Professional Development initiatives, noting how meaningful it is to see special education practices integrated into general education settings. Ms. Saunders shared that co-teaching in her daughter's second-grade classroom has been transformative for her confidence and peer engagement, and she encouraged continued collaboration—particularly as the new state literacy bill develops—to ensure that any curricular changes support all students.

Mr. Evans expressed deep pride in the district's work and emphasized how valuable it is to receive broad, perspective-rich feedback. He noted the difficulty of staying ahead of challenges but believes the district's integration efforts reflect strong priorities and thanked the team for their contributions.

Mr. MacLellan said he has strong confidence in the continually improving special education department but raised a question about the data showing family-initiated referrals instead of MTSS-driven referrals. He asked whether this could suggest gaps in the MTSS process and invited Mr. Stapleton to address any concerns or mitigating factors.

Mr. Stapleton explained that balancing MTSS with referral obligations is complex, as the district must evaluate students when a disability is suspected while still relying on MTSS to provide early supports. He noted that some parent referrals stem from students outside the district's MTSS pipeline and said he continually monitors eligibility rates and 504 plan usage by grade.

Mr. Squatrito said he found it eye-opening to learn about the range of professional development opportunities, noting that as a student he never saw what happened behind the scenes. He emphasized how important these supports are and highlighted the value of ensuring they enhance, rather than isolate, the learning experience.

Ms. Lesky thanked Mr. Stapleton and the SEPAC representatives and reiterated her strong support for co-teaching because of its academic and community benefits. She added that robust professional development is essential for teacher growth and retention, and she is excited to see continued investment in these opportunities.

Budget, Resources and Governance

FY27 Budget Priorities and Calendar – First Read

Director of Finance and Operations Susan Owen reviewed the proposed FY27 Budget Priorities. She outlined the district's focus on strengthening Tier 1 instruction through curriculum review, integrating culturally responsive materials, and expanding project-based learning aligned with the Vision of the Graduate. Additional priorities include initiatives to support student and staff wellness, belonging, and play.

Owen also described priorities related to resource management, including capital planning, anticipated MSBA timelines, and targeted efforts to reduce financial burdens on families.

The Committee held an extended discussion regarding the FY27 Budget Priorities document. Mr. Evans suggested revisiting the language to make each priority more directly tied to identifiable budget line items, noting that several statements—particularly within Compass Point 1—are broad and may leave the community unclear about what the district is actually prioritizing. He emphasized that clearer, more direct wording would help stakeholders better understand how priorities translate into spending decisions. In response, the Chair asked whether Mr. Evans was suggesting a level of specificity akin to listing particular books, conferences, or program costs, and she sought clarification on how such detail differs from the actual budget spreadsheet. Mr. Evans clarified that he was *not* advocating granular lists, but rather tightening broad phrases so that priorities more clearly align with operational or expenditure categories.

The Chair asked for an example of how a priority might be reframed to provide greater clarity without mirroring a budget line item, and Mr. Evans requested additional time to revise and return with concrete suggestions. Mr. MacLellan voiced agreement, recommending the document be retitled as an “FY27 Budget Priorities Overview” to set appropriate expectations and noting that the current draft feels overly wordy. Superintendent Shannon recommended tabling the item for further revision and committed to bringing back a refined version in two weeks. Mr. Squatrito added that the areas of wellness and community engagement seem the most straightforward to revise, as the associated costs—such as curriculum materials and textbooks—are easier to identify, and he agreed that clearer examples would strengthen the document.

Chair Lesky recognized comments submitted by Victoria Lattanzi at 125 Doane Street that she fully agrees with Mr. Evans, and she would very much like to have more tactical deliverables within the priorities, but it doesn't have to be granular, she's happy to help with this effort. She also inquired whether the compass points were in order of importance, to which Superintendent Shannon responded no.

Chair Lesky recognized comments submitted by Cassandra Dragon Archambo who expressed her agreement with Mr. Evans and noted that her name had been erroneously recorded in the October 8, 2025 minutes. After discussion the Committee agreed to revise the minutes accordingly.

After discussion,

A motion was made by Mr. MacLellan, seconded by Mr. Squatrito, to table the FY27 Budget Priorities and the FY27 Budget Calendar for the purpose of some reworking and representing at the next school committee meeting.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Evans – Aye; Mr. Squatrito – Aye; Mr. MacLellan – Aye; Jen Lesky-Aye.

FY27 Capital Requests – First Review

The Committee reviewed the first draft of the FY27 Capital Requests, with Superintendent Shannon explaining that the list represents all submissions from leadership, technology, and facilities, and that the next step is to determine which items should advance to the Town's Capital Plan. She emphasized the importance of developing a longer-term, multi-year capital strategy that aligns school needs with the Town's overall capital framework, noting that some requests recur annually and must be tracked over time. Mr. Squatrito raised questions about specific room locations and document access, and Mr. MacLellan urged prioritizing the first four requests while clarifying whether football uprights fall under warranty from the recent turf project. He also noted that the CMS STEM Counseling Suite may depend on MSBA decisions and suggested furniture and window shade replacements remain priority items, while lower-urgency items such as turf fencing could be deferred.

Superintendent Shannon and Dr. Scollins provided clarification regarding classroom clocks and the need for consistent synchronization across buildings. Mrs. Lesky asked whether window shades might qualify as safety enhancements and expressed support for performing arts requests and improved counseling spaces. Mr. Squatrito commented on past issues with unsynchronized clocks and the potential operational impact of systemwide replacement. Mr. Evans recommended structuring the capital list to distinguish recurring leased items, multi-year phased projects, and new discretionary requests so that non-negotiables are clear and annual increases (such as 2.5% adjustments) are incorporated. He expressed reluctance to support new facility projects without multiple years of planning, and requested greater detail on security enhancements given the long-term cost implications.

Mr. Evans also questioned whether band instruments should be funded through Capital rather than donations, and recommended removing the large asphalt resurfacing request from FY27 because it far exceeds feasible limits and requires broader inter-municipal planning. He concluded by urging that all new assets brought forward include an identified payback or long-term justification.

After discussion, the Committee noted that additional information would be forthcoming in the next meeting.

Community Relations / Communications

Reports from Subcommittees and Liaisons

Mr. Evans reported briefly on the Budget Subcommittee's recent work, noting alignment between the Subcommittee's discussion and the budget presentation delivered earlier in the meeting. Updates from other liaisons were deferred to future meetings.

School Committee Governance

Approval of Minutes

The Committee discussed the draft minutes from the October 8, 2025 and October 22, 2025 meetings. After discussion the Committee agreed upon two changes to the October 8, 2025 minutes:

- To remove Jacob Squatrito as the Representative Liaison for Cohasset High School; and
- To correct the references to "Cassandra Lombardi", replacing that name with "Cassandra Dragon Archambo".

A motion was made by Mr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Squatrito to approve the minutes of October 8, 2025 as amended.

Roll Call Vote: Evans – Aye; Squatrito – Aye; Lesky – Aye. Motion passed with unanimous support of all members present.

A motion was made by Mr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Squatrito to approve the minutes of October 22, 2025 as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Evans – Aye; Squatrito – Aye; Lesky – Aye. Motion passed with unanimous support of all members present.

Executive Session and Adjournment

Ms. Lesky noted that there was a reason for the Committee to move into executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3) for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Cohasset Teachers Association, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body, and not to return to open session.

A motion was made by Mr. Evans and seconded by Mr. Squatrito to enter Executive Session pursuant for the reasons discussed, and not to return to open session.

Roll Call Vote: Evans – Aye; Squatrito – Aye; Lesky – Aye. Motion passed with unanimous support of all members present.

The Committee entered Executive Session at 7:56 PM. The Committee did not reconvene in open session.

Documents/materials used by school committee members for the November 5, 2025 meeting.

- Gift to Cohasset High School: New Softball Equipment Shed at Freedom Field
- Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy
- Student Services Update (Mr. Michael Stapleton)
- Draft FY27 Budget Priorities
- Draft FY27 Budget Calendar
- Draft FY27 Capital Requests
- DRAFT Minutes for the October 8, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee
- DRAFT Minutes for the October 22, 2025 Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee

Respectfully submitted,

Lance C. Dial
12.17.2025