

NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING
Senior/Community Center, 331 High Street, Newburyport, MA 01950

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mayor Sean Reardon called the School Committee Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:32 PM. Roll call found all members present, except Andrew Boger.

Public Comments: none

Warrant

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to approve the Warrant in the amount of \$572,568.35 as presented.

Warrant 8176 (FY26)	\$541,048.07
A-Warrant	<u>\$ 31,520.28</u>
	\$572,568.35

Motion Passed

Andrew Boger absent

Minutes

Motion:

On a motion by Juliet Walker and seconded by Kathleen Shaw it was

VOTED: to adopt the minutes for the March 11, 2026 School Committee meeting.

Motion Passed

Andrew Boger absent

Student Representative Report: not presented (see attached)

FY27 Preliminary Budget Presentation

Assistant Superintendent Lisa Furlong and Finance Director Ethan Manning shared the preliminary FY27 Budget, which included a review of three possible scenarios for an increase to the City Appropriation (5.2%, 5.0% or 4.75%). Ethan explained areas that are driving increases in FY27, as well as various challenges the district is facing, steps they are taking and budget development strategies as they move forward. Projected Elementary class sizes and City Appropriation Trends were also discussed. A public hearing for the FY27 Budget will be held on April 8, 2026.

School Choice Report

Assistant Superintendent Lisa Furlong and Finance Director Ethan Manning reviewed the school choice process, school choice trends and enrollment data. Their presentation included the number of receiving and sending school choice students, which cities students are coming from, and where Newburyport students are choosing into for the past five years. A current breakdown of enrollments by

grade was provided for 2025-2026. Juliet Walker acknowledged receipt of an email from Cara Ripley regarding concerns with school choice, which will be included with meeting minutes. During the meeting, Juliet Walker also addressed various questions she had received from other parents. A video explaining how school choice works has been uploaded to the district's website. It is anticipated that choice seat availability for next year will be discussed at the next meeting (April 8th).

Cancellation of May 27th School Committee meeting

The May 27th School Committee Business meeting is in conflict with the High School's Scholarship Awards Night. The Senior/Community Center meeting space is not available on Tuesday, May 26th.

Motion:

On a motion by Kathleen Shaw and seconded by Mayor Sean Reardon it was

VOTED: to cancel the May 27th School Committee Business meeting.

Motion Passed

Andrew Boger absent

Traffic Circulation & Safety Advisory Committee Proposal

SC Members discussed the proposal to establish an advisory committee to evaluate and improve traffic flow and student safety at the Molin and Nock schools. John Ricci will modify the "summary" section of the purpose statement to read "committee will be comprised of *up to* seven members". A vote to establish this new committee will take place at the next meeting (April 8th).

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Finance Subcommittee

Andrew Boger absent

Policy Subcommittee

Two policies were presented for 1st read: ADDA – Background Checks and ADDA-R – DCJIS Model CORI/SORI. No additional changes were recommended, and both policies will be presented for 2nd read at the April 8th business meeting.

Teaching & Learning Subcommittee

Breanna Higgins stated they met on March 18th. The agenda focused on an update of the Math Action Plan and the current school year's action steps.

SEPAC

Kathleen Shaw stated that the annual regional meeting was held virtually on Monday, March 16th with Newburyport, Amesbury, and Georgetown. The next meeting will be in-person on May 7th with school adjustment counselors.

NEF

Lauren Eramo attended the recent NEF Board of Directors meeting, as well as the NEF Retreat. There are still openings for the Golf tournament, ED Award nominations are being accepted, and next year's Auction date will be November 14th.

Superintendent's Report

Assistant Superintendent Lisa Furlong summarized the Superintendent's report as follows:

- ❖ CTE Steering Committee held their first meeting. They will be looking into expanding Chapter 74 programming and Career & College Pathways.
- ❖ The new AI Ad-Hoc Committee will hold their first meeting on April 2, 2026.
- ❖ The district-wide, month-long art show opened at the Senior/Community Center on March 12th. Thank you to Ben Ober, the art teaching faculty and Mary Kelly for their hard work arranging this event.
- ❖ The 9th annual IFTAR was recently held at the high school and was well attended by many community members, students and their families.

New Business:

- Mayor Reardon thanked Kathleen Shaw for attending the Community & Public Service Awards night.
- The Mayor stated that City Council recently voted unanimously to approve both the Nock and NHS roof projects.
- Juliet Walker reminded everyone that the MASC Day on the Hill event is next Monday (March 30th).

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

On a motion by Mayor Sean Reardon and seconded by Breanna Higgins it was

VOTED: to adjourn the Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 8:18PM.

Motion Passed

Andrew Boger absent

Submitted by: Cassidy Bolcome & Anna Pervier

Location: Senior Center

Bresnahan News:

Coffee with Caregivers - Thank you to all the families who joined us for our recent Coffee Hour with Jacquie Rousseau! We appreciated the opportunity to connect and discuss the challenges of navigating screen time and technology with our children. Jacquie shared how NPS is approaching technology through our Tech2 work—helping students see technology as a tool and make thoughtful choices about when to use it. She also highlighted our focus on playful learning at Bresnahan, which builds essential skills like collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. Families were introduced to helpful resources, including Common Sense Media, The Awesome Generation, Free to Learn, and Let Grow. Thank you for being part of this important conversation and for your continued partnership in supporting healthy, balanced technology use for our students.

March Madness - Third graders are celebrating March Madness with a math twist! Led by Mrs. Doyle, each class takes on a fast-paced, three-minute multiplication challenge every Friday to see how they stack up. There's no elimination, just exciting opportunities to improve, gain accuracy, and celebrate growth each week. To keep the bracket even, teachers have joined the fun as a team, but with just one minute to solve 60 problems, the pressure is on! Students are energized, motivated, and eager to beat their personal bests.

Our goal is for every third grader to head into summer having mastered their 0–10 multiplication facts and feeling confident and ready for fourth grade.

Readathon - We are almost done with our Readathon. A huge thank you to the PTO for making this amazing program happen - and another huge thank you to our librarian, Renee Ames, for hosting library camp-outs for all of our students. We will celebrate the end of our two week readathon with a book character parade on Friday morning.

Molin News:

Molin is halfway through the Clipper Readathon and has their book character parade this Friday at 8:10!

Here are the 2026 Arbor Day Poster Contest winners for the Molin! The theme is "If Trees Could Talk." In third place is Olivia Garcia from Mrs. Lemes classroom. Our second-place winner is Hazel Cough from Mrs. Kusser's class. And our first-place winner is Sierra Sawicki from Mrs. Trail's classroom.

Molin's artist in residence, Kim Salathe, is working with our students this week on the intersection between art and mindfulness.

Nock Middle School News:

Tonight, Nock is hosting the Community Hoops fundraiser. We're expecting a great crowd and a fun night that brings together students, families, and staff.

March has been a busy and exciting month for students. They've enjoyed visiting local colleges, participating in team-building activities like the mannequin challenge, and earning rewards through PBIS challenges.

It's also been great to see so many students showing kindness and supporting one another throughout the month.

Students wrapped up Trimester 2 strong and have started Trimester 3 on a positive note.

There's a good sense of focus in the building as students head into their final stretch leading up to MCAS.

High School News:

Last Friday, NHS participated in the high school's Inspired Learning Day. We were able to select from a variety of offerings developed by teachers based on their interests and the District's Portrait of a Graduation. An example of one session involved a guided walking tour to explore historical architecture of the high school. Other students learned how to paint an interior room. Overall, there were over 40 different options for us to choose from.

The student's part of the future business leaders would like to thank the following professionals for offering mock interviews and feedback during the high school's inspired learning day last Friday: Stephanie Lucey, Kim Schofield, Ben Kibit, Kaithlin Kerrigan, Julie Morris, Lori Russo, Juliana Scandone, Sonia Linteris, Michaela Colbert

Next Thursday is the Greater Essex Regional College and Career Fair right at Newburyport High School. If you have a student of high school age, be sure to have the fair on your calendar. Mr. Smith from the College and Career Center has over 130 Colleges, Universities, and post-high school organizations attending.

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

I am both a community member and an educator, and I see firsthand how decisions like this can impact classrooms, staffing, and the supports available for students.

While school choice can provide options for families, it also raises important financial and planning concerns for districts.

In Massachusetts, school-choice tuition is capped at \$5,000 per student, while the actual cost to educate a student in many districts is significantly higher. That gap is often covered by local taxpayers.

In addition, once a district accepts a school-choice student, that student has the right to remain through graduation. This creates long-term enrollment commitments even if space or budgets tighten in the future.

School committees across Massachusetts often cite capacity concerns when deciding whether to open school-choice seats. Adding students can cause classrooms to fill faster than expected, reduce flexibility if resident enrollment grows, and make it difficult to adjust staffing levels.

Another important consideration is special education services. While the state allows additional tuition for special education students, those increments often do not fully cover the true cost of services. Districts may need specialized staffing, additional support services, or in some cases out-of-district placements that exceed the tuition received.

It's also important to consider students whose needs may not yet be identified when they enroll. When students enter a new district, evaluations may reveal previously unidentified learning needs. This increases caseloads for special education staff and adds pressure to already tight evaluation timelines.

Behavioral needs are another factor. Some school-choice students require significant behavioral supports, such as paraprofessionals or additional intervention staff, in order to maintain a safe and productive learning environment. These supports require additional staffing and funding that may not be covered by school-choice tuition. The program also does not allow for an

application or screening process, so districts may accept students without full knowledge of prior academic or behavioral concerns.

As an educator, I also see how this impacts intervention services. Many intervention groups have limited capacity. For example, if a Title I reading group is capped at 20 students per grade and your child is the 21st student in need, they may not receive those reading services right away because the group is already full. Adding additional students into a system with limited intervention capacity can affect access to support for students who need it.

Another concern is student athletics, particularly at the high school level. When students choose into a district for athletic opportunities, it can create pressure on team sizes, playing time, and access to programs for resident students. Athletics are an important part of school culture and community, and expanding school choice can sometimes lead to unintended consequences in these programs.

With almost 200 students already choosing into Newburyport, I hope the committee carefully considers whether expanding school choice is financially sustainable and whether it limits flexibility for serving resident students and ensuring all students receive the support they need.

At the end of the day, our responsibility is to ensure that every student who lives in this community has access to the resources, supports, and opportunities they need to succeed.

Thank you for your time.

Cara Ripley