School Committee

MINUTES OF THE CHELSEA SCHOOL COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

October 7, 2026

APPROVED NOVEMBER 5, 2026

The Chelsea School Committee held a meeting on October 7, 2026, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 500 Broadway, Chelsea.

Members Present: Mayra Balderas, Kati Cabral, Claryangeliz Covas Caraballo, Jonathan Gomez-Pereira, Lucia Henriquez, Shawn O'Regan, Dr. Sarah Neville, and JAKE Small

Also Present: Superintendent Dr. Almudena G. Abeyta, Chief of Staff & Wellness Dr. Aaron Jennings, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Blake-Canty, Chief Academic Officer Adam Deleidi, Officer of Innovation and Opportunity Malik Howshan, Human Resources Director Dr. Christine Lee, Chief Finance & Operations Officer Billie Jo Turner, and School Committee Clerk Veronica Dyer-Medina.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call for Attendance:

Mr. Small	Present
Ms. Covas Caraballo	Present
Ms. Henriquez	Present
Mr. O'Regan	Present
Ms. Balderas	Present
Dr. Neville	Present
Ms. Cabral	Present
Ms. Hernandez	Absent
Mr. Gomez-Pereira	Present

Having 8 school committee members present, and 1 member absent, the meeting proceeded.

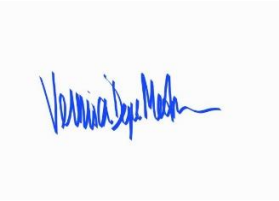
Public Comment:

- Nadia de Villeda-Parent expressed her gratitude for having early meeting budget meeting. She requested transparency with numbers so that parents can help advocate.
- Kellyanne Curley-Chelsea Teachers Union-ELC ML teacher-encouraged early planning and sharing line items for transparency.
- Zachary Ryan-Parent expressed gratitude for having early meeting and encouraged transparency, engagement, and more questions from school committee members. He ended by saying the city would be asked for more money.
- Vanesa Mercado-Mendoza-Chelsea Teachers Union Vice-President-Kelly School teacher-shared she wanted to see the impacts of enrollment loss and how more advocacy at city, state, and larger levels needs to happen and pushing everyone to work together.

Report of the Superintendent of Schools: Preliminary FY2028 Budget Projection

Dr. Abeyta shared the challenges facing the FY2028 budget such as: enrollment decline by 300 students, SOA funds leveling, rising salary expenditures, increased charter school tuition, increased health costs, higher transportation and special education expenses, higher food service costs, increased utility costs. She explained that as a community we need to get in front of this. She shared that she is concerned because as a school system, we are heading in the right direction, but now people are fearful and there is tension amongst adults and this impacts children. She called what is happening a "perfect storm". She added that if the district and community did not advocate, then they will lose more teachers, administrators, and programming. She explained that in two years the district has lost 650 students which equates to a loss of $22,000 per student.
Ms. Turner then broke down the projections of cost estimates for staff steps, healthcare, special education tuition, transportation, and utilities. She explained that the district is up to go out to bid for transportation, Xerox, and other utilities, which could increase costs. She stated that DESE does have a taskforce for assisting districts in keeping costs for transportation comparable during bids.
Members asked follow up questions and shared concerns; all coming to a consensus that the funding for schools is not equitable and the foundation formulas need to change. Dr. Neville spoke about the inflation problem and how this is hurting gateway cities. Members agreed that advocacy has to be loud and encouraged joint conversations with the city and state. Mr. Small stated that this will call for an unprecedented civic engagement. He added that we will need to ask for more funding, prioritize spending around students having high quality education.
Dr. Abeyta shared that the district will begin planning community conversations in November and get information out early. Ms. Covas Caraballo added that it would be great to have meetings with admin, teachers, parents, etc and different groups in the community. Mr. Gomez-Pereira also mentioned that the city should also look for other opportunities in development to bring more funds in to help provide better opportunities for our students.
Adjournment: At this time Mr. Small motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Balderas seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 6:52 pm.

Recorded by



Veronica Dyer-Medina
School Committee Clerk

Recording of the meeting can be found here, courtesy of the Chelsea Community Cable YouTube channel.

BUDGET FY 2028



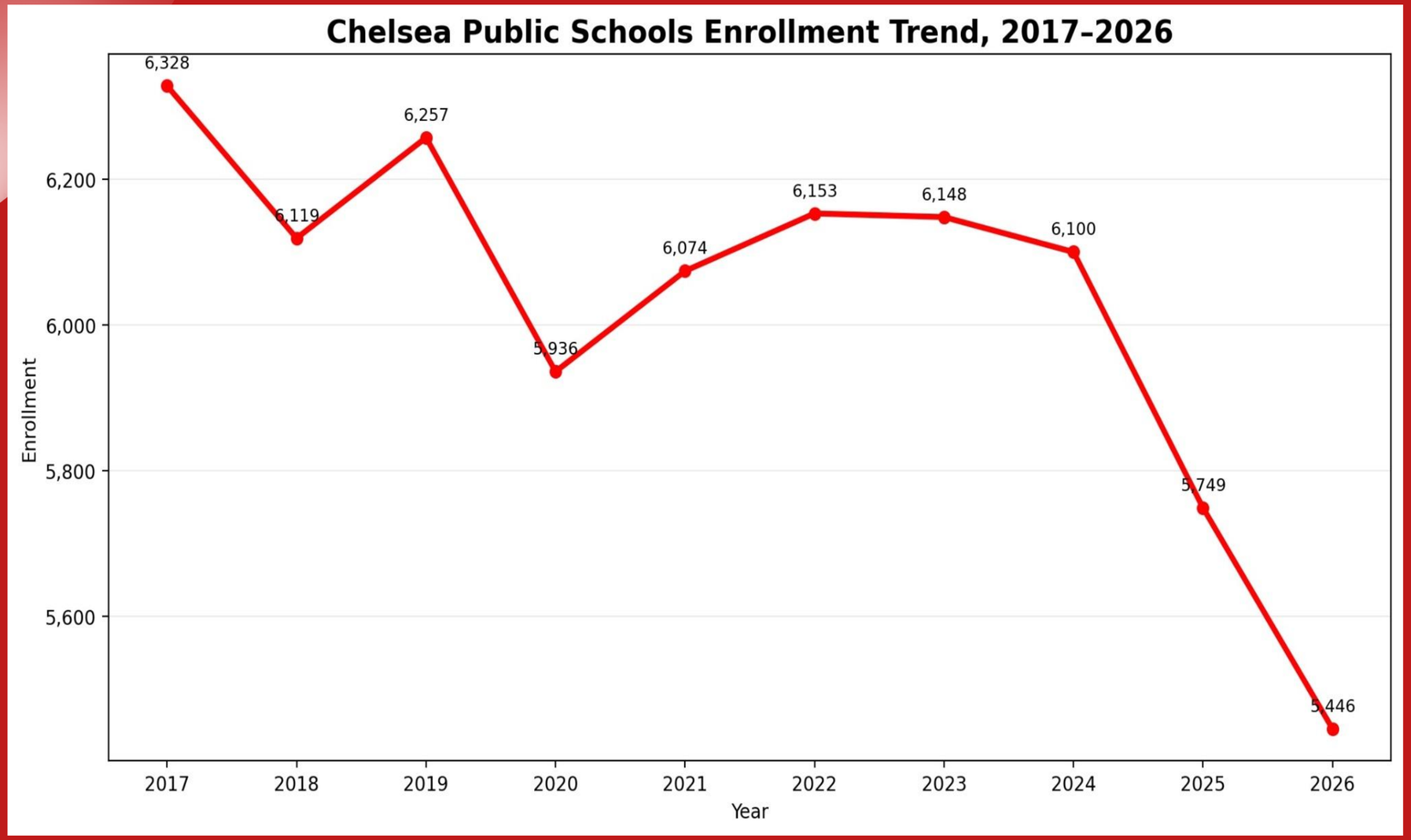
BRIDGE TO SUCCESS
Chelsea Public Schools
Chelsea, Massachusetts

THE CHALLENGE



- **Enrollment declined by 275 students**
- Student Opportunity Act funding leveling
- Rising salary expenditures
- Increasing charter school tuition obligations
- Increasing health insurance costs
- Higher transportation expenses
- Growing special education tuition costs
- Higher Food Service Costs
- Increasing utility costs

Enrollment Projections



Baseline Expenditure Forecast 10/7/2026

Item	Preliminary September - October 2027	
Enrollment	$6,600,000	Down 300 students $22k each
Staff Costs: Steps, COLA	$6,700,000	Recent raises: COA/Step & Lane Increases
Staff Costs, Healthcare, Pension, etc.	$2,500,000	Rate for health increase not available yet so est only but City has warned this will be high
Special Ed Tuition Increase	$1,500,000	Est annual 5% rate increase for OOD placements; this does NOT include more students being outplaced
Transportation	$2,500,000	This is a bid year and we have been warned to expect 40% jump but with minor offset due to declining enrollment
Utilities, insurance, subs	$2,500,000	Contractual increases reflected for utilities and subs
	$22,300,000	Estimated Net Shortage



Questions?

THANK YOU