

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

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Vice Chair Juliet Walker called the School Committee Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:31 PM. Roll call found all members present, except Mayor Sean Reardon.

Public Comments: none

Warrant

On a motion by Andrew Boger and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to approve the Warrant in the amount of \$562,805.01 as presented.

Warrant 8182 (FY26)	\$459,443.62
A-Warrant	<u>\$103,361.39</u>
	\$562,805.01

Motion Passed

Mayor Sean Reardon absent

Minutes

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Kathleen Shaw it was

VOTED: to accept the minutes for the June 10, 2026 School Committee meeting.

Motion Passed

Mayor Sean Reardon absent

Newburyport's Whittier School Committee Reps – Check-in

Stephanie Kalina and Erin Fenn provided an update of end-of-year student activities, such as the prom, various awards, graduation, 2026 SkillsUSA National Leadership & Skills conference in Atlanta and summer programming. Whittier students competed in a NH Bike Build-Off Competition in Laconia, NH and carpentry students built / distributed little free libraries. Whittier continues to work with MSBA for a future facility, and a shared campus with Northern Essex is still under consideration. A new financial leader was elected (Angus King). The Whittier School Committee completed the superintendent's evaluation with established goals for the coming year, and approved a partnership with Southern Maine Community College. Erin Fenn is also on the salary subcommittee which recently agreed to a 3.1% for non-union staff.

John Ricci requested a copy of the Whittier Superintendent's evaluation report. Erin Fenn will share that after their meeting in August.

New Literacy Curriculum Adoption Process

Dr. Tom Abrams provided a presentation covering the process of finding and adopting “Fish Tank”, a new literacy curriculum for grades K – 5. Dr. Abrams explained various steps involved with the evaluation of existing curriculum, the selection process for new curriculum, and piloting of selected curricula (CKLA and Fishtank Learning). His presentation also included a sampling of curriculum topics for grades K-5, a summary of the review & analysis of each pilot, and teacher’s feedback as to why they chose Fishtank. Dr. Abrams explained the plan for a successful implementation for 2026-2027, reviewed examples of how teachers can collaboratively contribute on the different units, and areas to be considered to evaluate and measure success of the new curriculum.

2028 NHS Overnight Field Trips Follow-up

Principal Andy Wolf reviewed the new vendor selection process that will be used by the high school teachers when planning international travel opportunities for students. He described the process and reviewed the travel feedback survey and the vendor comparison matrix.

High School teachers Aileen Maconi, Aaron Ribaud-Smith, and Matthew Matloff used the new process to help plan proposed trips to Dominican Republic (Feb. 2028), Japan (April 2028) and The Alps/Mediterranean (Summer 2028). Aileen and Aaron presented their findings for the three trips, which included vendor information comparisons such as trip itinerary, trip costs / discounts, hotel accommodations, tip inclusion, meals, travel insurance availability, private tour options, educational credits, student-to-chaperone ratios, and advisor compensation/benefits. Aileen and Aaron also explained how they choose their trips, as well as scholarships that are available to students. School Committee members had opportunities to ask questions throughout the presentations.

Andrew Boger suggested making sure all outfits are weighted against other options.

John Ricci recommended amending the policy/process to ensure all our trips are private.

Breanna Higgins suggested adding a “student satisfaction” row to the student survey.

Motion:

On a motion by Breanna Higgins and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to approve all three proposed trips consistent with Policy JJH – Student Overnight or Late Night Travel. (Japan - April 2028 w/World Strides, Dominican Republic - February 2028 w/EF, and Alps & Mediterranean – Summer 2028 w/EF)

Motion Passed

Mayor Sean Reardon absent

Kathleen Shaw and John Ricci abstained

AI Ad Hoc Guidelines

After thanking all the members that participated with the NPS AI Ad Hoc Committee, Superintendent Sean Gallagher explained the process they used to gather information and ideas to develop a list of guiding principles. His presentation included a review of the four guiding principles, expectations for responsible and/or prohibited use of AI within NPS, as well as teaching & learning opportunities for students and teachers.

The Committee took a short recess at 8:33PM and returned at 8:40PM.

FY27 Budget Update

Superintendent Sean Gallagher explained the current FY27 budget gap of \$123,901. The Superintendent reviewed \$30K school nutrition related costs that can be charged to the School Nutrition Revolving Fund, as well as three additional options that could be used to close the remaining budget gap of \$93,901. Recommended next steps, as well as additional staffing items to monitor were also presented.

2026-2027 School Choice Wait List Review

Based on existing School Choice information discussed during the FY27 Budget Update presentation, additional spots for 2026-2027 were approved in grades 6, 9 and 10.

Motion:

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

VOTED: to increase 2026-2027 School Choice in grade 6 by 7 slots for a total of 12, increase grade 9 by 9 slots for a total of 24, and increase grade 10 by 3 slots for a total of 8.

Motion Passed

Mayor Sean Reardon absent

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Finance Subcommittee

Andrew Boger said they discussed the FY27 budget in their last meeting.

Policy Subcommittee

Kathleen Shaw stated they met on June 22nd and reviewed the AI Ad Hoc Guidelines. Further discussion regarding any AI policies will be done before school starts. Juliet Walker stated a policy related to student medication needs to be updated and reviewed by the Superintendent.

Teaching & Learning Subcommittee

Lauren Eramo stated they have not met.

SEPAC

Kathleen Shaw had nothing new to report since their last meeting.

NEF

Lauren Eramo stated their next meeting date was June 24th, not June 17th as previously reported.

Summer Retreat Planning

Agenda Topics: Juliet Walker will send an email to obtain ideas / topics for the retreat. One key topic will be the budget.

Date: In addition, Juliet will send an email asking members if they will be able to change the Summer Retreat date by one week, from August 12th to August 19th. The start time is currently 5:00PM.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent's report covered the following:

- ❖ Favorite Poem Project: The Superintendent enjoyed performing with his daughter at this year's event at the Senior Center. Mayor Reardon, Lauren Eramo and Kathleen Shaw also participated.
- ❖ NEF Awards: This year's award ceremony was held at The Deck. Superintendent Gallagher congratulated all the winner's and recognized NPS students that performed.
- ❖ Honoring Skipper: Superintendent Gallagher recognized "Skipper", a district therapy dog, who officially retired after 10 years of service at the Nock/Molin schools.
- ❖ Kindergarten Readiness: The Superintendent thanked Bresnahan Principal and kindergarten staff for their work with the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. He also explained the new 1-week Kindergarten bootcamp pilot program that will run this summer and is being sponsored by the Swasey Grant program.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Kathleen Shaw it was

VOTED: to adjourn the Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 9:26PM.

Motion Passed

Mayor Sean Reardon absent

Breanna Higgins absent