

Cohasset Public Schools
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025
Empower Students to Improve Communities

**MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
March 31, 2026
6:00PM**

Cohasset Middle and High School
Learning Commons
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025

Attendance

**Committee Members in Attendance
(Virtual via Zoom)**

Jennifer Lesky, Chair
Craig MacLellan, Vice Chair
Lance C. Dial, Secretary
Corey Evans, School Committee Member
Jacob Squatrito, Interim School Committee Member

Others in Attendance

Dr. Sarah Shannon, Superintendent
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Call to Order

Chair Lesky called the Special Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee to order at 6:00 PM on March 31, 2026, for the purpose of reviewing and voting on the FY27 budget. She noted that the meeting was conducted via Zoom and publicly accessible through Facebook Live and 143TV. After confirming all members could hear and be heard, she conducted a roll call vote.

**Roll Call: Mr. Dial-Present; Mr. Evans-Present; Mr. MacLellan-Present; Mr. Squatrito-Present;
Ms. Lesky-Present.**

Opening Remarks

Chair Lesky reminded attendees that the Committee had reconvened to receive a brief FY27 budget overview from Dr. Shannon, followed by final School Committee comments and a vote on the proposed budget. She also clarified that public comments would be accepted for Committee consideration only and would not reopen substantive budget deliberations.

Public Comment

Victoria Lattanzi, 125 Doane Street, presented detailed concerns regarding perceived inequities between the proposed FY27 school budget and broader Town budget allocations after reviewing newly available Town budget materials. She argued that while schools face significant staffing, programming, and leadership reductions, other municipal departments appear comparatively insulated, with some receiving substantial pay increases, staffing additions, and budget growth. Ms. Lattanzi expressed concern that shifts in budget categorization may disproportionately burden school funding while preserving broader municipal operations, potentially creating harmful long-term precedent. She urged the Committee to carefully evaluate whether the proposed school budget reflects equitable tax dollar allocation and questioned whether delaying the vote might better allow alignment with Town leadership to address perceived disparities. Ms. Lattanzi emphasized that budget equity and

collaborative fiscal planning are essential both for current district health and for future community support of override efforts. In response, Chair Lesky thanked Ms. Lattanzi for her thoughtful analysis, advocacy, and engagement in the budget process.

FY27 Budget Proposal

Dr. Shannon reoriented the Committee and public to the final FY27 budget framework, incorporating a late-stage additional allocation of \$19,011 from the Town and confirming a total FY27 school budget of approximately \$26 million, representing a 4.83% increase over FY26. She explained that despite this improvement, the district still remains approximately \$990,000 below full level-service funding, necessitating continued reductions in staffing, resources, administrative support, and selected programming. Dr. Shannon detailed how strategic retirements, staffing realignment, grant utilization, revolving funds, and operational efficiencies have allowed the district to bridge more than \$1 million in shortfall while preserving as much educational programming as possible. She further noted that because reductions slightly exceeded required savings targets, the district may be able to restore certain positions or resources over time as staffing and fiscal conditions stabilize. Throughout the presentation, Dr. Shannon emphasized that while substantial harm has been mitigated, the district's long-term structural funding issues remain unresolved.

Mr. Dial strongly supported adoption of the FY27 budget, emphasizing that while the budget is imperfect, it reflects the absolute maximum achievable through extensive collaboration with Town leadership and district administration. He rejected suggestions that delaying or rejecting the budget would provide strategic leverage, arguing instead that failure to approve would create fiscal chaos, jeopardize district operations, and undermine both schools and broader municipal stability. Mr. Dial stressed that the district has exhausted all reasonable short-term solutions and must now pivot immediately toward responsible long-term operational override planning. He praised Dr. Shannon, Town officials, teachers, and staff for mitigating significant harm while cautioning that this budget trajectory is fundamentally unsustainable.

Mr. Evans echoed Mr. Dial's position, emphasizing that rejecting the budget would dangerously misunderstand both legal obligations and practical governance realities. He underscored that the budget vote secures critical operational funding for schools and staff, not merely a negotiating tactic, and strongly defended district leadership's extraordinary work in preserving educational quality amid severe constraints. Mr. Evans also praised the Administration's creativity and planning while making clear that FY27 must represent the final year of relying on emergency fiscal maneuvers rather than sustainable structural solutions. He reiterated that immediate work must begin on long-term override planning to preserve district excellence.

Mr. Squatrito expressed appreciation for district leadership's extensive efforts while adopting a more cautionary tone regarding the final budget outcome. He acknowledged that while the district avoided the worst-case scenario feared earlier in the year, the approved budget still represents significant degradation and carries meaningful long-term educational risks. Mr. Squatrito stressed that broader structural underfunding—not malice or neglect—drives the district's challenges and urged community members to remain engaged, vigilant, and collaborative as the Committee pursues future funding stabilization. He also emphasized his commitment to maintaining public trust and ensuring that community concerns continue shaping future district advocacy.

Mr. MacLellan affirmed that he had carefully reviewed the broader Town budget and concluded that, while imperfect, the proposed FY27 school budget represents an equitable and responsible use of available tax dollars under current structural limitations. He directly addressed public concerns by stating that delaying the vote would not serve district interests and confirmed his support for moving forward. Mr. MacLellan emphasized continued responsiveness to community concerns while reinforcing the necessity of approving the budget in order to maintain operational stability.

Chair Lesky reiterated that her role on the School Committee is grounded in protecting public education and minimizing unnecessary risk to students, teachers, and district operations. She stressed that delaying or rejecting the budget would create unacceptable fiscal uncertainty and that the Committee must act in good faith based on the extensive work, collaboration, and diligence already demonstrated by district leadership. Chair Lesky characterized the FY27 budget process as exceptionally thorough and concluded that the Committee had reached the appropriate point to formally advance the budget.

A motion was made by Mr. Dial, seconded by Mr. MacLellan, to approve the FY27 Cohasset Public Schools budget in the amount of \$26,031,005 as presented to the Committee.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Dial – Aye; Mr. Evans – Aye; Mr. Squatrito – Aye; Mr. MacLellan – Aye; Ms. Lesky – Aye.

Following the vote, Chair Lesky thanked the public for its sustained engagement throughout the budget process, emphasizing that active civic discourse strengthens the Cohasset community even when opinions differ. She acknowledged the difficult concessions required within the approved budget while expressing pride in the district's success in approaching near level-service funding under challenging circumstances. Chair Lesky stressed that the Committee's primary focus must now shift toward collaborative long-term override planning and broader community engagement to secure sustainable future funding.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Mr. MacLellan, seconded by Mr. Dial, to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee at 6:46 PM.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Evans – Aye; Mr. Dial – Aye; Mr. Squatrito – Aye; Mr. MacLellan – Aye; Ms. Lesky – Aye.

Documents/Materials Used

- FY27 Budget Presentation dated March 25, 2026

Respectfully submitted,
Lance C. Dial
May 17, 2026