Ashland School Committee Minutes
December 10, 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 Marcy Culverwell, Member James Adams, Superintendent Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Absent:	Tina Fitanides, Secretary 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
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Ms. Fitanides will be arriving late to the meeting.

Ms. Tosti moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Athletic and Extracurricular Stipends MOA. Mr. Terry seconded the motion.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

At 5:12pm meeting re-opened. Ms. Tosti reported that the board voted to approve the recommendation to adjust the ratios for the Athletic and Extracurricular Stipend positions in the district.

Public Comment
None.

English Language Education Update
Christy Arnold provided a report of current enrollment numbers of multilingual learners in Ashland. Currently, 226 students are getting English language services across our 5 schools. The majority of these students have a home language of Portuguese.

Mr. Terry asked if the demographics of these enrollment numbers have changed in the 5-10 years? Ms. Arnold reported that the demographics have remained fairly consistent over the last five years.

Ms. Arnold reported on the WIDA ACCESS test, which is a test for English proficiency. Students can score from 1-6 scores in four domain areas. An overall score of 4.2% equals proficiency in English. The average length of time for a student to become proficient in English depends on a student's age and the length of time in US schools.

Flashlight 360 is a progress monitoring tool that teachers are using with their students. Ms. Culverwell asked if parents are able to see results from Flashlight 360 results? Ms. Arnold noted that it's mostly a teaching/assessment tool.
Family Engagement Night at Mindess took place this fall. A Spring event will be planned for Warren School.

Ashland Student Advisory Council
Zoha Syed-Ali offered academic updates. Some Seniors have started to get early decision college decisions back. She offered a thank you to the School board members for the new sound system in the Cafeteria and Auditorium at the high school. She reports that it has been a great improvement to the school.
Yash Bhide, sophomore, reported about a Chemistry lab. Clocker Idol, a 12th annual fundraising event sponsored by Student Council, is coming up next week. Tomorrow is a presentation at the high school by Nate Turner about addiction, substance abuse, and overcoming obstacles.
Sophia Warnetski, junior, reported that the National Honor Society induction ceremony took place recently. 51 new members were inducted. Winter sports have begun. Wrestling invitational tournament is coming up. Indoor track has their first meet with 95 student athletes on their roster. The swim team has had a waiver passed to allow eighth graders to compete for high school, which has increased participation numbers.
Ojal Patil, junior, reported that the Make a Wish Club has partnered with Kendra Scott, a popular jewelry brand for fundraising. A Japanese pen-pal program has begun and Japanese students will visit AHS for a day in the winter.

ACCEPT Quarter 1 Treasurer's Report
In keeping with the by-laws of the ACCEPT collaborative, Mr. Adams will be providing the financial report to the School board on a regular basis. Mr. Adams reports that he's been frustrated with ACCEPT over the past several years, from a management standpoint, however, the new Interim Executive Director, Dr. Kat Bernklow, has two years on her contract, and she has been outstanding.

FY 2027 Preschool Tuition Rate Increase recommendation
Chris Mathieu is recommending a 3% tuition increase over the current year. The increase is to cover the operating expenses and salary costs. Mr. Terry moves to approve the tuition increase as presented for FY 2027. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Warrant Approvals
Between October 23, 2025, and December 10, 2025, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature, payables in the amount of $ 2,251,904.66. This includes General Fund expenses of $ 1,125,832.95, Revolving expenses of $ 1.112.647.18, Grants expenses of $ 13,340.97, and Meals Tax expenses of $83.56.

Superintendent's Report
Mr. Adams thanked the School Committee members who participated in the Department of Education's District Review last week. Interviews were conducted with staff, students, administrators, School Committee members and the Town Manager. It was a comprehensive review. Researchers visited about 50 classrooms to do observations. The Department of Education will present a report with their findings to the Superintendent in March.

FY 2027 Budget is still in progress.

Fundraising and Donations
Mr. Adams will be sending a letter going out to the community regarding Fundraising and Donations. When a group or organization plans to donate something to the schools, the School Committee is required by law to review and approve all donations and to account for them.

Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Michael Caira
Dr. Caira reported that EL students showed 3% lower scores on MCAS Math test results compared to last year. This is an area of concern.

The Educator Evaluation Committee continues to meet. The group has discussed changes they will be making to the Evaluation rubric.

From the Music Department – Dr. Caira reports that several students will participate in a Central District Music festival.

Superintendent's Goals
Mr. Adams reports that he has put forth five goals for the 2025-2026 School Year. He asks that the School Committee approve them so he can post goals and to continue to work on them. Mr. Terry moves to approve the Superintendent's Goals for the 2025-2026 School Year. Mr. Kendall seconds the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: 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
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Report of School Committee Members
Ms. Culverwell thanks the folks for chaperoning the Make A Wish trip. It was a great opportunity for kids.
Ms. Fitanides attended the recent high school band concert and fundraiser. There is a middle school and high school concert upcoming.
Mr. Kendall attended the recent Town Meeting where all items passed unanimously.
Mr. Terry participated in the DESE District Review. The interviewers focused on existing relationships.
Ms. Tosti attended a Warren Site Council meeting, where the discussion was mostly about the school budget situation for FY 2027. She also chaperoned the Make a Wish trip, the students were amazing.

Dr. Caira also reported on a recent event sponsored by the LAUNCH program at AMS. Cassia Ashman, the LAUNCH program coordinator, hosted a movie event for all students in specialized programs at all schools. The aged 18-22 students sold tickets and concessions, and the students all got to enjoy a movie together.

At 5:53pm, Mr. Terry moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
English Language Education December 2025
ACCEPT BoD Treasurers Update 093025
ACCEPT Executive Director quarterly memo 11122025
FY27 Preschool Tuition Rate Increase Recommendation
Grant Funds
Minutes - October 22, 2025
School Committee Agenda December 10, 2025
Stipend Recommendations
Superintendent Goals 2025-26