

The Special Meeting of the New London Board of Education was held on March 2, 2026 in the New London Public Schools' Welcome Center and via Zoom Webinars.

1. Call to Order

President Maynard-Adams called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present for the Board of Education: President – Elaine Maynard-Adams
Vice-President – Karen Bergin
Secretary – Scott Garbini

Board Members Present: Rebecca Amanti
Nanci DeRobbio
Richard Martin

Board Member Absent: Susan Hambey

Present for the administration: Dr. Cynthia Ritchie, *Superintendent of Schools*
Dr. Jennifer Hills-Papetti, *Assistant Superintendent of Schools*
Mr. Rob Funk, *Chief Financial Officer*
Ms. Carrie Rivera, *Executive Director of School and Family Supports*
Ms. Christine Pemberton, *Executive Director of Talent & Human Resources*
Mr. Miguel Gautier, Jr. – *Executive Director of Operations*
Ms. Kristea Francolino – *Manager of Executive Support Services*

2. Public Hearing on the FY 2026-2027 Proposed Budget (*Summaries of each public comment shared can be found below*)

- Samantha Cacciatore, New London – Ms. Cacciatore shared that she was present to speak as a parent of a student at St. Joseph's school, and her concern about her child only having 3 hours of nursing during the day. She expressed that there should be the same level of health services for all students to include full, adequate, consistent coverage. She continued that there are concerns that there could be allergic reactions or falls on the playground, and after the nurse leaves, there are only untrained staff in vulnerable positions. She expressed that she is not asking for something extra, but what is required and that kids deserve more than 3 hours of care.
- Elizabeth Anderson, Waterford – Ms. Anderson stated that she is a member of the School Board for St. Joseph's School. She expressed that the Statute states that the Board shall provide the same services for health services, not equivalent, equitable

or per capita. She added that other school districts in Southeastern Connecticut have private and parochial schools and they comply with the law regarding health services. She shared that this was also an issue about 5 years ago, and after legal opinions were rendered the District corrected it. She stated that attorneys get paid for nuance, but in front of a judge the definition would mean equal coverage. She continued that it has been stated that the administration has reached out multiple times to the school, but that it only happened the last day of school, and that there was also a suggestion to use Title funds to cover the cost, but those funds cannot be used for that purpose.

- Lenna Kenyon, New London – Ms. Kenyon shared that the current budget allocates for nursing services at St. Joseph’s for 3 hours, but students are in school for 6 hours. She expressed her concern that students only have access to medically qualified staff for 3 hours, and that after the nurse leaves, the need to care for students who normally would go to the nurse takes away from the normal duties of those staff. She expressed her concern that medical issues may arise at any time, and that there was a student who had known seizures which require a medically trained professional, not a teacher or administrator. She also expressed a concern about the pay for the nurse on a snow day. She added that the funding is provided to the Board through a reimbursement, and asked that St. Joseph’s receives a full 6 hours of nursing.
- Melissa McElwee, New London – Ms. McElwee shared that she has come forward to speak on behalf of St. Joseph’s school. Children deserve and are entitled to a legal on-site full time nurse. She continued that this is not a luxury, but it is a legal obligation expressed through State statute. Currently the nurse is only present for 3 hours a day and there are children who have chronic conditions. Additionally, emergencies happen, and students with complex medical needs require support. She also cautioned that there could be an exposure to negligent claims, OCR, and other investigations.
- T.J. Londregan, New London – Mr. Londregan stated that he was here to speak on behalf of St. Joseph’s as a parent of three daughters. He expressed he understands that some believe public funds should not be used for private schools. That being said, by choosing a non-public schools while residing in the City, the City’s burden of cost per student decreases. The parents of St. Joseph’s students pay both tuition and New London taxes. He continued that St. Joseph’s operating in the city is fiscally beneficial to the city. It is in the best interest of the Board and the City to help St. Joseph’s. He stated that it is mildly upsetting, being a longtime resident and family of this city, to see that there is a misstep of what is provided and what costs approximately \$65,000.
- Gina Phillips, New London – Ms. Phillips shared she has come to support the school nurse at St. Joseph’s. She noted that it is a state law which requires that the nurse should be covered by the Board of Education. ***At this point Ms. Phillips made comments about a Board member which Chair Maynard-Adams stated would not be accepted at this meeting.***

- Nicole O'Connor, New London – Ms. O'Connor stated that she was present as a parent of a student at St. Joseph's. She shared that she wants to send her child to school to be safe, not just academically supported. Training in a protocol is not the same as having a medical professional in the building. Someone with clinical judgement can recognize when something becomes serious before it becomes life threatening, and licensed nurses are regulated by a Board of Nursing. She continued that this is not about fear, but about preparedness. As parents, they entrust the schools with their children for most of their waking hours, and health and safety are a priority. She asked that the Board respectfully reconsider what is appropriate.
- Julia Costello, Norwich – Ms. Costello shared that she is a teacher at Jennings. She shared her memories of her Mother also teaching in New London at multiple buildings. She has been teaching since 2018 and loves her role. She expressed that she remembered when Harbor was closed 4 years ago. It was a hard time and there was a lot of confusion between the students, parents and staff of what the future would look like, and now there is the potential to close another building. She understands that enrollment is down and there is a deficit, but she does not believe any service is being done for students if a building closes and class sizes increase. She also added that parents are going to have to choose a different pathway. She does not believe that this is fair to students and staff who want to be in a certain school. She understands that there is a budget issues but does not believe that closing a school is an option. This will impact students and make learning much harder. She commented that there has to be a better option. She also expressed her concern for magnet recruitment if there are higher class sizes.
- Bianka Caremise, New London – Ms. Caremise shared that she is a student and has come forward to speak on behalf of Hearing Youth Voices (HYV). She has been a member of HYV for three years, and they have advocated for positions and additional funding for the schools at Board meetings, City Council meetings and also at the State level. She shared that this year HB5002 may be able to partially solve some of the budgetary issues. As a young person who attends the budget Legislative Sessions and continues to advocate for passage, HYV is calling upon the Board and school leadership to take action and be present to speak in support of HB5002 and other Bills which may be able to afford additional funding.
- Bianca Sinclair, New London – Ms. Sinclair shared that she is a student at the high school. She expressed that she would support the parents of St. Joseph's and their concerns. Ms. Sinclair stated that she would like to vouch for the budget and that she agrees with the idea of consolidating a pathway, as it seems like the easiest way to save money for the district. She believes that components of the International Education pathway can be engaged in the other pathways. She also expressed that she would agree with the VPAMP middle grades returning to the Bennie Dover Jackson Multi-Magnet Middle School campus. She continued that it might be hard for some students to process if a school building closes, but she thinks it would be a beneficial thing and make sense to do so.

- Sarah Turner, New London – Ms. Turner shared that she hears everyone’s concerns, and that she is also in support of Plan C. She is not in support that it closes a building, but that it consolidates programs and services to provide students and teachers with what they need. She added that last year the Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission was listed as a budget driver, but the Superintendent has shared that it is now a self-sustaining program in the district. She continued that it would be wonderful to hear when they became self-sustaining, and how might it be possible to potentially move other schools to being self-sustaining. Ms. Turner also expressed that the move of the middle grades Arts students back to the middle school campus makes sense. She added that the middle school campus has done a phenomenal job of turning around the culture and environment. She also thinks that that Year-Round calendar program was a great attempt. She thanked the administration for their creativity during this budget process.
- Patrick Sheehan-Gaumer, New London – Mr. Sheehan-Gaumer expressed that he believes the best plan for the budget would be for the City to actually fund the district. There was a budget shortage of \$7.5 million last year, and more this year. He suggested potentially closing other buildings. He continued that maybe the PreK program could move to whichever school is potentially closed, and the offices at Shaw’s Cove could then also move to that school. He shared that as an interventionist and a parent of 2 students, it is hard to imagine absorbing over 100 students at Nathan Hale as well as additional students to meet the 25% out of district requirement. Mr. Sheehan-Gaumer expressed that he is not in favor of the middle school grades becoming 5-7 instead of 6-8.
- Angela Muralo, New London – Ms. Muralo shared that she was present in support of St. Joseph’s school. She expressed that the Board must provide the same level of health services to private, non-profit schools. This means full, consistent, and adequate coverage.
- C.J. Parker, New London – Mr. Parker shared that he wanted to reiterate what Bianka had shared earlier, and support the advocacy. He shared that there is an Educational Committee Hearing at the State this upcoming Wednesday at the State Legislative Office Building, and encouraged all to submit testimony in person, in writing, or via Zoom. Mr. Parker also shared that he was curious about the actual benefit of St. Joseph’s in the community. There is funding based on a per pupil basis, but the District loses funding when students go to private school, and they also do not reach racial quotas for what there should be in district. Additionally, Mr. Parker stated he attended the middle school and high school when there were 28 students in each classroom. He stated that the district has improved leaps and bounds with the supports that have been put into place for students, and think supports are more important than buildings. The district has slashed its suspension rates in half over the last ten years, and this is in part due to the supports that have been put in place.
- Courtney Johnson, Groton - Ms. Johnson stated her family is a military family, and has three students in district, and is also a hybrid substitute. She expressed her

concerns of having a high number of students per classroom without an additional support person. As a military parent, she shared her kids were excited for Jennings and the middle school after their tours and now as students. She expressed that the thought of losing Jennings is devastating. Many families will be impacted moreso than they already have been due to previous budget reductions. She shared that she can't support closing a school as it wouldn't make New London have the top magnet district in the State. She shared that STEM is a dying field and that AI is taking over. She believes that STEM is a lost cause and not doing students any justice, but that the international pathway will help them. She believes that there will not be jobs for students in STEM in the future. She hopes that money can be found elsewhere, and that closing a school is a devastating option.

- Margaret Lewis, New London – Ms. Lewis is a teacher in her 31st year, currently working at Jennings. She shared that Edgerton was closed in previous years due to funding, and those who were at the Edgerton School were combined with Jennings. She stated now she is at Jennings and she loves it. She is a member of a committee which has been creating a robust curriculum for social studies. The kids are learning that we are connected to students across the world. She believes that if the International Education pathway was thrown away it would break her heart. It would keep an opportunity from the kids for them to learn about all neighbors culturally and internationally. She would like if another option can be found that keeps the International Education pathway open.
- Danny Rutherford, New London – Mr. Rutherford shared that he is at Connecticut College in New London. He shared that he is in agreement that there is a need to find this money and all are present for a common purpose. He encouraged all to continue to look for money at the State Level as funding the public schools is so important. He encouraged all to keep looking to find the money.
- Cheryl Potter, New London (*Full written testimony read aloud by Ms. Francolino – summary provided here*) – Ms. Potter submitted comments as a social worker in district as well as a New London resident and taxpayer. She suggested that there be consideration to change the focus of Jennings to house all PreK and Kindergarten programs in the district, which would allow for Grades 1-5 in elementary school, 8th grade students at the middle school campus, and the Arts Pathway to remain at the high school campus. She also suggested that by doing this the central office staff might be able to move to Jennings and save the cost of rent at Shaw's Cove. Additionally, Ms. Potter noted that if the PreK students were to move to Jennings, then the B.P. building could be considered for closure. Ms. Potter also suggested that the Year-Round program be reconsidered, as there is low enrollment at Nathan Hale.
- Nicole Broadus, New London (*Full written testimony read aloud by Ms. Francolino – summary provided here*) - Ms. Broadus submitted comments as a mother of two students who attend New London Public Schools. She wrote that this is a call to action for the Board to advocate for increased funding from the state. Members of the New London Community will be attending the Public Education Day of Action to speak in support of HB5002. It is imperative that Board of Education members

highlight the needs in the city to receive more magnet and ECS funding in order to maintain past supports. She expressed in her submission that she understands that the Board is facing a large deficit, and that the proposed plan detailed the amount needed from the state in order to prevent layoffs and a potential school closure. While the state option is not promised, there needs to be representation advocating at the state for these monies. All voices need to be present. She added that if Option C must be done, she requests that there is student, parent, community and teacher representation on how the plan will unfold. Ms. Broadus also included that she would like to see a 5 year sustainability plan from the Board.

With no others signed up to speak, Ms. Maynard-Adams closed the hearing. She stated that no final decision on the budget has been made, and likely will not be made until May. She added that the Board is not a taxing authority and has no ability to raise funds on its own. She continued that what the district is facing now are the consequences of many years of underfunding from federal, state, and local governments.

There was a 5-minute recess at this time.

3. Discussion and Possible Action on the Current 2025-2026 School Year Calendars, to Change March 6, 2026 from a Staff Professional Development Day to an In-Session School Day

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Mr. Garbini, to change March 6, 2026 from a Staff Professional Development Day to an In-Session School Day for all buildings except for the Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission.

It was shared that by making March 6 an in-session day, the new tentative last day of school for students will be Thursday, June 18 instead of Monday, June 22. Staff will make up the Professional Development day on June 22. The only building that would not follow this change would be the Early Childhood Center at B.P. Mission. PreK students are not required to be in school for a specific number of days. Additionally, there was a previously-scheduled required training for the staff to attend on this day.

It was noted that for the Year-Round calendar, the tentative last day of school would then be June 10, if approved.

Motion carried, 6-0

4. Executive Session Pursuant to Connecticut State Statutes: Title I, Chapter 14, Section 1-200(6), Connecticut Freedom of Information Act for the Purpose of Discussing the Possible Approval of the Appointment of Principal of Nathan Hale Arts Magnet Elementary School.

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Bergin, to move into Executive Session.

Motion carried, 6-0

The following people were invited into Executive Session: The Board as a whole, Superintendent Ritchie, Ms. Christine Pemberton.

Time into Executive Session: 7:30 p.m.

Time out of Executive Session: 7:37 p.m.

Upon returning from Executive Session, Ms. Maynard-Adams clarified that the reason for moving into the session was for the purpose of discussing the possible approval of the appointment of Principal of Nathan Hale Arts Magnet Elementary School. Additionally, she confirmed that no notes and no votes were taken.

5. Possible Action Following Executive Session

Motion by Mr. Martin, seconded by Ms. DeRobbio, to appoint Ms. Erin McGuire as Principal of Nathan Hale Arts Magnet Elementary School.

Motion carried, 6-0

Ms. McGuire thanked the Board for continuing to trust her with Nathan Hale. She stated she will work hard for these students, the dedicated and talented staff, and loving families. Twenty years ago New London offered her the first position she would hold in education, and twenty years later her love for New London has never wavered. She committed to working hard and fighting for the students in the City of New London.

6. Continued Discussion of the NLPS Proposed FY2026-2027 Budget

Mr. Funk came forward to share proposed reductions that the Board could take action upon for the budget.

Motion by Ms. Maynard-Adams, seconded by Ms. Bergin, to approve the proposed reductions to include: reduce staffing by 10.0 FTEs, reduce hourly staffing to eliminate the additional wages for “specials” in the summer months, eliminate ADEC payment to the City of New London, eliminate the OPEB annual contribution, reduce four 12-month teaching positions to 10-month teaching positions, reduce un-utilized contracted services in HR, for a total of \$1,369,042.

Motion carried, 6-0

7. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Garbini, seconded by Ms. Amanti, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried, 6-0

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott S. Garbini
Secretary, New London Board of Education