



**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**BUSINESS MEETING OPEN SESSION MINUTES**

April 27, 2026

<b>Meeting:</b>	School Committee
<b>Date:</b>	April 27, 2026
<b>Location:</b>	MEMS Library
<b>Attendees:</b>	Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent Chris Reed, Chairperson Kate Koch-Sundquist, Vice-Chair - Remote Lindsay Banks Jake Foster Nadia Wetzler Theresa Whitman
<b>Absent:</b>	John Binieris
<b>Guests:</b>	
<b>Recorded by:</b>	Maria Schmidt
<b>Link to Reports and Presentations</b>	<a href="https://www.mersd.org/domain/785">https://www.mersd.org/domain/785</a>

**A. Call to Order of** – Mr. Reed called the School Committee Business meeting to order at 5:50 p.m.

**B. Business Meeting Open Session**

**1) Public Comment (Guidelines for public comment can be found in sections BEDH and BEDH-E of the School Committee policy manual)** – none

**2) Chairperson’s Report** – Mr. Reed made no report

**3) Consent Agenda –**

- Acceptance of Warrants: No warrants for acceptance
- Minutes for approval: April 7, 2026

*Ms. Whitman moved to approve the minutes for April 7, 2026; Mr. Foster seconded the motion.*

*The motion passed 5-0.*

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#### **4) Sub-Committee Reports**

- **Elementary Facilities/MSBC Sub-Committee** (John Binieris/Theresa Whitman) –No Report
- **Finance Sub-Committee** (Jake Foster/Chris Reed) – No Report
- **Policy/Advocacy Sub-Committee** (Lindsay Banks/Nadia Wetzler/Theresa Whitman) – No Report
- **Negotiation Team Sub-Committee** (Kate Koch-Sundquist/Chris Reed) – No Report

#### **5) Superintendent's Report –**

- a. School Committee Member availability for negotiations prep and summer session. The superintendent asked SC members to update a circulated document with availability.
- b. Essex School Building Project – The superintendent reported that the school building project is progressing on schedule. The SBC has had two meetings since the School Committee last met. On April 14, after receiving community feedback, the SBC took a straw poll and was overwhelmingly in favor of adopting design Option F. This design includes a community trail, a larger playing field, and would position the building closer to the front of the site. Community feedback also supported Option F. On April 16, the SBC had a community meeting and reported out on the decision-making process, including how cost estimates were used as one component of the process. The project budget is currently estimated between \$91 million and \$93 million, before MSBA reimbursement. It was emphasized that this was an estimate only used in comparison with the other design options. Detailed design and budgeting will occur through the fall and go out to the community for a vote in the fall of 2026. Superintendent Beaudoin said that the SBC will vote on April 28, 2026 on the Preferred Schematic Option. From that point, the design will be developed with specifics that will allow for a true cost estimate.

Ms. Wetzler confirmed that the school budget is independent of the building project and there is no vote regarding the school building project on the docket for the Town Meetings. The building project will have no impact on the town budget for next year. Superintendent Beaudoin said that building costs will not likely hit the towns before 2028. Debt structuring can be variable – it could be done incrementally or in a large initial draw depending on terms.

Ms. Whitman suggested that Superintendent Beaudoin address any questions at the Manchester Town Meeting in regard to the building project. The

superintendent said that questions could arise as the town considers capital items on its agenda. Ms. Whitman stated that Andy Barletta, Manchester Town Administrator, would be able to address questions.

Ms. Banks urged the School Committee to anticipate potential questions, provide specifics where possible, and explain why some details are not yet available.

Superintendent Beaudoin said that an updated FAQ sheet will be distributed after review by Ms. Cresta and asked for School Committee feedback. Currently, it has gone out to the SC policy subcommittee and to Brian Gressler and Sarah Wolf. Mr. Gressler and Ms. Wolf have formed a budget and SBC support group to provide communication with constituents. The superintendent hopes to tie the FAQ to their communications. Superintendent Beaudoin sent the Gloucester Daily Times a submission.

Ms. Whitman expressed appreciation for the new voices that have participated in the building project and said that design Option F was the community favorite. Ms. Whitman asked about engagement plans with the community over the summer. Superintendent Beaudoin said there is an SBC Community meeting scheduled for June 4 and asked whether a recap meeting should be planned for Manchester or if drop-in hours would suffice. There is an additional Community Meeting on August 25 before fall voting. Ms. Whitman stated that a lot of design work happens over the summer. To encourage participation in the design process, Ms. Whitman stressed the importance of engaging with the community and suggested posters and hosting an SBC table at events. Superintendent Beaudoin replied that, with Town Meetings in November, there will be plenty of time to focus on communication. The district plans to staff informational tables at events like school open houses; create posters and handouts; and produce a QR code with details.

## **6) Continued Business – FY 27 Budget and Town Meeting Preparations**

Mr. Reed reviewed his planned remarks for the Manchester Town Meeting. He will highlight the 3.5% growth budget as maintaining level services and supporting the district's strategic plan. Mr. Reed will emphasize that the district employed financial tools, including reserve use and adjusted OPEB contributions, to manage costs. Mr. Reed plans to briefly outline the Essex School Building Project, allowing district administration to field specific questions during capital budget items. Committee members suggested edits to emphasize the budget's alignment with the district's annual goal of 3.5% growth.

