Ashland School Committee Minutes
March 11, 2026

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
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Agenda Review and adoption
Ms. Tosti opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda and took attendance.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Not present yet, will be arriving shortly.
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Arrived late.
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment
None.

LAUNCH program update
Cassia Ashman, Special Educator was joined by her five young adult students. The students introduced themselves and presented their individual goals for themselves. Ms. Ashman also discussed some long term goals for the program: creating a business open to the public, similar to the SugarShack in Westborough and a business in Shrewsbury. Post-secondary opportunities for some students. Transportation for the group of students, perhaps purchasing a passenger van that would accommodate more students.

Pittaway Preschool: Amanda Curley, Preschool Director
Pittaway hosted their second family event before February break. The Winter Olympics themed event included movement activities, crafts and sensory activities. The event was a big success and had a participation rate of 88% for both morning and afternoon programs. After the event, Ms. Curley provided a survey to both parents and staff members to get feedback. She invites school committee members to drop in to their next Pittaway Open House, April 15 at 4:30pm.

Ashland Middle School: Erin Lachapelle, Principal
Seventh grade Engineering students presented their Courtyard Design projects. As a result of the middle school schedule change for this school year, 2025-2026, Engineering has been added as a core class for 7th graders. This is a project based class, taught by a former Math and

Science teacher. Two groups of students presented – Ai Uchikubo, Isabella Goncalves, Becca Dube, and Arielle Charvet. The students also brought models of their landscape designed to show the committee members.

Composting program proposal, Pittaway School: Kieran Cade
Ms. Cade is a Senior at Ashland High School. She has been working for the last few months on a proposal to implement a composting program at Pittaway School with the goal to reduce food waste. She is hoping to start it as soon as possible. Install a composting "tumbler" at Pittaway. The student members of the Environmental Action Club would be responsible for moving the kitchen scraps to the tumbler, then connecting with the Ashland DPW when the compost has turned to soil. Committee members asked questions, such as: When do you plan to start? How many people plan to participate? Where do you plan to locate the compost collection at Pittaway so it doesn't disturb the neighbors? What happens if animals get into the compost?

Warrant Approvals
Between February 26, 2026, and March 11, 2026, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature, payables in the amount of $208,774.06. This includes General Fund expenses of $165,029.17 and Revolving expenses of $43,744.89. Finally, he authorized payroll in the amount of $1,565,825.02.

Superintendent Report: James Adams
Superintendent's Mid-Year Goals Review. The goal of transitioning the athletic fields from the Town to the School Department is on target. Mr. Adams will present more information on this initiative in April. He is needing an update on available field equipment from the Town.
The MTSS goal is on target. The Educator Evaluation goal is behind, the last two meetings were cancelled due to snow. The Communication goal is a work in progress, it is still Mr. Adams responsibility to make the goal of submitting two press releases of positive student achievements out each month.

FY27 Budget
Mr. Adams gave the committee members a review of the two budget options that will be put forth to the town.

Option 1: 6.18% Budget increase, Operational Override: **$47,236,865**

Option 2: 3.25% Budget increase: **$45,931,775**

Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Michael Caira
The course selection process is happening now at the high school. Freshmen, sophomores and juniors are choosing their classes and electives for next year. Math placement and math assessments are happening now for Grade 5 for the accelerated math classes available at the middle school in Grade 6.
The Educator Evaluation committee's work has been delayed; the most recent scheduled meetings were cancelled due to snow. The Professional Learning program for Year 2 and Year 3 teachers took place this past week. We had 22 teachers from Mendon/Upton Regional School District and Milford Public Schools visit our schools. The EL programs and Preschool programs were able to participate in observations.

MTSS processes and procedures are being reviewed and improved.

Safety Committee members are reviewing the Reunification procedures – what happens after a potential crisis event. The group is utilizing tools from Raptor Support.

Flag Day is scheduled at AHS for Friday at 10:30am. It is a way that the high school celebrates the many different cultures that are represented in the student body. Literacy Night is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18 at the Warren School.

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

Report of School Committee Members
Abhishek Karthik reported that the Cared Club is sponsoring a Spirit Week at the high school this week. The goal is to celebrate diversity and culture. They focused on a different country each day. One day, Korean food was served in the cafeteria. Another day, India was featured. The week will end with the Flag Day celebration.

Mr. Terry attended the recent High School Site Council meeting. The group discussed the results of a recent survey of 880 students. 25% of the students responded. One of the items on the survey was what are barriers to access school events? Transportation was one identified barrier, another was language.

Ms. Fitanides attended a recent ASHPAC meeting. There were questions and concerns about the budget for next year and the elimination of the Special Education Team Chair at Ashland Middle School.

At 8:30pm, Mr. Terry moved to adjourn. Mr. Kendall seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
3.9.26 Budget Presentation
2026 Pittaway Winter Olympics
Composting Project Presentation
Copy of Courtyard
FY 26 03.11.26 School Committee G&D Acceptance Log
Mid-Cycle Superintendent Goals 2025-26
Minutes - February 25, 2026
School Comm Meeting Final
School Committee Agenda March 11, 2026
School Committee Presentation Courtyard Project created by Becca and Arielle