

S.C. MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee
School Committee Meeting
Monday, March 23, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.
Hoosac Valley High School, Resource Center, 125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Erin Milne, John Duval, Robert Tetlow, Fred Lora, Tracey Tierney, Adam Emerson, Jen Solak

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Aaron Dean

104439 **Call to Order**
Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

104440 **Public Comment or Questions**
Erin Strek During public comments, a parent speaking on behalf of the Hoosick Valley Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (CPAC) expressed concern regarding ongoing budget discussions and their focus on the cost of special education services. The speaker emphasized that while nearly 25% of district students receive legally mandated special education support, discussions should also highlight the positive outcomes these services provide, including academic and social-emotional success. Concerns were raised about proposed budget cuts, particularly the elimination of Special Education Coordinator positions, which have improved compliance with IEP timelines and provided essential support for staff and families. The potential loss of a School Adjustment Counselor was also identified as troubling given increasing student social-emotional needs. The speaker noted that these roles are critical to maintaining student progress, ensuring legal compliance, and supporting both general and special education populations. CPAC urged the committee to consider the broader impact of reductions and to prioritize sustaining staffing and structures that support students with disabilities and uphold the district's educational obligations.

104441 **Approval of Minutes - March 16, 2026**

MOTION: On Motion of Tracey Tierney and second by Jen Solak, Erin Milne abstained
VOTED: To approve March 16, 2026 meeting minutes. The vote was 6 - 0 - 1

104442 **Report of Business Manager - None**

104443 **Report of Sub Committees - None**

104444 **Communications**

A. Out-of-State Field Trip Approval, 2 Students - Portrait of a Graduate Convening (NH)

The committee reviewed the previously approved out-of-state field trip for the Portrait of a Graduate initiative and noted a change in plans. Due to scheduling conflicts and transportation issues, the trip to the spring convening in New Hampshire will no longer take place. Instead, students will remain in-state and attend the BCC Student Voice Summit as representatives, eliminating the need for out-of-state approval. The program primarily includes 11th and 12th graders, with some 9th and 10th grade students involved to support continuity; participating students for the summit will be in grades 10–12. Christine will share the summit date with the group.

B. Accept donations from Barrett Foundation and Specialty Minerals for Outdoor Classroom at High School

The committee reviewed and discussed the acceptance of donations for a high school outdoor classroom project, including \$20,000 from the Barrett Foundation and \$10,000 from Specialty Minerals, totaling \$30,000. The funds will support the construction of a timber-frame outdoor classroom to be built in front of the school. The project will include hands-on student involvement, with most of the labor performed by students under guidance, providing opportunities to learn skills such as reading architectural drawings and basic construction techniques. Two alumni will contribute to the project: Jack Soban, who completed the architectural drawings, and Matt Tassone, who will assist with construction and instruction. A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for April 15 at 12:45 PM, with a rain date of April 16 at the same time, and will include representatives from the donor organizations. A motion was made by Jen and seconded by John to accept the \$30,000 in donations for this purpose. It was confirmed that the only stipulation is that the funds be used for the intended project, and discussion followed.

MOTION: On Motion of Jen Solak and second by John Duval
VOTED: To accept donation from Barrett Foundation and Specialty Minerals The vote was unanimous.

C. Treasurer Resignation Effective June 30 and Plan for Identifying a Successor

The committee was informed that Mr. Jetty, who has served as treasurer since 2008, will retire effective June 30. Efforts are underway to identify a replacement, including outreach to local finance professionals who are part of the Massachusetts Treasurer Association. While Mr. Jetty has also served other districts, it is anticipated that each district will pursue its own candidate moving forward. With his recommendations and ongoing outreach, the goal is to present several qualified candidates for the committee's consideration later in the year.

104445

Report of Superintendent

A. Presentation of Recommended FY2027 Budget for Adoption

The superintendent provided a detailed budget update, emphasizing that proposed reductions are difficult but necessary, with efforts to prioritize attrition and minimize direct impact on current staff while reallocating duties, particularly in student support and special education. Reductions total approximately \$362,000 and include a school adjustment counselor, elementary librarian, middle school STEM position, special education coordination, and a full-time guidance secretary, with plans to redistribute responsibilities and maintain services. An additional \$514,000 in costs will be shifted to alternative funding sources, including rural aid and school choice, to preserve key instructional and support positions. The proposed FY2027 budget is \$23,990,355, an increase of \$853,719 (3.69%), with assessments rising to \$6,169,351 for Adams and \$3,174,989 for Cheshire. Major cost drivers include increases in out-of-district placements, charter tuition, school choice, and health insurance, with a significant portion of spending allocated to students educated outside the district. The administration also noted uncertainty in grant funding and potential earmarks, ongoing adjustments based on student needs, and the importance of maintaining reserves while planning for future sustainability. The committee was informed of the assessment methodology and will vote separately on the full budget, town assessments, and the use of reserve (E&D) funds.

The committee continued its budget discussion by addressing a procedural requirement related to conflict of interest disclosures. It was clarified that two members had disclosed potential conflicts involving personnel and employee benefit line items, requiring those items—regular instruction (\$6,358,559) and fringe benefits (\$5,343,120), totaling \$11,701,679—to be voted on separately without their participation. Members discussed the process, noting that while this procedure had not been followed in past years, it was being implemented this year based on legal guidance to ensure compliance and transparency. The committee also acknowledged the importance of clearly outlining such procedures in advance moving forward to support a smooth and well-informed process.

MOTION:

On Motion of Jen Solak and second by Tracey Tierney, Conflict of Interest Adam Emerson and Bob Tetlow Abstained

VOTED: Budget FY2027 Line Items Regular Instruction and Fringe Benefits. The vote was 5-0-2.

MOTION:

On Motion of John Duval and second by Tracey Tierney

VOTED: Budget Total as a whole FY2027 \$23,990.355. The vote was unanimous.

The committee clarified that the \$32,000 increase represents the amount above the towns' required minimum contribution for FY2027, not the total spent above state-mandated levels. Overall, the district exceeds the towns' minimum contribution by about \$1.6 million annually. The distinction between the towns' required contribution and the district's net school spending requirement was emphasized.

MOTION:

On Motion of Jen Solak and second by Fred Lora

VOTED: Assessment to the Town of Adams FY2027 budget \$6,814,144. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION:

On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by Tracey Tierney

Assessment to the Town of Cheshire FY2027 budget total \$ 3,402,983. The vote was unanimous.

MOTION:

On Motion of John Duval and second by Fred Lora

VOTED: \$275,000 be Appropriated from Certified E&D for the purpose of reducing the FY2027 Budget Assessments members of the towns of Adams and Cheshire. The vote was unanimous.

104446

Chairman's Report - None

104447

Unfinished Business - None

104448

New Business - None

Committee members requested that discussions on graduation and retirement recognition be added to next month's agenda. The fire marshal's agenda will also be included and finalized at the next meeting.

104449

Action Items - None

104450

For the Good of the Order

The recent school musical, *Willy Wonka*, was noted for the participation of students involved in multiple activities, highlighting the district's multi-talented student body.

Elementary schools recognized Trisomy 18 and Trisomy 21 awareness, with students wearing light blue and themed socks, respectively.

Attendance at community events, including the play and the Rod and Gun Club's music bingo, was highlighted as strong and engaging.

A junior varsity girls' softball team will be added this season, marking an expansion of the athletic program.

Committee members expressed intent to recognize Mr. Jetty, who has served as treasurer since 2008 and completed two terms on the school committee, at next month's meeting for his long-standing service and contributions to the community.

MOTION:

On Motion of Adam Emerson and second by John Duval

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Mary Lisa Irizarry, Recording Secretary