

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

April 8, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING - FY27 BUDGET

Present: Mayor Sean Reardon, Juliet Walker, Breanna Higgins, Kathleen Shaw, Andrew Boger, Lauren Eramo, and John Ricci

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Sean Reardon called the School Committee FY27 Budget Public Hearing to order at 6:32 PM. Roll call found all members present.

FY27 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Superintendent Sean Gallagher reviewed a list containing eight frequently asked questions pertaining to the proposed FY27 Budget. Finance Director Ethan Manning provided a presentation that summarized information in the proposed FY27 Budget book. Ethan explained this FY27 budget proposal reflects a 4.33% increase in the City appropriation, and a 6.65% total budget increase over last year. School Committee members had the opportunity to ask questions after the presentation. Both the FAQ list and the FY27 Proposed Budget presentation will be uploaded to the district's website.

The Mayor shared that this budget proposal is approximately \$600K higher than he'd like, and he would like to see this # closer to his 3% guideline. The School Committee is scheduled to vote on the FY27 Budget at their next business meeting on Wednesday, April 29, 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sara Collins, 39 Daniel Lucy Way / Co-President, Newburyport PTO (Budget)
Phoebe Lonborg, 39 Moseley Avenue / Co-President, Newburyport PTO (Budget)
Sarah Hall, 8 Arthur Welch Drive (Budget)

ADJOURNMENT OF PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Andrew Boger it was

VOTED: to adjourn the Public Budget Hearing at 7:50 PM.

Motion Passed Unanimously

SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING

April 8, 2026

Present: Mayor Sean Reardon, Juliet Walker, Breanna Higgins, Kathleen Shaw, Andrew Boger, Lauren Eramo, and John Ricci

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Juliet Walker called the School Committee Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 7:54 PM. Roll call found all members present.

Public Comments

Nicholas Prendergast, 16 Marlboro Road, Georgetown (School Choice)

Warrant:

Motion:

On a motion by Andrew Boger and seconded by Mayor Reardon it was

VOTED: to approve the Warrant in the amount of \$433,353.38 as presented.

Motion Passed

Minutes

Motion:

On a motion by Mayor Sean Reardon and seconded by John Ricci it was

VOTED: to adopt the minutes from the March 25, 2026 School Committee meeting as presented.

Motion Passed

Student Representative Report

Maddie Jackman provided the student report which included library campouts and 2026 Readathon at the Bresnahan, math celebration and Autism Acceptance Month at the Molin, the Clipper Cup Championship at the Nock and the High School's winning Poetry Slam Team.

School Committee members met with high school students before tonight's school committee meeting and held informal discussions regarding a variety of topics, such as advisories, GPA, artificial intelligence and school lengths.

NHS Overnight Field Trip

High School Principal Andy Wulf provided background on the overnight field trip request to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York from June 6th to June 13th to participate in a Sailbot Robotics competition. Cost of the trip is appx. \$750 per student.

Motion:

On a motion by Mayor Reardon and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to approve the Sailbot Robotics overnight field trip in accordance with Policy JJH – Student Overnight or Late Night Travel.

Motion Passed

School Choice

Superintendent Gallagher reviewed recommendations for 2026-2027 school choice openings. School Committee members held a lengthy discussion which included a review of current resident and school choice enrollment numbers. The Superintendent will look into how many grade 9 school choice students have IEP's or 504 plans. In accordance with Policy JFBB – School Choice, the following votes took place:

Grade 10

Motion:

On a motion by Juliet Walker and seconded by John Ricci it was

VOTED: to open five (5) school choice spots in Grade 10 for 2026-2027.

Motion Passed Unanimously

Grade 6

Motion:

On a motion by Breanna Higgins and seconded by Andrew Boger it was

VOTED: to accept five (5) school choice openings in Grade 6 for 2026-2027.

Motion Passed Unanimously

Grade 9

Motion:

On a motion by Breanna Higgins and seconded by Juliet Walker it was

VOTED: to open fifteen (15) school choice spots in Grade 9 for 2026-2027.

Motion Passed (4-3)

Breanna Higgins	yes
Kathleen Shaw	yes
Lauren Eramo	yes
Andrew Boger	no
John Ricci	no
Mayor Reardon	no
Juliet Walker	yes

TOTAL 2026-2027 OPENINGS APPROVED: 25

Grade	Slots
Grade 6	5
Grade 9	15
Grade 10	5

School Committee Meeting Schedule 2026-2027 - Draft

Juliet Walker reviewed the draft meeting schedule. Committee members agreed to change the November 11th meeting to Monday, November 9th due to Veteran's Day, and the November 25th meeting to Monday, November 23rd due to the proximity to the Thanksgiving holiday. In addition, a meeting will not be scheduled during the week of December 21st.

Traffic Circulation & Safety Advisory Committee Proposal

John Ricci presented the Purpose Statement to establish an advisory committee to evaluate and improve traffic flow and student safety at the Molin and Nock schools. Juliet Walker stated the committee would run for one year, but could be revisited to extend if needed.

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Mayor Reardon it was

VOTED: to approve the establishment of a Traffic Circulation & Safety Advisory Committee.

Motion Passed

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Finance Subcommittee:

Andrew Boger stated Athletic Fees have been reviewed during recent FINCOM meetings and could be discussed at the next School Committee meeting. Juliet Walker suggested waiting to see where the FY27 Budget lands.

Policy Subcommittee:

Kathleen Shaw submitted changes to Policy ADDA - Background Checks and Policy ADDA - DCJIS Model Cori/SORI Policy.

Motion:

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

VOTED: to approve Policy ADDA - Background Checks as submitted.

Motion Passed

Motion:

On a motion by Kathleen Shaw and seconded by Breanna Higgins it was

VOTED: to approve Policy ADDA-R - DCJIS Model CORI/SORI as submitted.

Motion Passed

Teaching & Learning Subcommittee

Breanna Higgins stated their next meeting will be held on April 15th, and they will review the District Health Survey Results.

SEPAC

Kathleen Shaw stated their next meeting will be held on May 7th at 6:30PM in the Nock Library.

NEF

Lauren Eramo stated they will meet next week.

Superintendent's Report

Efficiency Study Update: Superintendent Gallagher provided a status of the efficiency study being conducted by the Collins Center. All interviews have been completed and final data their team requested is being submitted.

AI Advisory Group Update: The Superintendent stated the group held a productive first meeting on April 2nd. Members included parents, School Committee members, Central Administration, IT staff and various teachers. They will be looking to develop guidelines around four primary pillars (Ethical Practices, Teaching & Learning, AI Literacy, and Professional Development). The next meeting will be held on May 7th. The Superintendent anticipates presenting to the School Committee in late May or early June.

Music in our Schools Month Celebration: The district held an amazing three-day concert series with performances from hundreds of students in grades 4 through 12. The Superintendent credited Stephanie Phillips and the entire Performing Arts team for their dedication and hard work!

New Business

MASC Day on the Hill: Lauren Eramo, John Ricci, Juliet Walker and Kathleen Shaw attended this event and thought it was both impressive and informative. Two students also attended.

MASC Fall Conference: The MASC Conference in November will be held on the North Shore this year, possibly in Danvers. Juliet Walker will share the information.

NRYS Asset Awards: Kathleen Shaw noted that the new crossing guard at the Bresnahan, Mark Cooper, will be receiving an Asset Award by Newburyport Recreation and Youth Services.

The AI Doc: Kathleen Shaw shared that the movie "The AI Doc" is being shown at the Screening Room in Newburyport.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Mayor Sean Reardon it was

VOTED: to adjourn the Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 9:23PM.

Motion Passed

Student Report for School Committee

April 8, 2026

Submitted by: Maddie Jackman

Location: Senior Center

Bresnahan News:

We wrapped up the 2026 Readathon! Thank you to the PTO for organizing such an incredible community event that inspires our students to get excited about reading.

A big shoutout to our librarian, Renee Ames, who hosted library campouts for each class. Students had the chance to get cozy in tents in the library and enjoy their favorite books.

Our 3rd Graders started their MCAS testing today. We are super proud of their hard work and grateful for the 3rd grade teachers and proctors.

Our Bresnahan Playful Learning Team has been enjoying their time working with Coach Lori Towle. If you were to visit the Bresnahan on any given day, you would see teachers facilitating stations, play centers, community meetings, and engaging students in dramatic and hands-on exploratory learning.

We are now nearly one year into our Playful Learning grant (provided by DESE), and for our upcoming staff meeting, all Bresnahan staff will participate in teacher-led professional development. This will provide an opportunity for our team to share their learning and continue spreading these practices across the school.

Molin News:

April is National Mathematics and Statistics Awareness Month. This celebration started in 1986 to help increase interest, appreciation and understanding of mathematics and statistics. Our elementary schools will take part in the celebration by being able to participate in weekly estimation challenges, biweekly math riddles, and the week before vacation (4/14-4/17) we will have a math spirit week. The math celebration doesn't just have to take place in school! Students will be going home with choice boards for their grade level.

April is Autism Acceptance Month.

Our school adjustment counselors created a virtual classroom that links to several read-aloud books, videos and coloring pages for classrooms. Teachers and students will be reading, discussing, and learning about autism throughout the month. Thank you to Siobhan Green & Maggie Flaherty for creating this informative, kid-friendly virtual classroom.

Nock Middle School News:

March Madness at Nock Middle School ended with a bang as we celebrated our Clipper Cup championship—congratulations to Mrs. Dollas' homeroom for taking the win! The month showcased incredible school spirit, positive behavior, and strong community across all grade levels. This week, we begin ELA MCAS testing, and our students are ready. We are excited for

them to demonstrate their growth, effort, and learning. We are proud of the preparation they've shown and look forward to their continued success.

High School News:

NHS's Slam Poetry Team, the Spittin' CWANS, came in 2nd place in the Mass Poetry Teen Spoken Word Festival finals the weekend of March 28th. The team won the Best Group Piece Award and Vee Shields got the ONLY 10 (the highest score) in the whole show! Thanks to everyone who has encouraged and keeps on encouraging the team - Sophia Adam, Milla Baptiste, Rachel Kinney, Lucius Nelson (who also got a 10 in the preliminary bout), Vee Shields, and Calli Taffel. And of course – Deb Szabo



Public Comment In Support of School Choice

1 message

BrianCallahan.me <brian@briancallahan.me>

Wed, Apr 8, 2026 at 3:29 PM

To: Sean Gallagher <sgallagher@newburyport.k12.ma.us>, Lisa Furlong <lfurlong@newburyport.k12.ma.us>, Joanne Yelle <jyelle@newburyport.k12.ma.us>, Ethan Manning <emanning@newburyport.k12.ma.us>, sc@newburyport.k12.ma.us

Dear School Committee and Administrators,

This public comment letter is in support of School Choice as a way to increase funding for Newburyport Public Schools, and should be included in the minutes of the 4/8/26 Budget Hearing meeting.

You may have seen some dubious opinion pieces in secondary publications recently, decrying the practice of School Choice. One frequently cited example claims that while we receive \$5,000 from a sending district, it costs \$20,000 to educate each student in Newburyport. The first number is true. The second is not. The per-pupil cost figures provided by DESE are meant to offer a high-level overview by dividing the total budget by the number of students. They do not and cannot represent the actual cost of educating any individual student, no differently that the City budget being divided by the total amount of residents indicates a per-resident cost for City services. In reality, costs vary widely. Some students cost far more than others, and not only those with special education needs. Student athletes, for example, technically cost more than non-athletes, since participation fees fall well short of covering the true cost of running the Athletics Department.

There has also been talk about Choice students "taking spots" on teams. That is, quite frankly, bunk. The spots in question are primarily on town leagues, not high school teams. It is the policy of many of those leagues that any student attending school in Newburyport can participate, regardless of where they live. That includes students in the District, River Valley Charter School, the IC, and elsewhere. Players may also be Newburyport residents, but not go to school here. If there is an issue with that policy, it should be taken up with the league itself. The Newburyport Public Schools should not be dragged into it.

Additionally there has also been talk about how some residents simply don't want "those types of kids" going to our schools. I have no time for that attitude.

For years, the mechanics and benefits of School Choice have been explained in detail, yet we still see claims about a supposed \$2.8 million "gap," as cited in one of those aforementioned opinion pieces. At the same time, people point to declining enrollment, down 191 students from 2016 to 2025, though fluctuating year to year, without acknowledging the obvious consequence. Chapter 70 state funding declines along with enrollment, while costs continue to rise annually. School Choice helps offset that reality. It is not the problem. It is part of the solution.

Some cities operate without School Choice, but they rely on large stabilization funds, often totaling millions of dollars, built from local taxpayers. Newburyport does not have that luxury. If the city chose today to stop accepting Choice students, the financial impact would be immediate and cumulative. Next year alone, the budget would lose \$45,000 as current seniors graduate and incoming lower classes no longer include Choice students and their associated funding. In 2028, the loss would grow by another \$160,000. The pattern would continue year after year as each incoming class brings in no Choice revenue, eventually reducing that funding stream to zero.

School Choice is a smart, manageable way to maintain programming without placing additional strain on taxpayers. I will support its use in my role as a City Councilor during the upcoming budget discussions.

Thank you,

Brian Callahan
Former School Committee member and Finance Sub-committee Chair,
Current Ward 3 City Councilor
29 Warren Street



FY27 Budget/School Choice Request

1 message

Nicholas Prendergast <prendern@gmail.com>

Wed, Apr 8, 2026 at 1:37 PM

To: sc@newburyport.k12.ma.us

Dear Newburyport School Committee,

I am writing to respectfully ask that the School Committee consider opening up school choice spots for the incoming 7th grade tonight during school committee voting. We currently have a son who attends Newburyport through school choice. The opportunity for our daughter to attend the same district as her brother would allow her to access the same curriculum as well as follow the same academic calendar and activity schedules including conferences, concert performances, etc. Furthermore, making the transition during middle school allows our daughter to assimilate to the community and amongst her peers heading into her middle school/high school years.

Many of the voices you have heard through public opinion reflect concern about school choice enrollment. Our experience with Newburyport has been positive and we feel very fortunate that school choice was an option for us. As residents of Georgetown, rising costs and lower enrollment have led to uncertainty in programming, extracurriculars, and supportive services. Newburyport's thoughtful approach to school choice and the overall budget process, especially over the last 5 years, has enabled the community to navigate these challenges while maintaining academic standards and programming at all age levels.

Our family values the role we have representing Newburyport and appreciate the mutual benefit school choice has provided us. We consider ourselves members of the community as well as consumers. The opportunity to bring our daughter to the district in 7th grade helps us continue investing in Newburyport. If I can provide any additional insight, or the school committee would prefer public comment, I welcome the opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

Nicholas & Sharon Prendergast

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Nicholas Prendergast
Prendern@gmail.com