Ashland School Committee Minutes
April 8, 2026

Ashland Town Hall
101 Main Street
Select Board Meeting Room

Hybrid meeting: recorded on Zoom

Present:
Laurie Tosti, Chair
Marc Terry, Vice Chair
Paul Kendall, Member
Marcy Culverwell, Member
Tina Fitanides, Secretary
James Adams, Superintendent
Michael Caira, Assistant Superintendent
Chris Mathieu, Director of Finance
Abhishek Karthik, student representative, Ashland High School

Agenda Review and adoption
At 6:05 pm, Ms. Tosti opened the meeting, reviewed the agenda and took attendance.
Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: Present and AYE
Ms. Fitanides: Present and AYE
Mr. Kendall: Present and AYE
Mr. Terry: Present and AYE
Ms. Tosti: Present and AYE

Public Comment
Andrew Puntini, resident of 270 Cordaville Road, is a parent of two young children in Ashland. He spoke in support of the proposed budget override. He noted that many families in Ashland are two income families and that there is a high demand for after school care through an Extended Day Program. His family did not get a spot in EDP for the next school year, and he understands that there is a waiting list with many students. He noted that the demand far outweighs the available spots in the existing Extended Day Program.

AMS Unified Sports
Five middle school students came to present a program at their school called Unified Sports. Brady Giles, Charlotte, Grace, and Aayan Neupane shared how the basketball program has taught them about inclusivity, teamwork and friendship. Unified Basketball is a sport where people of all types of abilities play together on the same team.

Warrant Approvals
Between March 26, 2026, and April 8, 2026, Paul Kendall, authorized by his signature, payables in the amount of $572,143.58. This includes General Fund expenses of $478,084.51, Revolving expenses of $92,508.55, and Grant expenses of $1,550.52. He also authorized payroll in the amount of $1,516,823.49.

Superintendent Report: James Adams
Field Rentals and Field Maintenance

Mr. Adams discussed the initiative of Ashland Public Schools assuming the field rentals from the Town Department of Public Works. He reviewed the process and the fact that one of his Superintendent's goals for this year is to take over the administration of the field rentals and field maintenance. Mr. Adams gave a background of the field rentals from 2011. He reviewed potential staffing for field maintenance. He discussed historical agreements with Ashland Youth sports organizations (such as Ashland Youth Baseball/Softball, Ashland Youth Soccer, etc.) He reviewed that we will need a new School Committee rental policy (Policy KF). In his presentation he reviewed: Decisions Needed, Year 1 Setup, Operational Readiness, Possibly hiring a person to manage the fields, Administrative tasks to manage the rentals. He is aiming to have this organized and resolved by July 1, 2026.

Superintendent's Evaluation
Given that Ms. Tosti will be retiring from her position on the School Committee, she would like to do the Summative Evaluation for the Superintendent by her last meeting, May 13. Mr. Adams shared the Evaluation documents and rubric with the School Committee members and asked them to get their feedback to Ms. Tosti by May 6.

Assistant Superintendent's Report - Dr. Michael Caira
The District had a professional development day last week. PowerSchool training began for all teachers. Building level leaders, administrative assistants and a counselor from each building will participate in intensive PowerSchool training next week.
For the Educators Evaluation committee – the final teacher evaluation document is being reviewed by the committee members. Then they will modify it for service providers. By the end of June the committee should have the educator evaluation process completed.

Literacy Programming – we have chosen two programs to pilot. Dr. Caira is currently talking with teachers in grades K-5 to see who might be interested in participating in a pilot program during next school year. He is looking for 12 teachers (or 2 teachers per grade level) to try out each of the two different programs. The programs to be piloted are: EL Education and Amplify CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum.

Public Hearing School Choice 2026-2027
Mr. Adams noted that School Choice has been a significant part of our budgeting process. Mr. Terry asked about special education costs of incoming School Choice students. Mr. Adams responded that the special education costs are reimbursed by the sending district to the receiving district. Mr. Adams recommends that Ashland participate in School Choice for 2026-2027 and he recommends opening 46 seats open across the district. Mr. Terry moves to close the public hearing. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Mr. Kendall moves to approve the School Choice seats as presented. Mr. Terry seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Public Hearing FY 2027 School Budget
Mr. Adams presented the two FY 2027 Budget options for the Ashland Public Schools:

Option 1: **$47,236,865**

A $2.75 Million override budget representing a 6.18% increase over the previous year.

Option 2: **$45,931,775**
A 3.25% increase over the previous year, with no override.

Mr. Terry moves to close the public hearing on the FY 2027 Budget. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Mr. Kendall moves to approve both Option 1(**$47,236,865)** and Option 2 **($45,931,775**) Budgets. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

WACA - TV Board Member proposal
Mr. Adams recommends Joe White as the next WACA Board Member for a term of 3 years, until October 2028. He would replace Deputy Lyn Moragan who resigned from this position this spring. Mr. Terry moves to approve Joe White as a WACA Board Member, Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Consent Agenda
Mr. Terry moves to approve the Consent Agenda. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

Report of School Committee Members
Abishek Karthik reported that Term 3 is ending at the high school, and Term 3 grades will be posted in two weeks. He also reported that there have been ongoing issues with the bathrooms at the high school with property damage, flooding of toilets and flushing things that shouldn't be flushed. It has led the administration to clamp down and close many bathrooms. The students use a software system called eHall pass to sign up to use a bathroom at school. Bathroom use has been restricted for only 1 or 2 students who can be in a bathroom at one time.

Ms. Fitanides attended the recent ASHPAC meeting where they discussed the budget. Brittany Hawkins gave an update on the ESY summer services which are fully staffed. They also discussed the Special Olympics which are coming up at the end of April.

Mr. Terry attended the recent high school site council meeting, where there was a lot of discussion around the bathroom issues.

Ms. Tosti attended the recent Warren School Site Council meeting. The two topics discussed were the FY 2027 Budget and the override proposal, and the piloting of two potential new literacy programs.

At 7:55pm, Mr. Terry moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kendall seconded the motion. Vote:
Ms. Culverwell: AYE
Ms. Fitanides: AYE
Mr. Kendall: AYE
Mr. Terry: AYE
Ms. Tosti: AYE

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Gretchen King
Executive Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent

Documents used during the meeting
2025-2026 Superintendent's Self Summative Evaluation
Appointment to the WACA Cable Access Board
April 8, 2026 SC Meeting Grant Funds
APS Fields Rental
APS Fields Rental (1)
Copy of 2026-2027 School Choice Recommendation
FY 26 04.08.26 School Committee Acceptance Log
Minutes - March 25, 2026
Public Hearing 2026-27 SC Budget Presentation
School Committee Agenda April 8, 2026
Summative Evaluation Memo
Warrant Approvals 04_08_26
We are Unified!