

S.C. MINUTES

Hoosac Valley Regional School Committee

School Committee Meeting

September 14, 2026 - 6:30 p.m.

Hoosac Valley High School, Resource Center, 125 Savoy Road, Cheshire, MA

PRESENT: Fred Lora, Tracey Tierney, Erin Milne, Robert Tetlow, John Duval, Daniel Barnes, Kyle Malloy,

ABSENT:

OTHERS: Aaron Dean, Kristen Palatt

104500 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Fred Lora at 6:30 p.m.

104501 Public Comment or Questions

There were no public comments or questions.

104502 Approval of Minutes

A. August 24, 2026

The Committee reviewed the August 24, 2026 meeting minutes. A question was raised regarding the wording concerning the middle school basketball hoops and whether the proposed portable hoops were intended as a short-term or permanent solution. The Committee agreed that the wording should reflect that the hoops could serve as an immediate short term solution while the long-term needs are evaluated.

MOTION: On motion of Erin Milne and second by Tracey Tierney

VOTED: To approve the August 24, 2026 minutes. The vote was unanimous.

104503 Report of Treasurer/Business Manager

A. Approval of Grants

The Committee reviewed the district's grant spending plan, including federal entitlement grants and other grant-funded programs.

The grants discussed included Special Education and Early Childhood Special Education, Title I, Title II-A, Title IV, early literacy funding, CPPI, and Rural Aid. Grant funding supports paraprofessional services, instructional technology, intervention programs, professional development, family engagement, tutoring, literacy initiatives, shared staffing, and other district programs.

The CPPI grant was reduced by approximately \$300,000 from prior years, requiring adjustments to the district's spending plan. The district received approximately \$390,000 in Rural Aid, supporting positions and services shared with neighboring districts.

The Committee discussed the importance of grant funding to the district's overall operations and the continued effort required to identify and apply for available grants. The Committee also recognized the assistance and expertise of Jackie Daniels, who continues to support the district with grant-related work and applications.

The administration noted that additional grant opportunities are being explored, including potential outside-of-school-time programming for the middle school.

MOTION: On Motion by Erin Milne and Second by John Duval

VOTED: To approve the grants and spending plans as presented Approved unanimously by roll call vote.

104504 Report of Sub Committees

A. Northern Berkshire Education Sustainability Study (NBESS) Update

The Committee received an update on the NBESS study. Committee members participated in community outreach at the Adams Street Fair, where there was significant public engagement and discussion regarding the future of education in the region.

The community survey is expected to launch around September 25. The survey will seek input from residents regarding their perceptions of the current school system, what is working well, and what they would like to see in the future. Members emphasized the importance of reaching community members who do not currently have children enrolled in the schools.

The study team is also reviewing data from the participating school districts. Additional community forums and focus groups are being planned for faculty, staff, students, and community members. Student input may include adapting existing student-voice activities used by area schools.

An overview of the study was scheduled for the Cheshire Select Board. The next NBESS steering committee meeting was scheduled for September 30.

104505 Communications

A. In Memoriam – Loss of a Recent Graduate and Support for the Family

The Committee acknowledged the recent loss of a Hoosac Valley graduate and expressed condolences to the student's family, friends, and the school community.

The district has been providing support to students and families affected by the loss. The Committee also discussed a flower donation and possible future memorial efforts, including a trail dedication or bench. The district will continue to communicate with the family regarding any additional needs.

104506 Report of Superintendent

A. Update on School Opening – Superintendent and Building Principals

The Superintendent provided an overview of the school year opening and upcoming events, including school open houses, fifth-grade trips to Ramblewild, Indigenous Peoples' Day, and the elementary school's annual Trunk-or-Treat.

Paraprofessional and bus monitor vacancies remain challenging to fill. New custodians have been hired at the elementary and high schools. Enrollment is projected at approximately 1,000 students, with numbers continuing to fluctuate as families move into and out of the district.

The Superintendent identified literacy as the district's primary instructional focus and reported encouraging preliminary assessment data. The district continues to monitor student needs, staffing, transportation, and school safety.

Elementary School Principal's Update

The Principal reported a positive start to the school year, with approximately 380 students enrolled and five new classroom teachers. Literacy initiatives include student benchmarking, targeted reading groups, and ongoing professional development. The school's new student program, Bridges program, and redesigned Reset Room are operating, with adjustments made to meet student needs. ParentSquare is also being used to improve communication with families.

Middle School Principal's Update

The Principal reported a positive start focused on relationship-building, student safety, and clear expectations. Staff and student meetings are underway to gather feedback and establish shared goals. The new Hoosac Family Connection initiative will provide opportunities to meet with families individually and better understand student needs. The Principal emphasized collaboration, open communication, empathy, and accountability.

High School Principal's Update

The Principal reported a strong start, with a focus on literacy, vocabulary development, critical thinking, and student outcomes. Professional development, classroom observations, and coaching opportunities are being introduced to strengthen instruction and teacher collaboration. The school continues to develop its Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to provide enrichment and targeted student support. The Student and Adult Advisory Board has grown to more than 60 students, providing opportunities for student input and school improvement.

Chair Fred Lora thanked the Committee members and staff for their continued work and participation in the start of the school year.

B. Check-in on Cybersecurity

The Committee received an update on district cybersecurity practices and ongoing efforts to protect student, staff, and district data.

The district continues to implement and monitor multifactor authentication, staff cybersecurity awareness, phishing prevention, system monitoring, network safeguards, and incident-response procedures. The Superintendent emphasized that cybersecurity is an ongoing process requiring continued review, communication, and collaboration.

The district's IT staff continue to work with state resources and other school districts to stay informed of emerging threats and best practices. District IT staff are also scheduled to attend a statewide cybersecurity conference at UMass Amherst on October 1.

The Committee discussed the possibility of a future Executive Session briefing regarding the district's overall cybersecurity posture and resources.

C. Approval of Updated Substitute Pay Rates

The Superintendent presented proposed adjustments to substitute pay rates. The changes included updated rates for teachers, long-term substitutes, paraprofessionals, secretaries, cafeteria workers, nurses, custodians, crossing guards, bus monitors, and out-of-district van monitors.

The Committee discussed the need to remain competitive while maintaining appropriate relationships between substitute and regular employee compensation.

MOTION: On Motion by Tracey Tierney and Second by Daniel Barnes.

VOTED: To Approve updated substitute pay. The vote was unanimous.

104507 Chairman's Report - Nothing to add at this time

104508 Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

104509 New Business

A. Engagement with PTGs

The Committee discussed inviting the elementary and middle school PTGs to attend a future School Committee meeting to share their perspectives, successes, concerns, and ideas for their schools.

The Committee agreed that November would be an appropriate time to extend the invitations and provide an opportunity for informal discussion and collaboration.

B. Superintendent Evaluation

The Committee discussed the Superintendent's evaluation process. The Superintendent is completing the second year of the evaluation cycle.

The evaluation process will include the Superintendent providing evidence related to established goals and standards. Committee members will provide individual input, which will be compiled and discussed as part of the overall evaluation.

The Committee will continue the evaluation process in accordance with the established evaluation rubric and timeline.

Executive Session

MOTION: On motion of Erin Milne and second by Kyle Malloy.

VOTED: By roll call vote to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining. (required under Massachusetts Open Meeting Law) The vote was unanimous.

The School Committee entered Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining strategy. No votes were taken during the Executive Session other than those required by law.

The Committee voted by roll call to enter Executive Session, with all members voting **Yes**. The Committee stated that it would not return to public session following Executive Session other than to conclude the meeting. Non-committee members and guests departed prior to the committee entering the Executive Session. Executive session minutes are maintained but remain sealed to preserve the confidentiality of collective bargaining strategy.

A roll call vote was taken to exit Executive Session 8:09 pm

104510 Action Items

None.

104511 For the Good of the Order

The Committee recognized the success of the band bottle and can drive, which will continue through the end of the month.

Members also commented positively on the football season and the positive atmosphere surrounding the games, including the respectful conduct of players and coaches.

The Committee discussed the booster organization's Gmail account and arrangements for donation pickup and drop-off.

MOTION: On Motion of Fred Lora and Second by John Duvall

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm. The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Dean, Superintendent

Mary Lisa Irizarry, Recording Secretary

***The Committee entered Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining for successor agreements with the Paraprofessional, Custodial, Secretarial, Nursing, and Cafeteria bargaining units.**