Ashland School Committee Minutes
January 28, 2026

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present:	Laurie Tosti, Chair: *attended remotely* Marc Terry, Vice Chair Paul Kendall, Member Marcy Culverwell, Member Tina Fitanides, Secretary James Adams, Superintendent Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School
Absent:	Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance

Agenda Review and adoption
Mr. Terry 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
Ms. Tosti: Attended remotely and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE

Public Comment
None.

Ashland High School: Ms. Kelley St. Coeur
We are in the third year of offering Business classes at AHS, such as Intro to Business and Marketing. These classes have been a valuable resource for students, and their enrollments have been full each semester. We have a new teacher this year who is going above and beyond in reaching out to the public, bringing in speakers from the business community to present to students. Recently, as an end of term project, he brought in business members from the community, in addition to members of the administration to help judge a “Shark Week” competition. Winners from the two classes are here to present their business plans for a Food Truck concept.

Rolling Cone
Waffle Wands

Ms. Fitandies asked the students about their process to come up with a concept. Ms. Culverwell noted that as an accountant by trade, she has seen many business proposals. She commended the students for their level of detail, and the students' clear and presentation styles. She noted that these practical skills are ones that they can take with them to college and beyond.

Warrant Approvals
Between January 15, 2026, and January 28, 2026, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature payables in the amount of $646,793.15. This includes General Fund expenses of $556,441.76, Revolving expenses of $88,952.92, Grants expenses of $1,275.00, and Meals Tax expenses of $123.47.

Superintendent's Reports
Advanced Placement test data results
Mr. Adams presented the spring 2025 Advanced Placement (AP) test data. How did Ashland students perform as compared to other Metro-west towns and districts?

Ashland High School demonstrates exceptional academic performance, with 95% of students scoring between 3 and 5 across all AP subjects. This performance ranks Ashland second among the provided districts, trailing only Hopkinton (96%). Based on comprehensive data across all seven districts, Ashland High School frequently ranks in the top three for passing rates (scores of 3–5) in the most common AP subjects, often sharing the #1 rank with Medfield or Hopkinton.

Most AP courses at Ashland High School are taught by AHS teachers. However, there are a couple of AP courses that are offered online through a Virtual High School. AP course enrollment is based on teacher recommendations and a student's grades from previous courses.

Participation – How many students at AHS took an AP exam? 234 students at AHS took an AP exam in 2025. 25 different AP exams were offered at AHS.

Next steps are to get the participation rate higher. Discuss with faculty to encourage higher participation rate. The AP History and AP Psychology courses have been competitive to get into. AP Physics, Computer Science A and AP French are three new AP courses that were added in person this year at AHS.

FY 2027 Budget Update
A School Committee Budget Workshop scheduled for Wednesday, February 4, at Mindess School from 4-7pm. Open Meeting Law training is upcoming. The Tri-Board meeting was last week. On Tuesday night, February 3 Mr. Adams will host an All Staff Zoom meeting to discuss the FY 2027 budget, possible staff reductions and a possible budget override.

Mr. Terry noted that communities facing budget limitations or considering overrides are happening across the state.

Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Michael Caira
Professional Development
The faculty and staff had a professional development day recently. In the afternoon all staff had a presentation from the nursing department on policies and procedures of medical supervision during field trips. We also covered MTSS strategies using a new dashboard of Open Architects.

Curriculum
Science teachers at the middle school are piloting three different science curriculum programs. They participated in a training with one of the science programs. Decisions will be made by April

if the science teachers will continue with Amplify or if they will move to a different program. Dr. Caira, Kate Altman and the two Literacy Coaches are reviewing the current literacy curriculum and are exploring other options. To date, they have reviewed 7 different programs.

Assessment
iReady ELA testing has been completed at AMS and is in process at Mindess School.
Ms. Lachapelle shared that she was made aware of concerns about cheating involving Google Lens with the iReady ELA assessment. IT has since disabled this feature on student Chromebooks. A small number of cases were very obvious, and those students were required to re-test.
Mid-term exams are completed at the high school.
The Year 1 teachers had a meeting this week where Christy Arnold, Director of EL Learners presented.
Mr. Terry asked how many teachers are in the non-Professional Teacher Status level. Dr. Caira reported that there are about 70 teachers. There are about 45 teachers in the Year 2/3 program, and about 25 first year teachers.

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

Report of School Committee Members
Ms. Culverwell attended a recent Middle School Site Council meeting. Ms. Lachapelle reported that there was strong growth with the recent iReady ELA test results. She discussed the possible cheating issue with Google Lens. The scheduling of one day of testing with iReady helped students to focus. Keefe Tech: there are currently 50 applicants at AMS for 17 open spots available for Ashland students. Course placement and course recommendation process for incoming Grade 9 students has started. Faculty are also reviewing their grading practices.

Abhishek Karthik reported that mid-term exams finished today at the high school. Senior Nights for winter athletic teams are happening this week. College decisions for seniors are starting to come in. The French trip to Quebec City is happening the weekend of February 8. Students from AHS will be going on the trip with students from Maynard High School.

At 7:13pm, Ms. Fitanides moved to adjourn the meeting. seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE

Respectfully submitted,

Gretchen King

Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
2024-25 AP Analysis
AP Analysis 2024-25
CT DOE 2696ASHLANDPUBLICSEM - SIGNED
FY 26 01.28.26 School Committee Meeting G&D Acceptance Log
January 28, 2026 SC Meeting Grant Funds
Minutes - January 14, 2026
School Committee Agenda January 28, 2026
The Rolling Cone
Waffle Wands
Warrant Approvals 01_28_26