AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

September 28, 2026

Present were Mayor Kassandra Gove, Ian Gillis, Chris Hunt, Abigail Jurist Levy, Deb Manseau, Greg Noyes, Brock Omohundro, Brooke Woodsom

A recording of this meeting can be viewed here:
https://cloud.castus.tv/vod/amesbury/video/6abfea1e69e08d0002c75595?page=PLAYLIST

Call to Order

Mr. Noyes motioned to move Executive Session to the top of the agenda to allow for technical troubleshooting, seconded by Mr. Gillis. Passed unanimously.

I. Executive Session
Dr. Jurist Levy motioned to enter Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30 A, section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy as it relates to negotiations, as an open session may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Amesbury Public School Committee, as declared by the Chair; seconded by Dr. Manseau. Passed unanimously.

Dr. Jurist Levy motioned to exit Executive Session, seconded by Dr. Manseau. Passed unanimously.

II. Mission Statement/Pledge of Allegiance (3:27) – Dr. Manseau read the mission statement and led the committee in the pledge.

III. Comments by Visitors & Delegations (4:01)

- Stan Schwartz, Highland Street - Requested a comprehensive district-wide inventory and policy evaluation regarding the use of technology, with a particular urgency around artificial intelligence (AI). Citing research on the potential negative impacts of AI on student cognition, memory, test scores, and critical thinking, the speaker urged the board to consider restricting or banning AI tools in certain grades and scenarios. He also highlighted broader concerns about screen time and early technology habits—referencing advocacy materials from the nonprofit Fair Play for Kids—and requested that the

committee schedule a future agenda item to review technology policies, procedures, and community partnerships.

- Megan Hoyt, Lions Mouth Road - Cashman Elementary School Counselor addressed the committee to promote an upcoming district-wide Family Community Forum scheduled for Thursday at 6:30 PM in the Cashman cafeteria. Featuring guest speaker Dr. Jessica Pepple, the interactive session—open to community members and students in grade three and above—focuses on strategies to recognize, address, and prevent dehumanizing language. Ms. Hoyt highlighted Dr. Pepple's previous successful presentation to Cashman staff, emphasizing her ability to facilitate safe, constructive dialogue around challenging topics, and urged committee members and local families to attend.

IV. Communications & Reports (9:38)

A. Technology Update provided by Stephen Hare, IT Director. A summary of the presentation is attached (Attachment A).
   a. Dr. Jurist Levy asked if Mr. Hare would recommend an annual review for responsible use and Mr. Hare stated that a review would probably be better quarterly or more frequently.
   b. Ms. Woodsom asked if blocking outside emails would include students emailing their parents and Mr. Hare said yes, those types of emails would be blocked as well.
   c. Mr. Noyes asked for clarification of what it means to deploy a new virtual lab for high school STEM, to which Mr. Hare responded that all computers would be operating off of one server to decrease upgrade costs moving forward. Mr. Noyes asked if there is already outdoor Wi-Fi at the other schools like what was recently installed at Cashman to which Mr. Hare responded that they do not have that but would be able to add it if they requested. Mr. Noyes asked if it is possible to remove any access to Gemini AI within the schools and Mr. Hare said yes that is possible. Mr. Noyes asked if we have iPads for use in the schools to which Mr. Hare replied that we do, mostly for the Special Education department.
   d. In response to Mr. Hunt’s inquiry regarding district cybersecurity, Mr. Hare expressed strong confidence in Amesbury’s readiness, estimating its safeguards rank in the top 10% of public school districts due to his private-industry security standards. He highlighted the deployment of Trend Micro Vision One—an advanced Extended Detection and Response (XDR) system that automatically isolates and sandboxes threats—alongside a strict protocol of updating edge devices and firewalls every 45 days, concluding that the district has maximized its protection within current resources.

V. New Business (36:32)

A. Regionalization Feasibility Study (Attachment B)

Mark Chapulus, Marlene DeLeo, and Rich Labrie of TMS presented an initial feasibility study commissioned jointly by the Amesbury and Georgetown superintendents. It examined finances, transportation, facilities, staffing and salaries, enrollment, and academics as a starting point for discussion—not as a recommendation to regionalize. The study was based on information available when it was prepared and did not assess the effects on school culture or local community identity. The scenario assumed that elementary schools would stay in their towns, while middle and high schools could be regionalized (about grades 6–8 and 9–12).

Transportation and enrollment

- The scenario that appeared to fit the high-school facilities best would send Georgetown high-school students to Amesbury High School. The estimated additional transportation need was four single-tier buses, at roughly $300,000 for the first year.
- The modeled trip between the high schools was about 30 minutes each way, before accounting for pickup routes and circulation. The study did not include late buses for after-school activities; some students might drive, though Amesbury parking could be limited.
- For enrollment projections, the presenters estimated about 180 Georgetown students could be eligible to attend Amesbury, and modeled 166 transferring, with an estimated range of about ±4.7 students.
- The projections showed Amesbury growing by about 215 students, while Georgetown would lose around 83 and then stabilize at roughly 907–980 students in later years.

Facilities and staffing

- High school: The combined high-school enrollment was projected at about 655 students in 2027–28, which the presenters said could initially fit in Amesbury High School. They estimated the building could reach capacity in about six or seven years, potentially requiring expansion. They also cautioned that current space is used differently than it was in the past—for special education, AP courses, technology, and other purposes—so fitting students into the building could be difficult without affecting class sizes or course offerings.

- The presentation estimated the high-school student-teacher ratio could change from roughly 11:1 to 15:1; average class sizes of 17–18 could rise to around 22–24 if current curriculum options were maintained.
- Middle school: The scenario considered placing both districts' middle-school students in Georgetown, which would be possible if Georgetown high-school students moved to Amesbury. The combined middle-school enrollment was projected at about 645 by 2035—roughly 241 from Georgetown and 456 from Amesbury. That could fit in Georgetown, but would leave Amesbury Middle School underused. As with the high school, the presenters cautioned that classroom and curriculum needs might limit how well the enrollment numbers translate into actual space capacity.

Financial and labor considerations

- Amesbury currently receives nearly $4 million more in Chapter 70 funding than Georgetown; the presenters attributed part of the difference to Amesbury serving students with greater socioeconomic needs.
- The study cited higher operating and capital costs in Amesbury, per-pupil foundation spending of about $14,648 in Amesbury versus $12,983 in Georgetown, and an Amesbury annual debt-service burden about 3.5 times Georgetown's. Georgetown had about $13.5 million in outstanding school-project debt. The presenters noted that districts entering regionalization often keep existing debt separate, rather than transferring it to the new regional district.
- Combining districts would require reconciling salary schedules and bargaining units. Under the study's salary comparisons, Amesbury teacher salaries would require about $990,000 in upward adjustments, while Georgetown's would require about $40,000. For paraprofessionals, the estimated adjustments were about $10,000 in Amesbury and $48,000 in Georgetown. The presenters emphasized that employees' salaries could not be reduced.
- Combining central-office functions might reduce duplicated positions, but a regional district would also need certain roles, such as a treasurer and additional finance or bookkeeping capacity.
- The new regional district would need to arrange its own health insurance. How costs would be shared between the communities was not determined; the presenters said a regional agreement would need to set the apportionment method, often based on a rolling enrollment measure.

Academic comparison

- Georgetown showed higher overall elementary proficiency, particularly in grades 3–5 and in math and science.

- Amesbury showed stronger student growth in ELA and math, and stronger performance in many middle- and high-school assessments, including all grade 10 MCAS subjects. The largest cited difference was in grade 10 science, where Amesbury was ahead by 13 percentage points.
- Georgetown was described as having a traditional college-prep progression and a strong AP culture, with slightly higher SAT averages and AP pass rates. Amesbury had higher overall AP participation and a broader range of options—including dual enrollment, personalized pathways, career exploration, internships, and additional support services.
- The presenters characterized the districts' strengths as potentially complementary: Georgetown's early achievement and established AP culture alongside Amesbury's stronger secondary growth and broader programming. They said a thoughtfully planned regional grades 6–12 district might preserve and build on those strengths, but framed that as a possibility for consideration, not a conclusion that regionalization should proceed.

Bottom line: The study supplied data and identified tradeoffs—such as transportation costs, future facility capacity, salary harmonization, and how costs would be shared. It did not settle whether regionalization would be desirable or how an agreement would work. The chair described it as one piece of the district's broader long-range planning process and emphasized that further discussion and community input would be needed.

Dr. Jurist Levy moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Noyes. Passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the School Committee will be held on Monday October 5, 2026 at 7pm.

Information Technology update for Q4 2026 and Q1 2027

Summary

Over the last six months Amesbury's IT department has worked on multiple planned projects, improved the security posture of the district, and worked on strengthening the policies in place to keep the school district safe and secure.

This was the most successful start to a school year that we've had in my 4-year tenure with Amesbury. Ticket volume was low, and there were no major disruptions with Chromebook delivery and deployment.

Moving forward into the year 2027, a few projects should be addressed early so we can begin planning, Phone migration away from Comcast Voice Edge, Migrating the Middle School then the High School to Fortinet from Meraki, and tightening security protocols around student and staff access.

Projects Completed

- Updated the Public Address system for the High School
- Deployed 320 new Chromebooks for third and eighth grade
- Built and deployed a new Virtual Lab for High School STEM classwork
- Installed multiple new switches in the Amesbury School District Infrastructure environment
- Installed new outdoor WiFi for Cashman Elementary to comply with medical device needs

Upcoming Projects

- Migrate Amesbury Middle School network from Cisco Meraki to Fortinet
- Host District wide Technology Security training for all staff
- Install security cameras at Cashman Elementary
- Project kickoff and planning phase of School District phone migration

Policy Implementation:

- Implemented updated FERPA compliant Google Gemini to Middle School and High School students.
- Blocked all .IO websites for security reasons with exceptions for needed sites.

- Improved our year end/ year start process around Apple Certificate deployment for Ipads.
- Require a portal based workflow be submitted when asking for new equipment, software, or something that rises to the level of a “project”.

Proposed policy changes;

- Block student outbound and inbound email access outside the school domain.

  This will drastically reduce the security footprint. Exceptions can be made for individuals or groups as needed quickly and easily through google. There’s very limited reasons for students to need to send and receive email outside the domain, and in those specific cases we can create exceptions to allow access.

Final Thoughts

The dependance on technology is only increasing in the education space. This increase in dependance clarifies the importance of digital security in the modern age. As an exercise, picture the school district with all it’s digital devices and services. Now picture what happens if those devices and services suddenly were unavailable. The immediate and catastrophic results would be felt by every member of the staff. Add the uncertainty around AI and the potential inflexion point it possibly represents, and you are left with an area that is both vitally important to the daily workings of a School District and requires ever increasing human and infrastructure resources.

While I attempt to make fiscally responsible choices while not depriving the staff of the tools they need to work, I strongly urge the School Board to reflect on the current environment and what it takes to not only keep it healthy, but what is required when changes are proposed to the environment.

I try to keep an extremely transparent department, and my team is always available to consult and make recommendations. Our door is always open if anyone wants to either visit and chat with us or perform a “ride-along” to see what we do on a daily basis.

Georgetown-Amesbury Regionalization Feasibility Study

Based on available data through end of FY26

prepared by

tms
our team is your team

Background



Background

Started in the autumn of 2025, superintendents in Amesbury and Georgetown requested a feasibility study about the regionalization of the two districts.

This study looks at the the following areas as connected pieces of a puzzle:

- Finances
- Transportation
- Facilities
- Salaries
- Academics

Background

Assumptions

Superintendents gave TMS this suggested scenario.

- **Elementary schools** remain as is
  - **All remain open** and only serve the students in their towns
- **Regionalized middle school**
- **Regionalized high school**
- MS and HS could **split geographically**
  - MS occupying facilities in one town and the high school located in the other town.

What this this feasibility study is

and what it is not

This feasibility study **IS** a:

- **Starting point** for conversations about whether regionalization makes sense
- **Collection of data** from which conclusions can be drawn
- **Snapshot of where the districts were** based on the superintendents' ask

This feasibility study **IS NOT** a:

- **Recommendation** in one direction or another
- **Regionalization study**, complete with community input and DESE involvement
- Study of **school culture and local community** or the impact regionalization could have

Transportation



Transportation

- Distance from **Georgetown High School to Amesbury High School is approximately 15 miles**
  - Estimated travel time of approximately **23 minutes by car, via I-95 and Rt. 133**
- Regionalized district would **need four (4) single tier buses** dedicated to those High School routes to minimize ride time
- Four **bus routes** travel time would range between **48 minutes and 69 minutes**
- Distances, routes, and times for middle school travel would be similar

Enrollment Trends



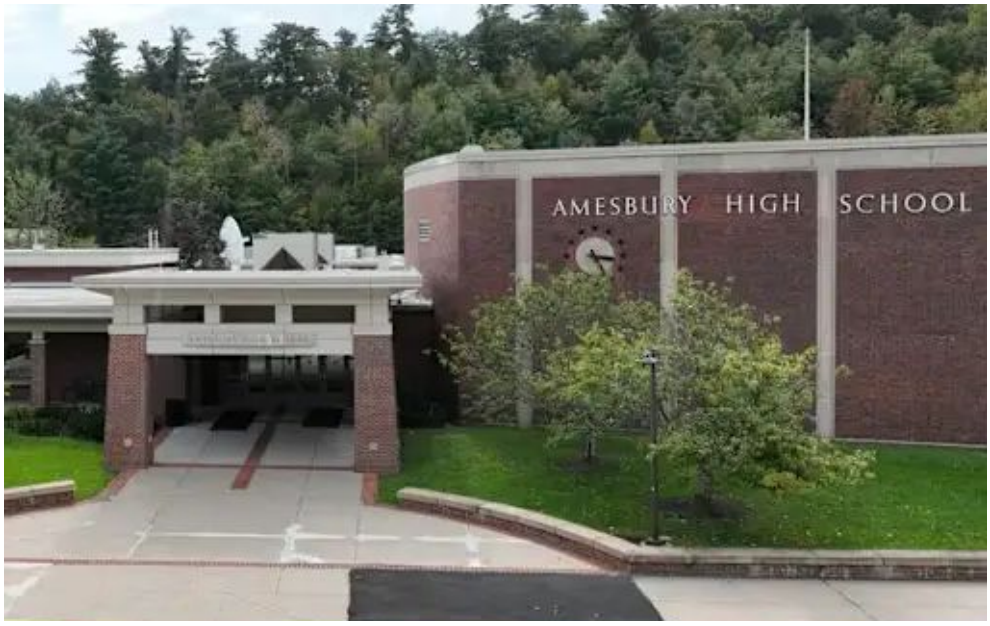
Enrollment Trends

Based on most recent NESDEC data and projections

In the next 10 years, NESDEC data suggests:

- **Amesbury**
  - Gains approximately **215 students**
  - **Enrollment increases** almost every year
  - PK-12 enrollment **exceeds 2,000 students** by 2031-32
  - Growth driven by larger elementary cohorts moving through the system
- **Georgetown**
  - Loses approximately **83 students**
  - **Enrollment falls** below 1,000 students beginning in 2027-28.
  - **Stabilizes around 970-980** students in the later years.

High School Facilities



High School Facilities

Based on volume, not educational space use trends

Based on size of high school, the only "fit" would be for Amesbury High School to be the regional high school

- In 2008 (**20 years ago**) the AHS student enrollment was 729 students
- **Combined AHS and Georgetown High School** enrollment for 2027-28 would be approximately **655 students.**
- Theoretically, the combination of GHA and AHS at the AHS building is feasible.
- After year 6/7, it **would be necessary to expand** current AHS facilities

High School Facilities

Class sizes

- Amesbury High School has a **Teacher/Student Ratio of 11:1**
  - **Adding 166 Georgetown students**, Student/Teacher ratio changes
    - approximately **15:1**
    - **+ 33.95 %**
- Amesbury High School has an average **Class Size of 17-18**
  - **Adding 166 Georgetown students**, Student/Teacher ratio increases Class Size
    - approximately **22/24**
    - **+ 31.4 %**

High School Facilities

Based on volume, not educational space use trends

The Caveat

Building and classroom utilization has changed significantly in the past 20 years.

- More dedicated space for special education related services and curriculum electives and class size reductions.
- Challenging to develop a master schedule which maintains the current curriculum options and not significantly increasing class sizes

Middle School Facilities



Middle School Facilities

Splitting the schools geographically, Georgetown would host the middle school

- Georgetown High School space could be utilized for a **combined GMS and AMS**
- **In 2010**, the Georgetown HS/MS combined **student enrollment was 852 students.**
- **Projecting to 10 years (2035)**, combined enrollment would be approximately **645 students.**
  - Georgetown: 241
  - Amesbury: 456
- Consolidation of the middle schools would not require construction of additional classroom space for the foreseeable future

Middle School Facilities

The same caveat applies

Middle School Facilities

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Financials



Financials

- Amesbury v Georgetown
  - Amesbury receives nearly **$4 million more in Chapter 70** funding than Georgetown
  - Amesbury serves a student population with **greater socioeconomic needs**
  - Amesbury's historical reports show that **out-of-district tuition** has, at times, **exceeded 40% of the district's entire special education budget**
    - Georgetown's recent special education review similarly identifies OOD tuition and transportation as significant cost pressures
  - Amesbury carries significantly **higher operating and capital costs**

Financials

- **Per-Pupil Foundation Spending**
  - Amesbury: $14,648
  - Georgetown: $12,983
- **Debt Service Key Findings**
  - Amesbury annual debt-service burden: roughly 3.5 times greater in both principal and interest payments during FY2026
  - Georgetown outstanding school-project debt balance: $13.5 million
  - Amesbury's total long-term debt balance cannot be determined from the information provided

Salaries & Benefits



Salaries & Benefits

Payroll contracts would need to be merged and renegotiated, to unify under new regionalization contract.

This effects:

- Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- Maintenance
- Central Office

Salaries and benefits would need to be adjusted.

Salaries & Benefits

Teachers and paraprofessionals

In most regionalization scenarios, **salaries and benefits are adjusted** to the steps and categories to whichever is higher.

In this case, this could mean:

- Amesbury paying an **additional $990,126 in teacher salaries**
- Georgetown paying an **additional $40,698 in teacher salaries**
- Amesbury paying an **additional $9,587 in paraprofessional salaries**
- Georgetown paying an **additional $48,091 in paraprofessional salaries**

Salaries & Benefits

Central Office

Consolidation of duplicate administrative functions:

- Superintendents
- Administrative Assistants
- Business Management
- Human Resources
- Facilities
- Athletic Director

Estimated savings from central office consolidation is approximately **$357,000**.

Academics & Culture



Academics & Culture

Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement (Elementary School)

FY2025 MCAS results

- **Georgetown Public Schools demonstrates higher overall proficiency rates in the elementary grade**s and across Grades 3–8 as a whole, particularly in mathematics and science
- **Georgetown** students consistently perform above Amesbury students in Grades 3–5, suggesting **strong early academic preparation.**

Academics & Culture

Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement (Middle and High School)

FY2025 MCAS results suggest that **Amesbury students make substantial academic gains** as they progress through secondary school.

- **Amesbury outperforms Georgetown** in most **Grade 6–10** assessments, including all Grade 10 MCAS subjects
- The largest difference occurs in **Grade 10 Science**, where **Amesbury exceeds Georgetown by 13 percentage points**

Academics & Culture

Student Growth

Student Growth

Student Growth Percentile (SGP) measures academic progress relative to students with similar prior achievement, providing important context for proficiency data.

- **Georgetown reports higher proficiency rates**
- **Amesbury demonstrates stronger student growth** in both English Language Arts and Mathematics

Findings suggest that Amesbury is producing greater academic growth over time, particularly during the middle school years.

Academics & Culture

Curriculum and Academic Programming

Curriculum and Academic Programming

Both districts are aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and provide multiple levels of academic rigor through college prep, honors, and Advanced Placement coursework.

- Georgetown
  - **Traditional college-preparatory model**
  - **Clearly defined progression** from College Preparatory courses to Honors and Advanced Placement
  - Students **frequently complete multiple AP courses**
- Amesbury
  - **Broader and more flexible educational model**
  - **Traditional programming, plus**:
    - **Dual enrollment opportunities**
    - **Innovation High School**
    - **Personalized learning pathways**
    - **Career exploration experiences**
    - **Expanded support services**

Academics & Culture

College Readiness

Both districts demonstrate strong college readiness indicators.

- Georgetown
  - Slightly higher SAT averages
  - Higher overall Advanced Placement pass rate
  - Students also tend to enroll in multiple AP courses
- Amesbury
  - Slightly greater overall AP participation
  - Exceptional performance in several history, psychology, statistics, and mathematics.
  - Broader program offerings provide students with multiple avenues for advanced coursework beyond AP participation

Academics & Culture

Regionalized educational Opportunities

A regionalized Grades 6–12 district would combine these complementary strengths to offer:

- **Expanded Advanced Placement, dual enrollment,** and **career pathway** opportunities
- **Greater access to specialized electives** and academic programming
- **Enhanced special education** and **student support** services
- Increased **extracurricular, fine arts, STEM,** and **leadership** opportunities
- **Greater flexibility** in meeting the diverse academic needs and postsecondary goals of students

Questions?

