

**Nantucket School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
March 4, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice-Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Vincent Murphy, and Student Council Representative Cecilia Wendelken

The March 4, 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Chair Timothy Lepore. A motion was made by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The agenda was approved unanimously.

There was no public comment

Chair Lepore reported on student attendance in Dr. Hallett's absence, noting that enrollment has increased slightly to 1,733 students, up from 1,728, with a few students joining and others leaving.

**2025-26 Nantucket High School Program of Study - Mandy Hilemn, High School Principal**

High School Principal Mandy Hilemn provided an overview of the scheduling process, emphasizing its complexity and early start in November. Departments collaborated to review the program of studies, assess course demand, and propose changes. Revisions were finalized in January with input from curriculum directors before students began course selection.

Course selection meetings have been held for the classes of 2025 and 2027, with students entering their choices into Aspen. An eighth-grade meeting is scheduled for Friday, and a parent night for eighth-grade families will take place on Thursday at 6:00 p.m. to discuss graduation requirements and course offerings.

Key curriculum updates include the removal of Mixed Media in the art department, with Printmaking returning in its place. The math department will offer Honors Calculus and Honors Statistics to provide students with different academic pathways. The science department is introducing Project Lead the Way Capstone and an Environmental Science Research and Writing Capstone to support college preparation.

Additionally, American Sign Language will be offered. Course availability will depend on student interest. The music department is reintroducing a keyboarding class. A document detailing these updates is available to students and families, and department leaders will be present at the eighth-grade parent night to provide further information on course options for incoming freshmen.

Ms. Wendelken inquired whether Honors Calculus would be available for juniors or seniors. Principal Hilemn confirmed that it could be taken by either, as it provides a different academic pathway alongside Honors Statistics, which was suggested by Mr. Lucas. She noted that while AP Statistics and AP Calculus are popular courses, with 33 students currently enrolled in AP Calculus, some students have found the workload too rigorous. Offering an honors-level option provides a challenging but more accessible alternative for those who may find AP coursework overwhelming.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne expressed her support for implementing an art and performing arts requirement, noting that such requirements exist in other states, including Massachusetts. She acknowledged her personal bias but suggested that the school consider advocating for this in the future.

Ms. Hilemn agreed with the idea of an arts requirement, sharing that she was a theater major in college and has a strong appreciation for the arts. However, she noted that making it a requirement could limit students' course options. She pointed out that most students already take at least one arts-related course, whether in visual arts, digital arts, ceramics, or music, even without a formal requirement. She offered to gather data on student enrollment in these courses to provide further insight.

Dr. Lepore commented on the complexity of scheduling, acknowledging the challenge of accommodating students with diverse interests while ensuring they meet required courses. He asked about a public speaking class.

Ms. Hilemn agreed that public speaking is important and referenced the school's *Vision of the Graduate*. She explained that last year, senior student-led conferences were replaced with *Vision of the Graduate* presentations. As a mini-capstone project, all seniors must present their high school experience and how it aligns with the *Vision*

of the Graduate before graduating. This was successfully implemented last year, and planning is already underway for this year's presentations.

Mr. Murphy was happy to see the extension of new classes and asked about classes that were dropped.

Ms. Hilemn stated that Creative Writing and Journalism will not be offered as electives next year, and Mixed Media in the art department will also be unavailable. Some courses are phased out if enrollment is too low. However, AP Physics and AP Biology are now offered annually due to dedicated teachers in those subjects.

### **School Committee Goals - Chair Dr. Timothy Lepore**

Chair Lepore reported on the School Committee's goals, which are created annually and evaluated for progress. The goals are selected based on their feasibility for evaluation and presentation. This year, changes were made to some focus areas, including:

- **Strong Instructional Leadership:** A new goal to ensure technology hardware is provided for grades 6-12, along with appropriate software and emerging tools like artificial intelligence, with clear guidelines for use. The district will also follow policies regarding the new Massachusetts legislation on competency determinations for graduating seniors.
- **Effective District and School Leadership:** Emphasis on attracting, developing, and retaining effective leadership teams who are committed to improving student learning and implementing strategies aligned with the district's mission and goals.
- **Safety:** A new focus area to maintain safe environments for students, with plans for annual safety reviews, staff training, and practice drills for crises and emergencies.
- **Staff Recruitment and Retention:** The district aims to secure qualified candidates, offer competitive compensation, and provide opportunities for staff development and growth. Efforts will be made to assist teachers and administrators in securing affordable housing.

These are the key goals set for the upcoming year.

### **Committee discussions and votes to be taken**

Vote to recommend \$43,746,176 for the FY2026 Nantucket Education Public Appropriation (Article Eight of the 2025 Annual Town Meeting of Taxpayers). The public school total budget appropriation is recommended at \$43,146,176 - \$35,762,101 for payroll and \$7,384,075 for operating expenses; and an additional \$600,000 Community School appropriation for payroll. And to AUTHORIZE use of School Department accounts as listed. *Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the donation from Friends of Nantucket Public Schools to the Nantucket High School Diversity Club for \$1,900. *Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the January 23, 2025 Workshop/Executive Session Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the February 4, 2025 Public Hearing Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the February 4, 2025 Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the February 18, 2025 Workshop Meeting Minutes. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve Transfers & Invoices. *Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

### **Student Council Representative - Cecilia Wendelken**

Cecilia Wendelken reported that the school community is adjusting after returning from February break. Many students traveled to warm or cold locations, while some stayed home. Before break, the school held a fun Spirit Week, organized by the Student Council. The winter sports season has ended, and spring sports will begin on March 17th, including baseball, softball, boys and girls tennis, sailing, boys and girls lacrosse, and outdoor track and field. Each sport will have varsity and junior varsity teams, except for sailing and outdoor track, which are both considered varsity.

The National Honor Society is currently running a food drive, with collection boxes in each advisory. The food drive will end in a couple of weeks, though the exact date is still to be determined. The high school musical, *The Little Mermaid*, will take place in March, from the 13th to the 16th.

The Golf Club scholarship is advancing to the next step. Over break, the top 10 candidates for both academic and professional scholarships were decided. The final results will be revealed at a dinner on April 28th, with interviews and networking activities taking place before then.

Additionally, academic scholarship students are being paired with local alumni for brief interviews about their careers and how they reached their current positions. This is part of the scholarship process and is expected to be a valuable experience for the students.

### **Sub-Committee/Work Group Report**

Mrs. Gallagher-Byrne reported that the Policy Committee met and there will be policies to vote on at the next meeting with minor language changes.

**Agenda for the next meeting**, March 18, 2025 - Nantucket Public Schools Safety & Security Needs Assessment, Transportation Update, Cell Phone/Social Media Policy Update, Drop Out Rate, School Committee Self-Evaluation Report, End of the year audit report

Mr. Murphy shared that a community member asked him about 504s, which are related to accommodations for special needs and dietary requirements. He explained that 17 states are challenging these allowances in classrooms, and there could be risks if federal education policies change. He suggested the school review its exposure in case these accommodations are no longer supported.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne responded that the issue was discussed in the policy meeting, particularly concerning children with 504 plans, which include accommodations for conditions like ADHD and other diagnoses. She mentioned that there have been no legislative changes at this time but acknowledged the concern.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn at 6:31 PM by *Laura Gallagher Byrne*, seconded by Vince Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
Katie Bedell  
School Committee Clerk