

DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Meeting of the Budget & Finance Subcommittee
Friday, January 16, 2026, at 10:00 AM
Via Video Conferencing Join Zoom Meeting
Meeting Minutes

I. Call the Meeting to order.

Chair declaration: In accordance with MGL Chapter 30(a) Section 20 and in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 I announce this meeting is being recorded by the (Dudley-Charlton Regional School District) and I ask if there is anyone else present that is recording today's meeting? Please let the minutes reflect. No.

II. Approval of Minutes

- a. 3-3-25 (Approved)
- b. 9-26-25 (Approved)
- c. 10-31-25. 1st – K. Szela; 2nd – A. Aube. All in favor.
- d. 12-5-25. 1st – K. Szela; 2nd – A. Aube. All in favor.

III. Public Comment (Limited to 1 minute). None.

IV. Subcommittee Communications. None.

V. Director of Finance and Operation Stating Update(s) as available:

- a. Cherry Sheets. Preliminary revenue figures are due on January 28, 2026 which will be incorporated into current budget. This will be available for the next School Committee meeting.
 - i. Proposed Chapter 70 Funding by House/Senate/Governor. The formula for Chapter 70 is not efficient. DCRSD does not qualify for certain types of rural aid, however there are certain other qualifications that may net us a greater chapter 70 reimbursement. We do not qualify for certain types of rural aid, since we are a hold harmless district, meaning we get the minimum chapter 70 aid as a district. More updates as the first iteration of the Governor's budget comes out on January 28, 2026.
 - ii. Proposed Regional Transportation Funding by House/Senate/Governor. 85% reimbursement is a conservative earmark for regional transportation. This information will be included in the full budget presentation on February 4th.
- b. Circuit Breaker – None.
- c. E&D. Submitted TO DOR. Working with our representative at the DOR for finalization, within the next several weeks. \$1.5M of E&D funds to offset operating budget increases.
- d. Anticipated enrollment numbers for next fiscal year. Included in SC packet updated enrollment figures as of a couple of weeks ago. Used updated numbers for projections. October 1st of last year vs this year enrollment decreased by 97 students. Working documents for staff changes and sections projections will be available at the next school committee meeting. S. Lamarche reported enrollment is down by 15,000 students across the state.
- e. School Choice. No updates at this time.
- f. FY27 Healthcare cost projections. The two biggest hits: Medicare increase of 67%, resulting in a \$522K in FY27 for the District. 15% increase in health care, down from initial projection of 20%. This percent is yet to be finalized. If Dudley-Charlton gets into a Joint Purchase Agreement, it may help to drive this percentage down.
- g. Utility cost projections. Delivery fees have increased based on solar and other lighting projects which can help with this. We will keep a close eye on the utility cost projections.
- h. Transportation cost projections. Increase of approximately \$133,000 for year 1 (26-27) with Van Pool and First Student. The District will decide if it is prudent to go out to bid vs pick up the 5th year option. Built-in 4% increase (actual \$3.7 %) for subsequent and 5th year option. First Student and Van Pool will attend a School Committee meeting later in the year.
- i. Contractual cost projections. Salaries and COLA adjustments \$1.7M in presentation for collective bargaining agreements of 3.5% and positions added in current fiscal year.
- j. Proposed budget request/needs and justification. One page budget impact memo was compiled based on the October 25, 2026 budget workshop at the last two school committee meetings. Anticipated budget requests (fixed) and additional budget requests listed. A ranking system of 1-10 for priority will be available at the February 4, 2026 School Committee meeting.

- k. Audit update. All information has been submitted to auditors. Finalization from the auditors will be available in a couple of months. No issues with the audit.
- l. End of year report. Submitted to DESE in October. Considered finalized.
- m. Budget updates. At the next school committee meeting on February 4, 2026, a full budget detailed review of the budget will be brought forth. On February 11, 2026, an All-Boards meeting is scheduled. The District's 7% budget increase must be lowered to 3-4% range. Health insurance is currently at a 15% increase, however we are working on a 12% increase. The District must pay down the \$1M health insurance deficit. MSHG will decide on the final percentage increase for healthcare. We saved on weight loss drugs and diabetes meds because it is allocated across the board by the members and not by the users.

VI. Continued Discussion on a possible "Technology Efficiency Fund" and Steps to propose to the full School Committee for future adoption consideration. Pursue a framework for adopting this fund. Operating budget is 7% increase and looking at funding an OPEB account. May be difficult to create a Technology Efficiency Fund. Maybe look at what this framework would look like. What have other school districts done will be investigated by J. DeSantis. Should we continue to pursue or table this to another year. OPEB funding of 10K-20K is another option – start small and grow this. E-Rate is secure for this year.

VII. Discussion on budget availability prior to public budget hearing for school to review. This was address at the last school committee meeting.

VIII. Solar project update. Met with Dave Bisson, representative from Solect Energy, who will prepare lease agreements, also called a power purchase agreement. Preliminary documents will be available within 1-2 weeks for review. This will be presented to the School Committee at a future meeting. Currently, there is no current date for National Grid's feasibility study completion.

IX. Topics not reasonably anticipated at time of posting. None

X. Future agenda items. Please submit to A. Aube.

XI. Next meeting date. February 20, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

XII. Adjourn. Motion to adjourn by K. Szela, 2nd by C. Panczyk. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.