

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE

March 23, 2026

The warrants for bills payable were reviewed and signed by the School Committee.

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Elizabeth Coughlin at 6:00 p.m. in the Dartmouth High School Library Media Center. The Chair announced the meeting is being recorded for future broadcast over DCTV.

On a roll call the following members were present: Kathleen Amaral, Chris Oliver, Mary Beckwith, John Nunes and Elizabeth Coughlin.

Also present: Dr. Saba-Maguire, James Kiely, Student Representative Isabella Pires and Ms. Genthner.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

SPOTLIGHT ON KIDS – James M. Quinn School: The Chair invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to introduce tonight's *Spotlight on Kids* segment.

Dr. Saba-Maguire invited Dr. Audra Thomas, Principal of the Quinn School to make the Quinn School *Spotlight* presentation.

Dr. Thomas stated tonight's *Spotlight on Kids* segment will highlight the Quinn School's Inclusive Youth Leadership Program: Stephanie Yermalovich and Rebecca Hurley, Assistant Principals of Quinn school were in attendance.

Dr. Thomas introduced Quinn educators Michael Cappello and Paul Pavao; it was noted Quinn educator Peter Lavin was unable to attend this evening.

Dr. Thomas noted the work at Quinn stems from our District Strategic Plan which has four focus areas noting tonight we will be focusing on Area 2 - Safe and Supportive Schools - ensuring all students feel a sense of belonging and social and emotional well-being in our school through the use of culturally and intellectually affirming practices.

Dr. Thomas stated the Quinn school improvement plan was to expand the fifth-grade peer leadership program and invited Mr. Cappello to expound on the program.

Mr. Cappello briefly explained the peer mentoring/leadership program throughout the District noting the District is "so good" at traditional inclusion special education, students going into the regular education settings; the Quinn program focuses on "reverse inclusion" where general education students go into the specialized classrooms in the Quinn case it is the adaptive physical education classes.

Mr. Pavao provided brief comments about the program noting the idea was taken from the *Elementary Playbook* which is an inclusive youth leadership program put out by the Special Olympics Unified Athletics Department to promote the following: enhance school climate, develop students' sense of

responsibility contributing to a positive school environment; promote social emotional skills between peers, heighten awareness of the strengths and talents all students possess.

Mr. Pavao explained how the youth leadership program benefits students in specialized classes and peer leaders as well as for all students and the school community.

Quinn fifth-grade “reps” were present to speak about their individual experiences being a peer leader: Valentina, Katerina, Easton, Ella, Hailey, Chloe, Chloe, Amelia, Savannah, Kathryn and Anna.

A video was aired showing Quinn 4th grade peer leaders speaking about their experience being a peer leader: Noah, Freya, Lucas, Bryce, Luke and Drew.

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

DHS Junior Isabella Pires provided updates on activities and events happening at Dartmouth High School (DHS).

- Exam Updates: including MCAS and AP preparations
- Blood Drive on March 12th Update
- Dartmouth’s Finest; Gabriel Fernandes took first place.
- Credit for Life Fair for Juniors held on March 19th
- World Language Week Celebrated
- Show Choir “Dynamics” earned second place in their Division
- Class of 2028 hosted its first Spike ball Tournament with over 20 teams competing congratulations to our winners Mike Hauck and Landon Raposa.
- Career Fair to be held on April 15th
- Mean Girls*, the musical, will be performed from April 30th through May 2nd.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Oliver moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to approve the Regular Session Minutes of March 2, 2026 as written. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Coughlin invited Dr. Saba-Maguire to speak about the consent agenda item.

Dr. Saba-Maguire briefly described the event and expressed her support for its consent.

- DHS – Youth and Government Club to Attend the Model Government Conference – Boston MA (April 2026)

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to approve the request as presented. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

SELECT BOARD

Select Board Chair asked for a motion to open the Select Board meeting; Dave Tatelbaum moved, seconded by Chris O’Neil, at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Brooks noted there are three members of the Select Board present at this time: Heidi Brooks, Dave Tatelbaum and Chris O’Neil. Also present are Cody Haddad and Gary Carreiro, Town Administrator and Director of Budget & Finance/Treasurer respectively.

Shawn McDonald, Select Board Member, entered the meeting at approximately 6:33 p.m.

Ms. Brooks provided brief comments relative to the FY27 school budget noting the process works best when it is collaborative; the partnership between the Select Board and School Committee and the administration is essential as we work toward a budget that reflects our values, acknowledges our constraints and positions Dartmouth for the future.

PUBLIC HEARING

FY27 Budget

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to open the Public Hearing for the FY27 Budget at 6:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Ms. Coughlin invited those who wish to speak on the matter to come to forward.

Nathan Silva, Dartmouth resident, stated his concern is for the system of tomorrow if we continue to underfund education in our community and thanked the Committee for “asking for what you need” to maintain level services and to make up for past losses.

Heather Noyes-Fredette, Dartmouth resident and staff member, thanked the School Committee for the “hardline” you have held in asking the Town for the 6.8% that allows this District to support our student with student facing services.

Jody Parisi, Co-President of the Dartmouth Educators Association, began by thanking the School Committee for advancing a budget that reflects the needs of the School Department and added comments about the changing student enrollment and increasing student needs as well as past staff reductions and reallocation.

Joseph Sylvia, Co-President of the Dartmouth Educators Association, gave comments about staff reallocations adding, at the Finance Committee meeting on March 5th when the School Department gave its budget presentation, it was noted it is the only Town department not being level funded.

Christine Pankowski, Dartmouth resident and parent, gave comments noting “we” cannot expect an engaged and empowered community without making a firm commitment to our schools, undercutting the largest department for the third consecutive year is not a fiscally responsible decision.

Peter Knowlton, Dartmouth resident, stated his concerns about the increases in the need for student services; the students are “our future” and applaud the School Committee in coming forward with a very responsible budget.

Robin Delafuente, a parent of Dartmouth Public School students, thanked the School Committee for asking for what it needs, you have parent support adding statistics regarding recent staff reductions stating it is not sustainable to continue to ask current staff “to do more” with less.

Meg Rogers, Dartmouth resident and former teacher, encouraged the Select Board to take action, to find the solution, to find more revenue; no one wants to pay more taxes but we might have to in order to get education for our kids.

Zack Tavares gave comments supporting the School Committee’s 6.8% budget increase and asked the Town to support it.

Erin Souza Rezendes, Dartmouth resident, parent and Town Meeting member, asked the Select Board to support the School Committee’s full budget request - a 6.8% increase.

Erin Noonan, Dartmouth resident and parent, asked the Select Board to support the School Committee's full 6.8% budget increase.

Hannah Bordas, DPS parent and DPS substitute teacher, asked the Select Board to support the School Committee's full 6.8% budget request.

Jeff Steele, DPS parent, spoke about his concerns regarding the sustainability of high student performance when compared to school district funding.

Kimberly Bancroft, DPS parent, asked the School Committee to maintain its request of a 6.8% budget increase and asked the Select Board to approve it.

Select Board member, Stanley Mickelson, joined the meeting at approximately 7:08 p.m.

Abby Aevazelis, DPS parent, urged the Select Board to fund the schools at the requested 6.8%.

Molly Armando, DPS parent, gave comments around school funding and urged the Town to "get this right."

Ed Pacheco, DPS parent, gave comments around school funding and urged the Town to "do the right thing."

Katie Tavares, DPS parent, implored the Town to listen and to find a way to make this work.

Michael Cutting, Dartmouth resident and Town Meeting member, provided comments and stated it is time to make some "hard decisions."

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to close the Public Hearing on the FY27 Budget at 7:21 p.m. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver, to adjourn "our" meeting at 7:22 p.m. in order to have a joint meeting with the Board of Selectman and to return to our regular meeting when it is completed. The motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

JOINT MEETING WITH THE SELECT BOARD

The Joint Session between the Dartmouth School Committee and the Dartmouth Select Board began at approximately 7:23 p.m.

Cody Haddad, Town Administrator, gave a presentation on the Town's FY27 Budget Preview.

Mr. Haddad noted the full Select Board was present as well as Gary Carreiro, the Town's Director of Budget and Finance, stating before the Committee and Board have their discussion "we" thought it would be pertinent to give a general overview of the town's fiscal 27 budget process.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Town's budget policies that guide our budget annually as well as listing the general fund operating expenses and provided a graphic that illustrated FY27 general fund operating expenses: noting education is the largest expenditure for the town.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Town's FY27 estimated budgetary fixed costs which amount to \$33.4 million.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the Town's FY27 revenues noting property taxes generate the most revenue for the town adding state aid to Dartmouth for FY27 is a 1.2% increase for the town over last year and provided an illustration of the FY27 general fund operating revenues.

Mr. Haddad explained how the Town is taking a less conservative approach to its budgeting for FY27.

Mr. Carreiro added information about the State funding shortfall in FY26 and how that may affect state aid.

Mr. Haddad explained another reason why Dartmouth takes a conservative approach to the town's revenue estimates adding in Massachusetts communities budget one of two ways: budget for capital projects so you know what your capital projects are going to be and you include that as a line item in your operating budget or you do what Dartmouth does which is to budget only for reoccurring operating costs and fund capital costs with free cash at the end of the year so you need to plan to have a significant amount of free cash.

Mr. Haddad addressed some of the challenges the Town is facing including the increase in health insurance rates, revenue constraints and inflation.

Mr. Haddad reviewed the FY27 budgetary initiatives addressing comments made this evening about "there has been a lot of discussion and not a lot of action."

Mr. Haddad concluded stating the Town is now looking at being able to provide an approximately 4.5% budget increase to the school department explaining how the Town was able to reach that percentage from the 3% increase that was initially determined it could afford to give the school department.

Ms. Coughlin stated she appreciates the Town's conservative approach as well as the school department's but the problem is the 2.5% on real estate tax and unless that changes at the state or town level we are never going to "win" adding the schools need at least level funding and asked if the Town would consider taking from a stabilization fund in order to level fund the school district for a year with the understanding that we would go to the people and ask for an override.

Ms. Brooks noted Mr. Kiely sent a letter to our state representatives and senators as well as to Boson about changing the formula on school choice adding when looking at the school department's detailed budget she noted this year there are 67 out of district public school students and asked if that indicates "we" are paying out \$5,000 for those students and are we getting "in" more students than are leaving.

Mr. Kiely responded yes adding our "target" is 120 school choice students.

Ms. Brooks commented on the school's state aid (Chapter 70) and how the formula doesn't benefit us adding her concerns about a ballot question to be placed on the state ballot.

Mr. Kiely reported the legislature requested of the Department of Education that they do a listening tour regarding Chapter 70 formula which I had the opportunity to testify at and stated the formula has been broken for a long time and if you look at Dartmouth's Chapter 70 aid the line is almost flat adding the state believes, based on this formula, that Dartmouth should receive 17.5% of its foundation budget from Chapter 70 funding and we are currently at 24.48% so "they" think we are getting too much based on the formula; 82.5% is the largest possible share that can exist and the lowest is 17.5%.

Mr. Tatelbaum stated he hopes the community sees how dynamic the budget process has become and stated he is in favor of the 4.5% budget and will do what he can to persuade his colleagues to fund the 6+% the school department has asked for.

Mr. Oliver gave comments about the increased communication between town committees and stated his appreciation of the 4.5% noting we are at 5.02% for level funding adding, for me, anything that is a student forward-facing position needs to stay in the budget for me to support that budget.

Mr. McDonald gave comments about the background of proposition 2-1/2 and stated no one wants to pay more taxes adding he would support a small, targeted override for the schools.

Mr. O'Neil stated we need to figure out what it's going to take to get this department to where we need it to get to but not have surprises in the following years; we need to determine that "number" so that it makes sense for the department moving forward adding the challenge is doing "this" along with a huge capital outlay noting "we" have some additional revenue that may or may not come to fruition.

Mr. O'Neil stated you need to be communicative with the people that are actually paying the bills – the taxpayer - and explain how they will be affected.

Mr. Mickelson stated he will support whatever the schools need.

Mr. Carreiro added comments to the matter of an override stating it takes strategic planning.

Mr. Haddad responded to a comment about dipping into the stabilization fund and explained why you will not hear Mr. Carreiro or myself recommend doing that and concluded by stating whether the decision is to go for an override or come to a consensus we need to figure out a road to sustainability.

Ms. Brooks gave closing remarks including a vote will not pass if the general community is not made aware of the school department and town needs.

Ms. Coughlin thanked the Select Board and Town Administration for coming this evening.

Mr. Haddad stated for confirmation purposes regarding the path forward that the School Committee is going to work with the administration to review student facing needs and we will work through the budget advisory group to come up with a consensus budget.

Ms. Coughlin stated we have a vote on the budget in 2 weeks.

Mr. McDonald moved, seconded by Mr. Mickelson to adjourn the Select Board Meeting at 8:33 p.m. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Ms. Beckwith to reconvene the school committee meeting at 8:34 p.m. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

*The School Committee took a five minute recess.
Open session resumed at 8:41 p.m.*

OLD BUSINESS

Further Discussion on the Proposed FY27 Budget: Ms. Coughlin opened discussion on the FY27 budget stating she was pleased with the 4.5% offer from the Town adding we need to discuss items we may be able to let go of and asked Mr. Oliver to discuss the point he made earlier.

Mr. Oliver asked if it is accurate to say, for level services, we are at 5.02%.

Mr. Kiely responded not entirely and explained his response referencing the “Key Factors” from the budget presentation adding for current level services we are at 4.58%.

Ms. Beckwith asked for the overall total.

Mr. Kiely responded that is \$57,970,787.

Ms. Coughlin asked if the 4.58% includes the Special Education Facilitator.

Mr. Kiely responded no adding the it doesn’t include any of the budget recommendations.

Mr. Oliver clarified what positions are not included in the 4.58%.

Dr. Saba-Maguire added those are additional positions and not for level funding.

Mr. Oliver reiterated his commitment to forward facing positions adding my recommendation to move forward needs to include the following: 4 elementary ESPs; 3 elementary RBTs; an adjustment counselor at DMS and an elementary instructional music teacher; other positions can wait.

Mr. Kiely stated that would be 5.3%.

Ms. Coughlin stated the music position would be adding she doesn’t think we have the luxury to reinstate that program at this time.

Mr. Oliver stated we have a plan adding I need to see a budget moving our district forward referencing the District Strategic Plan and if we have to use school choice we use school choice.

Mr. Nunes disagreed with Mr. Oliver and his recommendation is the budget that was presented in February.

Mrs. Amaral agreed with Mr. Nunes what is in the budget presented in February reflects the needs of the students adding there is nothing in the 6.8% budget that she would vote to eliminate.

Ms. Beckwith asked how it plays out if we hold the line with the 6.8% budget which is her inclination.

Mr. Oliver responded if we vote forward this budget as is noting it is the Select Board’s responsibility per state law to bring a balanced budget to Town Meeting therefore they will have a choice to make; whether they can work with our request or they will set our budget at “X” amount of dollars and that goes on the Town warrant.

Mr. Kiely stated I think you’re right; ultimately “it” would not make it to the warrant if we don’t make some adjustment.

Dr. Saba-Maguire stated she believes there is an opportunity here given the new number she believes the Town has committed to the school department this evening suggesting we take the time to schedule another budget meeting.

Mr. Kiely agreed noting it doesn’t fund our proposal but we appreciate the movement.

Ms. Coughlin stated she believes we can make do without some of the proposals and would we be willing to spend our kindergarten fund.

Mr. Nunes responded to the kindergarten fund suggestion noting it is one shot.

Mr. Oliver recommended we use it to help this year letting everyone know we are using this money to fund our budget this year to get the positions we need.

Mr. Nunes stated he is good with that but we need to be aware that we won't have it for FY28.

Ms. Coughlin asked if the District can get the yearly increase down.

Mr. Kiely stated not for FY27 and FY28 adding comments about the kindergarten stabilization fund.

Mr. Oliver brought up the school choice spending plan and if the town votes down an override the school district will have no choice but to not only continue school choice but to expand it and offset salaries on a permanent basis to school choice which goes against town financial policies.

Ms. Coughlin asked the Committee if they would like to continue the discussion this evening or would we like to schedule a special meeting.

Ms. Beckwith stated it sounds like the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent want to do some more looking at numbers and asked what is the "drop dead date."

Mr. Kiely responded three weeks; April 13th.

Ms. Beckwith proposed we allow them to do what they think they should be doing and that we do not have enough information to continue the discussion tonight and that we hold a special meeting before the April 13th so that we know what will be in front of us.

Mr. Nunes asked if Dr. Saba-Maguire and Mr. Kiely could put something together over the next few days and get it to us; if we were able to have a meeting at 4:30 I could probably do that.

Dr. Saba-Maguire offered a zoom meeting during a lunch hour.

Mrs. Amaral stated she is not available this week.

Mr. Oliver asked if dates and times could be sent to us.

NEW BUSINESS

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Statement of Interest (SOI) Application for the Dartmouth Middle School (DMS) Replacement Project: Ms. Coughlin opened discussion on the matter.

Mr. Kiely provided brief highlights on the Statement of Interest and called the Committee's attention to the formal vote and other documents that were included in the meeting packet and recognized Dave Tatelbaum and the work of the Long-Range Capital Planning Committee and mentioned the walking tour provided to Town Committee and Board members.

Mr. Kiely provided a timeline in response to Mr. Oliver's request.

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on March 23, 2026, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Dartmouth, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 20, 2026 for the Dartmouth Middle School located at 366 Slocum Road, North Dartmouth, MA 02747 which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building

Authority in the future: Priority 7, replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements; the Dartmouth Middle School building components and systems have surpassed their expected useful life and do not meet modern educational standards for a conducive learning environment; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Dartmouth to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mr. Oliver to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously: 5-0.

Superintendent's Update: Dr. Saba-Maguire provided information and updates of events and activities happening throughout the District.

- Special Education Program Review at DHS/DMS by an Independent Collaborative
- Professional Learning Opportunities Update
- DHS TV Media Collaborative Program with Bourne Public School District
- HR Update: staff retirements this year
- ASPEN and ParentSquare Update
- Safety Update

Report of the Chair: The chair asked Committee members if they had anything to share.

- Music Update.

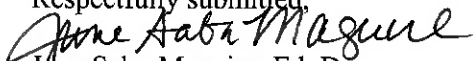
Other Matters that may not have been anticipated at the time of Agenda posting:

NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting: The Chair stated the next regular session of the School Committee will take place in the Library Media Center at Dartmouth High School and via live stream at www.youtube.com/dhstvmedia on Monday, April 13, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Nunes moved, seconded by Mrs. Amaral to adjourn at 9:37 p.m. into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, § 21(a)(2), to conduct grievance hearing pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement between the Dartmouth School Committee and the Dartmouth Educators Association and not to return to open session. On a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously: 5-0. Mrs. Amaral – Yes; Mr. Oliver – Yes; Ms. Beckwith – Yes; Mr. Nunes – Yes and Ms. Coughlin – Yes.

Respectfully submitted,


June Saba-Maguire, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Open Session - Documents/Exhibits

- Agenda
- Brief
- Spotlight on Kids PPP – Quinn School
- Consent Agenda – DHS Annual Youth and Model Government Conference
- Regular Session Minutes for March 2, 2026
- Statement of Interest Application for the DMS Replacement Project

Joint Session - Documents/Exhibits

- FY27 Town Budget Preview