NEWBURYPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE BUSINESS MEETING

Senior/Community Center, 331 High Street, Newburyport, MA 01950

Wednesday, October 14, 2026

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mayor Sean Reardon called the School Committee Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee to order at 6:32PM. Roll call found all members present, except Juliet Walker.

Public Comments:

Doug Willcox, 23 Marquand Lane, Newburyport (School Committee Policy EEAA / Hale St.)

Student Recognition

High School Senior Thomas Rich was presented with the 2026-2027 Certificate of Academic Excellence. This award is designed by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendent's (MASS) to award academic excellence and is given each year to a high school senior who has distinguished themselves in the pursuit of excellence during their high school career.

Warrant

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

VOTED: to approve the Warrant in the amount of $888,785.19 as presented.

Warrant FY27.16	$874,745.15
A-Warrant	$ 14,040.04
	$888,785.19

Motion Passed
Julia Walker absent

Minutes

Motion:

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

VOTED: to accept the minutes for the September 23, 2026 School Committee meeting.

Motion Passed
Juliet Walker absent

School Committee Student Representative Report

Student representatives Anna Pervier and Logan MacKnight provided the student report which included 3rd graders learning about monarch butterflies with NHS Conservation Biology students, 5th graders planting oysters alongside members of the MA Oysters Project, 7th graders examining local eco systems at Sandy Point, college information sessions at NHS, and the upcoming Kids For Kenya Field Day fundraiser by the high school. (attached)

Solar Installation Presentation – Bresnahan Elementary School

Molly Ettenborough, Recycling & Energy Manager for the City of Newburyport, presented Solect Energy's proposal for a solar installation project at the Bresnahan Elementary School. Dave Bisson, Business Development Director for Solect Energy, participated virtually to answer questions. Their presentation included company background information, components of the solar and storage power purchase agreement, a site plan showing proposed locations for solar panel installations, and a review of trends/flows of solar production/rates, electricity costs/savings etc. Solar panel life expectancy, possible installation timeline and the state's incentive program were also discussed.

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to approve the solar installation program at the Bresnahan roof.

Motion Passed
Juliet Walker absent

MASC Annual Conference Delegate

Mayor Reardon explained that an official voting delegate must be selected to represent them at the annual conference for the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) being held this year in Danvers on November 4-6th.

Motion:

On a motion by Mayor Reardon and seconded by Lauren Eramo it was

VOTED: to designate Vice Chair Juliet Walker as the School Committee's delegate to the MASC Annual Conference taking place in Danvers, MA on November 4-6th.

Motion Passed
Juliet Walker absent

MASC Resolutions Review

Mayor Reardon and School Committee members reviewed this year's resolutions that will be presented at the annual MASC Conference. Members will vote on the resolutions at the October 28th meeting.

Reschedule February 24, 2027 meeting date

Mayor Reardon proposed rescheduling the School Committee Business meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2027 to Tuesday, February 23, 2027 in order to avoid a conflict with the State of the City Address, which is typically scheduled on the fourth Wednesday in February (i.e. February 24, 2027).

Motion:

On a motion by Lauren Eramo and seconded by Kathleen Shaw it was

VOTED: to change the February 24th School Committee Business meeting to February 23rd.

Motion Passed
Juliet Walker absent

Modify 2026-2027 School Committee Business Meeting Schedule

The Joint City Council and School Committee meeting date has been scheduled for November 17, 2026. Due to new budget timelines, the FY28 Preliminary Budget Presentations and Public Budget Hearing meeting topics need to be moved.

Motion:

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

VOTED: to move topic *Public FY28 Preliminary Budget Presentations* to February 10th and move topic *Public Budget Hearing* to March 10th.

Motion Passed
Juliet Walker absent

High School Synthetic Turf Field Update

Superintendent Sean Gallagher provided an update regarding the current condition of the synthetic field at the High School. His presentation included an overview of the field history usage, specialized maintenance techniques used to groom and clean the field, an explanation of GMAX testing, a history of recent grooming/cleaning/testing dates and the company that provided these services. The Superintendent also explained Gmax measurements and testing results, as well as anticipated next steps. He also credited Athletic Director Anna DeVitto, Facilities Director James McSweeney and his Maintenance team for their efforts scheduling and completing all the specialized field maintenance each year.

SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

Finance Subcommittee

Andrew Boger stated they will meet on October 15th at 9:00AM.

Policy Subcommittee

Kathleen Shaw stated the next meeting will be held on Monday, October 26th at 6:30PM at Central.

Teaching & Learning Subcommittee

Breanna Higgins reviewed the Progress Monitoring Check report presented at their last T&L meeting, which is the first general progress monitoring check using the new format for this year.

SEPAC

Kathleen Shaw stated they will have a Transition Planning presentation on Thursday, October 22nd at 6:00PM in the Nock.

NEF

Lauren Eramo stated the NEF met on September 23rd. The NEF will hold their annual auction on November 14th from 6:00 – 9:00PM at City Hall.

Nock/Molin Traffic Circulation Advisory Committee Update

John Ricci stated they will hold another meeting.

Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent's report covered the following:

- ❖ Northern Essex Community College Informational Meeting: The college held an informational meeting for regional superintendents to discuss expanding student access to career-connected learning. Superintendent Gallagher, along with Dr. Erin Hobbs and Finance Director Ethan Manning, will represent our district on the steering committee.
- ❖ Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Site Visit: The Superintendent participated in a site visit with the SRTS State Coordinator Cecilia Leung to evaluate traffic circulation and pedestrian safety at the Nock/Molin campus. Ms. Leung also met with the District Wellness Coordinator Amy Heath regarding a bike and pedestrian safety curriculum at the high school.
- ❖ Coast Guard JROTC Update: Superintendent Gallagher and his administrative team met with Program Director Clay Cromer and his team to discuss next steps to set up the Coast Guard JROTC program at the high school in 2027-2028.
- ❖ SEPAC Meeting: A "Meet & Greet" was held for parents / caregivers on October 1st to meet the district's special education staff and to receive an overview of special education programming.
- ❖ Superintendent's Executive Assistant Position Update: The Superintendent announced that Melissa Cody has been selected to fill the Superintendent's Executive Assistant position upon Joanne Yelle's retirement.

New Business

- Breanna Higgins suggested that the Policy Subcommittee look into how the district determines what a hazardous route to school is and how to qualify for an exemption to bus fees.
- Mayor Reardon mentioned that half the 8th grade class toured City Hall and the Police Station recently, and participated in a mock City Council meeting. He thanked Councilor Beth Trach for organizing this activity.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

On a motion by John Ricci and seconded by Andrew Boger it was

VOTED: to adjourn the Business meeting of the Newburyport School Committee at 8:26PM and move to Executive Session for the purpose of discussing possible litigation and/or legal matters, and will not reconvene in Open Session.

Motion Passed

Roll Call

Mayor Reardon	Yes
Juliet Walker	Absent
Breanna Higgins	Yes
Kathleen Shaw	Yes
Andrew Boger	Yes
Lauren Eramo	Yes
John Ricci	Yes

October 14, 2026

Mayor Reardon, Superintendent Gallagher, members of the School Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening.

I want to begin by saying how impressed I have been with Newburyport Public Schools during my time as a Nock parent. My family has had a very positive experience, and I am grateful for the work you do.

I am here tonight because of School Committee Policy EEAA, "Walkers and Riders." That policy allows an exception to normal transportation guidelines when a student must travel through a hazardous area to and from school.

Over the past week, I have been trying to understand how that provision is actually applied. This past Saturday, I submitted a request asking NPS to evaluate whether a safe walking or bicycling route to Nock is available to my son when that route requires travel along Hale Street. I have provided you with a copy of my email.

Yesterday, the Transportation Coordinator very kindly called and offered my son a bus pass. We already have one, and I appreciate the offer. But the bus pass is not really the question I am trying to answer.

My question is whether Hale Street has ever been formally evaluated under the hazardous-area provision of EEAA, and if not, how such an evaluation is supposed to occur.

This matters beyond my own family. Hale Street is a route used, or potentially used, by many West End students. The City itself has acknowledged that the corridor lacks continuous pedestrian and bicycle accommodation and that families have raised concerns about student access for years.

I am not asking the School Committee to design or rebuild Hale Street. I am asking that the district clarify how its own policy applies to students whose route to school includes it, and that any determination be documented.

Thank you for your time.

Douglas Willcox
Newburyport, MA

Gmail **Doug Willcox <dougwillcox@gmail.com>**

Request under Policy EEAA – Hale Street route to Nock Middle School

Doug Willcox <dougwillcox@gmail.com> Sat, Oct 10, 2026 at 6:13 PM
To: transportation@newburyport.k12.ma.us

Dear Transportation Coordinator,

I am writing to submit a formal request under School Committee Policy EEAA, "Walkers and Riders," concerning my son, Theo Willcox, who is a seventh-grade student at Nock Middle School.

We live in the West End, and a walking or bicycling route from our neighborhood to Nock requires travel along Hale Street. I am requesting that Newburyport Public Schools evaluate whether a safe walking or bicycling route to school is available to him under the hazardous-area provision of Policy EEAA.

I would appreciate a written determination identifying the route evaluated, the criteria used to determine whether a safe route is available, and the district's conclusion.

I would also appreciate knowing the expected timeline for completing the evaluation.

Because Theo is in seventh grade, if the hazardous-area provision of Policy EEAA does not apply to students in grades 7–12, please let me know in writing and identify the policy basis for that limitation.

I have attached a photograph illustrating the conditions on Hale Street that prompted my request.

Thank you for your attention to this.

Please confirm receipt when convenient.

Best,

Doug Willcox
NPS parent
23 Marquand Ln,
Newburyport, MA 01950



Student Report for School Committee October 14, 2026

Submitted by: Anna Pervier & Logan MacKnight

Location: Senior Center

Bresnahan News:

Third graders recently collaborated with NHS Conservation Biology students, who shared their knowledge and experience caring for monarchs. Students have been outside, learning hands on about monarchs and how to protect them. They raised a few of their own monarchs and are preparing to release them to start their migration south. 3rd graders love this partnership with the high school students, and look forward to more projects in the future.

The NEF sponsored book vending machine is now officially tied to the Fishtank literacy curriculum this year! Classes earn books by completing and celebrating high-quality written work like unit projects and target tasks. Once a class meets its goal, they will be celebrated over the loudspeaker and invited down to the vending machine to show off their work and pick their books! The Bresnahan is grateful to the NEF for sponsoring this and providing a book for every child. We are excited to foster a love of reading while helping students take true pride in their writing!

Molin News:

A 5th grade class recently had an incredible opportunity to participate in oyster planting alongside members of the Mass Oysters Project! After volunteering with the organization this summer, Mrs. Trail collaborated with our STEM teacher, Kristen Daigle, to develop meaningful classroom lessons and plan this hands-on experience. Molin students are the first students to participate in this important project, making the experience even more special! Opportunities like this demonstrate the tremendous impact of connecting classroom learning to real-world experiences. Students not only deepen their understanding of science and environmental stewardship, but also see firsthand how their learning can make a meaningful difference in the world around them. What a wonderful example of learning coming to life!

Nock Middle School News:

6th Grade students have acclimated quite nicely into the Nock, building strong relationships through advisory, reading habits, a love of literacy and exploring new mathematical concepts.

7th Grade students are back out in the field at Sandy Point this week, exploring and examining local ecosystems through hands-on learning.

8th Grade students will be on their annual Goose Chase this week, continuing to build relationships, strengthen teamwork, and develop the whole child through shared experiences.

High School News:

The College and Career Center has been a busy place this fall. Mr. Ribaudo-Smith scheduled representatives from over 80 colleges and universities to talk with interested students this fall as they explore possibilities for after high school. In the first 5 weeks of school, 39 of these information sessions have already taken place. Mr. Smith and the guidance department have commented how great it has been to see so many juniors and seniors (and some sophomores) taking advantage of this resource. Mr. Smith said, having the center right in the cafeteria has been super helpful.

This Saturday is the ALS Cup. All proceeds will be donated to the ALS Foundation. The girls soccer game starts at 5:00 PM and will be followed by the boys at 7:00 PM. Pre-ticket sales are $5, and $8 at the gate.

The student officers of the Global Citizenship applied for a grant and presented at the last *Awesomeness Foundation* meeting where they were the recipients of a $600 grant which will be used to cover costs for the upcoming **Kids For Kenya Field Day Fundraiser** being held on the grounds of the Bresnahan Elementary School on Oct 24th from 12 - 3PM.

https://www.newburyportnews.com/news/local_news/young-environmental-stewards-in-the-making/article_05c8c717-b8d6-4ef8-94ef-61c7c45af263.html

CENTERPIECE

Young environmental stewards in the making

By Matt Petry | mpetry@northofboston.com
Oct 2, 2026

1 of 6



From left, students Lucia St. Cyr, Carson Carney and Avery Griffin help members of the Massachusetts Oyster Project p
Refuge.

MATT PETRY/Staff photo

NEWBURYPORT — Wading through cool waters, preparing mesh bags to protect baby oysters and shucking a few grown ones to learn more about them, local fifth-grade students were all laughs and smiles Wednesday morning as they visited Parker River National Wildlife Reserve.

The field trip gave them an opportunity to participate in a pilot oyster restoration field experience in partnership with the Massachusetts Oyster Project.

Arriving at Lot 6 about 8:30 a.m., Molin Upper Elementary Principal Tara Rossi, STEM teacher Kristen Daigle, fifth-grade teacher Martha Trail and her students trekked around 20 minutes down the Stage Island Trail, arriving at a cutout taking them to the beach.

There, along with members of the Mass Oyster Project, they helped plant baby oysters – known as spat – that have been growing in a Newburyport upweller next to the harbormaster's building.

"The whole idea is that Mass Oyster wants the kids to be environmental stewards," Daigle said. "They're going to be one day taking care of this whole ecosystem, and they want them invested at a young age."

The Mass Oyster Project is a nonprofit dedicated to increasing native oyster populations in Massachusetts by restoring oyster reefs throughout coastal ecosystems to improve water quality, coastal resilience and biodiversity.

Recently, the group worked with the city to establish the oyster upweller, otherwise known as an oyster hatchery, inside what looks like an oversized white cooler.

The upweller has served as an incubator for approximately 60,000 baby oysters. Water from the Merrimack River is continuously pumped through the upweller while volunteers care for and monitor the growing oysters.

The baby oysters, mostly the size of pebbles, filter water as it rushes through the upweller. By filtering the water, oysters grow by consuming nutrients, according to massoyster.org.

As they get older, oysters are sorted into buckets by size so that they grow and consume nutrients at similar rates.

A single oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water a day, removing harmful pollutants. Removing pollutants reduce algal blooms and ocean acidification. Oysters will filter nitrogen to balance the pH of the water surrounding an oyster reef.

Students had a variety of activities once at the shore, with some dressed in bathing suits and taking the opportunity to enter the water up to their waists to help plant the oysters.

Others on land worked on varying stations, including one that saw adults and students working together to transport spat to mesh bags that would then go in the water, with the mesh ensuring the babies would not get eaten over the winter.

Fifth-grader Nathan Walker said his highlight was putting the spat into the bags, sharing he was glad to be helping make the ecosystem healthier.

“I’m looking forward to seeing how the waters in this habitat get less polluted, so it’s healthier waters,” Walker said.

Another station saw students using small knives to shuck open oysters. Fifth-grader Weston Traister said it was his favorite part of the day.

“You have to look for the back and find a ledge, then crack it open,” Traister said.

Fellow student James Carpenter said he was on something of a side quest while shucking oysters.

“When they told us about it, I was thinking, ‘Oh, I could just get free pearls,’” Carpenter said.

While he did not have luck finding any pearls, he still said he was having a lot of fun and was grateful that his teachers took them on the trip.

“It beats writing two paragraphs a day,” he said.

Watching over the students as they shucked, Rossi said it was an amazing experience watching the kids become so invested.

“I honestly feel like this is the stuff kids should be doing, getting out and having real life experiences that’s connected to what they’re learning about,” Rossi said.

Mass Oyster Project leader Andy Rosenberg spoke about how important the organization feels it is to get youths involved.

“All of this that we’re looking at is going to be theirs,” Rosenberg said. “They’re inheriting it, and we want to give it to them in the best shape we can. And when I say the best shape, I mean the healthiest Plum Island Sound that you can imagine. Putting oysters in the water goes in that direction.”

Matt Petry covers Amesbury and Salisbury for The Daily News of Newburyport. Email him at: mpetry@northofboston.com.

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