REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7
Newbury Library Media Center
Board of Education Regular Meeting
February 11, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.
APPROVED 2.25.26

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Ms. Kim Crone (N), Ms. Mimi Duran (B), Ms. Deb Bell (N), Secretary / Treasurer, Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Vice-Chair Mr. Robert Jerram (NH), Ms. Lisa Fragale (C) via phone. Student Representatives, Mia Doyle and Amaya Washington, Director of Finance & Operations, Mr. James Gaskins, High School Principal, Mr. Gary Franklin, Middle School Principal, Mr. Ryan Cornelius, and Superintendent Steven K. LePage.
Absent: Ms. Terri Kenneson (C)
Ms. Sexton Read called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2.0 PUBLIC PORTION

No members of the public were present.

3.0 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Motion** Noel Gauthier, seconded by Kim Crone, to **APPROVE** the minutes of the January 14, 2026, Meeting. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: Ms. Fragale.

4.0 REPORTS

4.1 Student Representatives

Mia Doyle:

- **Athletics:** Boys Basketball (7-9), Girls Basketball (6-10). Wrestling has league championships on Saturday; Swim has championships on the 21st.
- **Events:** Cheer hosting first Virtual League Invitational on the 19th.
- **Student Activities:** Principal Advisory Council finalizing event dates. Policy Committee reviewing dress code adjustments. The National Honor Society (NHS) decorated lockers for Valentine's Day.
- **Upcoming:** "Whiteout" basketball game this Friday with Pep Band performance.

Amaya Washington:

- **Events:** Hosting the first cheer competition next Thursday with food trucks and fundraisers.
- **School Climate Survey Results:**
  - 53% agree that students treat each other well.
  - 43% agree that students respect differences.
  - 38% agree that students try to stop bullying.

- **Discussion:** Administration noted a disconnect between teacher perception (who believe students treat teachers with respect) and student survey results. Plan to focus on social media awareness, bystander intervention training, and leadership modeling. The language of some of the questions also created some confusion, shared by students, who interpreted terms like "bullying" in different ways, thereby skewing response averages. Some work will be done to clarify questions to ensure the questions get to the heart of the matter of focus.
- **Wellness Center:** Fully student-designed and created, officially opening tomorrow at 10:30 AM, funded by a $2,000 grant from Charlotte Hungerford Hospital.

4.2 Principal's Reports

MS Principal Ryan Cornelius

- **State Mandate:** A new committee composed of students, teachers, administrators, and parents has been formed to comply with state climate legislation.
- **Next Steps:** A public school climate forum will be held to discuss data and gather community feedback.
- **Survey Revisions:** Feedback indicated that survey questions—specifically regarding bullying—need to be refined for clarity next year to ensure accurate interpretation by students.
- **Parent Education:** Parents expressed a desire for better consistency and training regarding digital platforms like PowerSchool and Google Classroom.
- **Positive Climate:** Feedback indicates a positive environment with specific areas for improvement.
- **New Leadership Program:** "Live Girl," a leadership program for young women mentored by alumna Parker Brobston, has launched with nine participants.
- **Achievements:** National Junior Honor Society inductions are approaching, and Kieffer Kristhoffer, a seventh-grader, won the school-wide spelling bee and will advance to the Connecticut rounds in Hartford on March 8th.
- **Student Leadership:** Students are creating videos modeling respectful behavior based on committee recommendations.
- **Community Service:** Students are planning a service project to connect with isolated residents at local nursing homes.
- **Field Trip:** Forty-eight students will participate in the Civil Rights Stories trip to Washington, D.C., in May.

HS Principal Gary Franklin

- **Wellness Center:** Soft opening underway. Designed as a quiet, phone-free space for relaxation (puzzles, coloring, calming music). Capacity is roughly 5-6 students at a time.
- **Athletic Leadership:** NWR7 is one of eight schools participating in a new athletic leadership conference focusing on sportsmanship and Class Act school responsibilities.
- **Career Pathways:** Meeting with local businesses to develop pathways; exploring a partnership with the local fire chief for a junior firefighter program.

4.3 Superintendent's Report

Superintendent LePage

- **Strategic Planning:** Meetings have been held with principals to develop action plans for priority areas.
    - **AI Integration:** Jonathan Costa presented to faculty on February 4th. Acknowledged a mix of excitement and fear among staff regarding AI integration and strategic plan components.
    - **Administrative Restructuring:** Individual meetings scheduled with the administrative team on February 25th to discuss role shifts aligned with strategic goals.
    - Superintendent LePage and his principals will present action plans related to Strategic Planning, with some proposed leadership role changes to the Board on February 25, followed by a series of meetings with the full administrative team, department leaders from both schools, and the full faculty.
- **Policy Audit (CABE):** 16 policies presented for first review, including 14 mandatory policies, a recommended policy regarding School Resource Officers (SROs), and an updated School Wellness Policy.
- **Kindness in Motion:** The Kindness in Motion Program will be kicked off soon, with a new approach using student spokespeople to promote and encourage acts of kindness to begin here at Northwestern. Superintendent and hopefully many others will participate in the Penguin Plunge hosted at Northwestern on March 21st to raise funds for Unified Sports and United Sound. Concessions will be sold at the Penguin Plunge to benefit Kindness in Motion. Baked goods will be sold at the basketball games this Friday to benefit the Special Olympics.
- **Update: Wall Under the Greenhouse**. Another comprehensive set of survey readings and measurements were taken in November, indicating very little or no movement. Another reading will be taken in the late spring or early summer to continue monitoring, but the administration was reassured that there are no imminent concerns of failure.

4.4 Director of Finance and Operations (J. Gaskins)

- **Construction & Maintenance:**
    - **Roof Project:** The agricultural roof is complete, aside from some less significant items to be addressed when the snow melts. Final paperwork submission efforts, contractor payments to vendors, and reimbursements to Northwestern from the state are moving slowly.
    - **Facility Assessment:** Nine proposals were received for the facility condition assessment; interviews with the top four bidders are scheduled for next week.
- **Safety & Security:**
    - **Lockdown System:** The new emergency notification system (LENS) is fully operational and passed a live, school-day test with students and local first responders present in the building. A "punch list" of minor adjustments is being addressed.
- **Administration & Finance:**
    - **ADP Conversion:** A comprehensive conversion to a new payroll, benefits, and HR system is underway. Weekly meetings are held to ensure a target launch date

around May 1st, with some phasing in of the launch given the multiple Human Resources and Business Office operations this will impact.

- **Solar Project:** The district is investigating solar canopy options for the parking lot and reviewing the contract for existing roof panels, which expires in 2030. While solar is desirable, preliminary analysis suggests the construction costs for canopies are very high. All options are being considered carefully, and findings will be shared with the Board.
- **Budget:** The current budget is stable and trending as we would hope it to. Preparation for the Superintendent's presentation of next year's budget is ongoing and looking good. The Superintendent will present his proposed budget to the Board at the February 25 Board meeting.

5.0 OLD BUSINESS

- **Scholarship Fundraising:** The board discussed creative fundraising strategies (such as a raffle basket for the "Penguin Plunge") to continue funding the Judy Palmer Scholarship. Ideas were raised to consider a 50-50 at the upcoming cheerleading competition to raise funds for this purpose.

6.0 NEW BUSINESS

- The Board reviewed the proposed new policies. Discussion/first reading included identifying and addressing items unnecessarily included in these policies (such as details related to elementary age children), errors, omissions, and several other questions that were addressed by the Superintendent. The Superintendent will correct identified changes, which are non-substantive, and the Board is anticipated to approve these at the next meeting in the second reading.

7.0 CORRESPONDENCE

- **Motion** by Rob Jerram, seconded by Noel Gauthier, to **APPROVE** the use of the facility by Highlander Volleyball Camp. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: none.

8.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

- None.

9.0 EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell, to enter into executive session for the purposes of discussing and taking possible action on the superintendent's contract and performance review. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: none.

- **Motion** by Kim Crone, seconded by Deb Bell, to renew Superintendent LePage's contract with a 3.5% salary increase for 2026-27 and the addition of language allowing a child of the Superintendent to attend Northwestern free of charge. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: none.

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10. ADJOURNMENT

- **Motion** by Deb Bell, seconded by Noel Gauthier, to **ADJOURN** the meeting at 8:20 pm. AYE: Ms. Sexton Read, Mr. Jerram, Mr. Gauthier, Ms. Crone, Ms. Duran, Ms. Fragale, and Ms. Bell. Nay: none. Abstain: none.

Next meeting: February 25, 2026.
