AMESBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

October 5, 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/6ac91164ab378e00023ee383?page=PLAYLIST

I. Call to Order/Mission Statement/Pledge of Allegiance – Dr. Jurist Levy read the mission statement and led the committee in the pledge.

II. Comments by Visitors & Delegations (1:16) - *No Comments*

III. Communications & Reports (2:44)

A. Educational Leadership - Dr. Zadravec presented his Superintendent's Report, highlighting the latest newsletter, key staffing updates, community initiatives, and major facilities projects:

- **Community Engagement & Staff Professional Development**: Dr. Zadravec commended Dr. Jessica Pepple and Cashman Elementary Principal Dr. Amy Mitchell for facilitating a well-attended community forum focused on addressing and preventing dehumanizing language. Building on this work in partnership with the Mass Partnerships for Youth and the Amesbury Racial and Social Justice Group, the district is launching an in-house, six-week professional development course for all district staff based on Zaretta Hammond's book, Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain.
- **Early Childhood Education & Childcare RFP**: The district has paused the previous middle-school-focused childcare RFP to evaluate hosting an in-district daycare at Amesbury High School. The expanded model aims to support staff and community needs while establishing an early childhood career and technical education (CTE) pathway for high school students. A revised RFP is targeted for release in December with a planned launch for Fall 2027, requiring minimal physical renovations.
- **Facilities & Operations**: The Amesbury High School baseball field renovation is nearing final completion, with contractor punch-list items expected to wrap up shortly, pending minor hardware for batting cages.
- **Special Education & SEPAC Collaboration**: District leadership continues to strengthen its partnership with SEPAC, holding joint meetings with administration

to establish clear goals around trust, policy compliance, and transparent communication.

B. Student Advisory Council - Brooke Woodsom

- **Student Activities Fair**: The high school hosted a successful activities fair for freshmen and sophomores to explore school clubs and extracurricular opportunities, with strong student attendance and engagement.
- **Community Events & Fundraising**: SAC is preparing for its annual elementary-focused "Halloween Bash" on October 24 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM in the Amesbury High School cafeteria. Proceeds from the event will help fund upcoming school-wide events, including the Winter Carnival.
- **Communications & Governance**: To improve outreach, SAC appointed a dedicated social media manager to oversee council communications. Additionally, Mayor Gove noted that district leadership will coordinate with SAC advisers to schedule the joint School Committee and SAC meetings for the school year.

C. Whittier Tech Representative Report

- **Enrollment & Orientation**: Whittier Tech welcomed 29 incoming Amesbury freshmen (11 receiving special education services under IDEA), bringing total Amesbury enrollment to 112 students across grades 9–12.
- **Building Committee & MSBA Feasibility**: The committee is advancing its MSBA-approved feasibility study, managing immediate facility repairs, and drafting an RFS to hire a Project Manager by January. Discussions regarding potential site partnerships with Northern Essex Community College remain ongoing, subject to state property (DCAM) regulations.
- **Regional Agreement Committee (RAC)**: The RAC meets October 22 to continue discussions on capital cost apportionment formulas among member communities.
- **Admissions Policy Adjustments**: Following the rollout of the state-mandated lottery system, Whittier Tech proposes tying annual ninth-grade seat allocations to each town's graduating class size to prevent overcrowding. Under this adjustment, Amesbury's incoming ninth-grade seat allocation will adjust from 29 to 27 seats next year, maintaining overall city enrollment near its historical average of 110 students.

D. SEPAC Report - *No Representative Present*

E. Subcommittees

1. Finance & Facilities - Mr. Omohundro summarized recent subcommittee activity, including the authorization of two prior-year (FY26) warrants and ongoing physical plant projects across district campuses:

    - **Infrastructure & Signage**: AMS and AHS are set to replace 45 worn traffic and parking signs. An HVAC compressor replacement at Cashman Elementary is complete, while parking lot re-striping at Shay and

Cashman is deferred until a school break to avoid operational disruptions. AHS baseball field renovations are nearing final closeout.

- **Capital Planning & Strategic Overlap**: The subcommittee is reviewing capital planning, facilities dashboards, and strategic budget sustainability. Committee members noted significant overlap between Finance & Facilities and Policy, Personnel, & Strategy regarding long-term planning, proposing a joint "meeting of the whole" workshop to align efforts.
- **City Capital Submissions**: Mayor Gove highlighted that department capital request forms are due mid-October for integration into the city's overall capital plan created with the Collins Center, advising the committee to establish a schedule to review those requests alongside district budget planning.

2. Curriculum, Inclusion, & Community Engagement

- **Community Engagement & Communication:** The subcommittee officially relaunched the Amesbury Public School Spotlight Award, designed to recognize students, educators, staff, nurses, and community partners quarterly. Promotional flyers and QR codes are being distributed across district communications and social media. Mayor Gove suggested archiving past award recipients on the updated district website to showcase community contributions. Additional communication goals include a district website refresh and an upcoming technology survey led by the Director of Teaching & Learning to gather feedback on screen time, mobile device use, and AI.
- **Academic Achievement & Reporting:** Strategies to monitor academic trends include analyzing student achievement data, reviewing accountability metrics, and hosting an upcoming "Curriculum 101" presentation for the full board. The district will also present a comprehensive review of bullying, discipline, and community-building programs in November, with Mr. Noyes suggesting the inclusion of hazing data. Subcommittee members committed to conducting two individual school site visits per academic year.

3. Policy, Personnel, & Strategy - Dr. Jurist Levy reported that the committee had not met since September 8. Its next meeting is scheduled for October 11, where discussions will focus on strategic financial stabilization strategies to prepare early input for the upcoming budget cycle.

4. Joint Education - Dr. Jurist Levy noted no new updates since the August meeting, with the next Joint Education Subcommittee session scheduled for October 22.

F. Requests of Committee

- Mr. Noyes asked about registering for the MASC conference.

- Mr. Noyes requested to receive some more information from each school's councils.

IV. New Business (34:44)

I. Policy Review: INTERACTING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ENGAGED IN CIVIL LAW ENFORCEMENT (PROTECT ACT) - Second reading of the proposed policy regarding interaction with law enforcement officers engaged in civil law enforcement, drafted in response to the state's Protect Act.

- Dr. Jurist Levy recommended updating the non-discrimination statement in the policy's opening paragraph to ensure full compliance with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) civil rights guidelines. Following feedback from a recent DESE Instructional Management Review (IMR)—a recurring state audit of district civil rights compliance—the committee agreed to expand the list of protected classes to include English-speaking status, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, veteran status, age, and separate listings for gender and gender identity. Mr. Noyes voiced concerns regarding the addition of "age" to the list of protected classes.
- Additional minor revisions were accepted, including adding the word "appropriate" so the opening text explicitly references a "free and appropriate public education", along with a slight grammatical correction. Mr. Grayton clarified that upon final adoption, MASC will assign the official policy code and integrate it into the district's online policy manual.

Mr. Omohundro motioned to approve the PROTECT Act Policy with the edits requested above; seconded by Dr. Jurist Levy. Vote: 6 Yes, 1 Abstention (Noyes)

V. Consent Agenda (43:51)

A. *Dr. Jurist Levy moved to approve the following warrants: September 17 $226,291.42; October 1 $510,633.67; seconded by Dr. Manseau. Vote: Yes, unanimously.*

Mr. Noyes 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. Approved unanimously.

Dr. Jurist Levy moved to adjourn from Executive Session; seconded by Mr. Noyes. Passed unanimously.

The next regular meeting of the School Committee will be held on Monday October 19, 2026 at 7pm.