

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 7, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Timothy Lepore, Vice-Chair Laura Gallagher-Byrne, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy (by phone), Vincent Murphy, and Student Council Representative Nora Sullivan.

The January 7, 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 amended agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

Concerned parent Meri Lepore expressed frustration regarding the lack of certified teachers in recommended reading programs such as Orton-Gillingham or Wilson at NES for over seven years, particularly for supporting dyslexic students. She noted that while some teachers are now receiving training, the Special Education Department should have addressed this issue sooner. Ms. Lepore emphasized that parents should not have to fight for necessary services. She advocated for increased spending on continuing education and investments in students, criticizing the proposal for larger class sizes as detrimental to children's learning experiences.

David Dixon, a Nantucket resident since 2012, continued his December 17 comments by comparing AP Biology and AP Chemistry results from 2024 with those from 2011 and 2012. In 2024, 20 of 23 AP Biology students scored three or higher, while none scored a one, compared to 28 of 30 students scoring a one in 2011–2012. Similarly, in AP Chemistry, 10 of 11 students scored three or higher in 2024, with none scoring a one, whereas 10 of 12 scored a one in 2012. Dixon also highlighted broader progress in AP science, noting significant improvements in 2019 and 2023, with high percentages of students achieving scores of three or higher. He commended students, teachers, and administrators for their hard work and success.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Hallett reported minimal enrollment changes for January 2025. NES gained two students, NIS lost three, and CPS added one. High school data will be shared at the next meeting.

Dr. Hallett met with Cape and Islands Superintendents last week and shared that some districts had begun sharing draft competency determination policies. Dr. Hallett will be working with the Principals, Directors, and department leaders to draft model policy language. She clarified that the law will not allow MCAS to be used as a competency determination, and DESE has not issued any guidance yet. For this year she expects it will be a lenient process.

Dr. Lepore asked about students who have not graduated in the past. Dr. Hallett explained that they would have to look at the coursework at that time to align with MCAS standards. This may take a little digging for the information, but she feels confident that this can be done.

Transportation struggles with finding and keeping drivers. Dr. Hallett would like to hold an open discussion with parents, staff, and committee members about staggered start times.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Student Success Program - Alt Ed, Andrew Viselli

Andrew Viselli, a special education and meditation teacher, presented on the Student Success Program. With experience running behavioral programs and working with at-risk students, his current role has shifted to focus on teaching meditation, mindfulness, and holistic practices to students, staff, and administrators. He continues to teach two study skills classes, co-teach a history class, and manage a caseload of 62 students, primarily from the special education population. Mr. Viselli highlighted the integration of meditation and breathwork into the school community and introduced Caroline Collette, one of his students, who taught a meditation class earlier that day.

Ms. Collette shared that she has experienced improvements in stress and anxiety through the class, which provides a safe space for people to connect and open up. She expressed her appreciation for how the class fosters deeper connections with others, including those she had not previously interacted with. By the end of the semester, participants feel comfortable and safe with one another, creating a supportive community. Ms. Collette

highlighted journaling as one of her favorite aspects, explaining that it allows her to release mental clutter, address emotional concerns, and prepare for meditation. She emphasized that this practice helps participants become more self-aware and authentic, moving beyond the personas often maintained in school.

Ms. Laura Gallagher Byrne inquired whether the class is available to all grades and how frequently it meets. Mr. Viselli confirmed that it is open to all grades and meets four days a week. The committee members expressed their gratitude to Ms. Collette for attending and sharing her experiences.

Town of Nantucket FY26 Budget Presentation - Elizabeth Gibson, Town Manager & Brian Turbitt, Director of Finance

Ms. Gibson introduced herself as the town manager, along with Brian Turbitt, the Director of Municipal Finance, and Greg Tivan, the Assistant Town Manager. Then went through the FY26 Town of Nantucket Budget presentation, noting it was the same presentation given to the Select Board on December 11th, though slightly shortened to focus on relevant school-related topics. She highlighted that Section 4.2 D3 of the Town Charter requires the town manager to prepare and submit an annual operating budget to the Select Board. Budget objectives include staying within projected revenue, addressing priorities from the Select Board's strategic plan, focusing on housing, infrastructure, and facilities, and resolving staffing challenges with new strategies. Sustainability initiatives, capital planning, and project management remain key priorities. Due to resource limitations, the town increasingly relies on consultants and engineers, though oversight is required. Ms. Gibson highlighted progress in staffing, including the successful hiring of a project manager and a rental property manager for housing operations. However, filling the town engineer and deputy housing director positions remains a challenge. The deputy housing director role is particularly important due to the growing demands of managing town housing, which also benefits school employees.

Mr. Turbitt presented an overview of the FY26 budget process, highlighting key financial projections and school-related items. The recommended expense budget is \$161 million, with a projected revenue of the same amount, leaving \$227,000 in unused levy capacity for unexpected expenses. The FY26 budget reflects a 4.5% increase compared to FY25.

Key school-related items include:

- School operational expenses totaling \$7.1 million, including \$500,000 in expense increase requests.
- School salaries of \$36.3 million, covering all active collective bargaining agreements.
- A \$600,000 allocation to the Community School.

Other relevant details included health insurance costs projected at \$13.6 million for active employees and \$4.8 million for retirees, as well as a 7.5% increase in retirement expenses.

Ms. Gibson outlined recommendations for expense increase requests (EIRs), which are evaluated using a point system based on criteria such as legal mandates, alignment with the Select Board's strategic plan, operational efficiency, and support for new or existing programs. While many requests were funded, less than half could be accommodated due to budget constraints. The additional revenue from the room occupancy tax has allowed some progress, but caution was advised in relying on this revenue source due to potential economic and regulatory changes.

Key recommendations include:

- Funding eight new positions and increased appropriations for personnel budgets strained by workload.
- One-time increases for town-related expenses, such as improving cooling in school facilities during town meetings.
- \$300,000 in one-time expense requests from the school administration, recommended for funding.

Other considerations include reliance on free cash for some funding, with \$216,000 proposed for town expenses and delays in free cash certifications. Uncertainties remain around state aid, which is projected to remain level, and potential financial impacts from citizen warrant articles and future short-term rental regulations. Ms. Gibson noted that short-term rental revenue has not yet stabilized since the room occupancy tax expansion in 2019, with COVID and subsequent years being atypical. Future impacts of town regulations on this revenue remain uncertain. Escalating construction costs, especially due to Nantucket's unique location, have significantly affected

recent projects, including the costly coastal resiliency plan, which estimates over \$400 million in projects over 30 years. Additionally, preparations for the expiration of the solid waste services agreement have required significant time, as rising costs for waste management, driven by regulatory requirements and off-island disposal, continue to grow.

Ms. Gallagher Byrne asked if there was an update on the vessel speed restriction. Mrs. Gibson responded that they were advised the law had not progressed.

Dr. Lepore asked about PFAS contamination in Madaket wells. Ms. Gibson explained that while public water is available in some areas, including Tom's Way where a water line was installed to address contaminated wells, not all areas are connected. Ms. Gibson highlighted the importance of protecting Nantucket's water supply. She noted the creation of an Environmental Contamination Coordinator position in the Public Health Department, recently filled after a vacancy. The town has invested over \$1.13 million in PFAS-related efforts and held several public informational sessions, making the issue a key priority.

Budget Development

Technology - Stephanie Hoban, Director of Technology,

Stephanie Hoban, Director of Technology, focused on key changes in the budget. The biggest change is in Professional Services, where savings were achieved by hiring a managed service provider, Northeast Technologies, to handle the entire network, eliminating the need for multiple service providers. Additionally, the hardware and equipment line items have been combined, as the distinction between them was unclear. Chromebooks are now treated as a fixed cost within the hardware category. There is also an increase in the software budget. Historically underfunded, the software budget will now cover all districtwide software, including systems like Schoology, Aspen, and Raptor, as well as future educational technology. These changes reflect efforts to better manage and fund technology across the district.

Facilities - Chip Clunie, Director of Facilities

Chip Clunie, Director of Facilities, explained that facilities make up 12% of the school budget, with 75% of that allocated to utilities and payroll. Utility costs are increasing, and repair, maintenance, and general contractor accounts, which cover unpredictable costs, have also risen significantly due to the increase in construction costs. These accounts are being adjusted to reflect the rising costs and are expected to be balanced over the next couple of years. In response to a question about phone system expenses, Chip clarified that while phones account for only 2% of the budget, the system is integral to the school's technology, linking classrooms and security systems, making it a critical part of their operations. Dr. Lepore asked about vandalism expenses. Mr. Clunie reported it has improved.

Community School - Alicia Graziadei, Executive Director

Alicia Graziadei, Executive Director of the Community School, outlined that their budget is composed of three main components: an appropriation from the town, fees, and gifts. The town's annual appropriation of \$600,000 has remained the same for the past three years, which has impacted their ability to keep up with rising health insurance costs (up 8-10% annually), cost of living increases, and employee salaries. While the town covers health insurance costs for its employees, the community school must absorb these expenses.

Despite this challenge, the school has received over \$200,000 in grants, including funding from the Nantucket Community Foundation, which supports essential community programs. These grants are vital for offering programs like ESO registration, which would not be possible without them. She emphasized that while grants are crucial, they are not guaranteed, and without them, some programs would no longer be available. She expressed hope that the town's appropriation will increase in the future to help address these challenges.

When asked about the reliance on grants, Ms. Graziadei acknowledged the competitive nature of grant applications and thanked her staff and the community for their ongoing support.

Athletics - Travis Lombardi, Director of Athletics, Matthew Hunt, Assistant Director of Athletics

Matt Hunt presented on behalf of Travis Lombardi, Director of Athletics, who was unable to attend. The Athletics Department's budget represents 2% of the district's total budget, with a slight increase to \$1,472, primarily to accommodate salary increases and the addition of JV assistant positions. These positions were added to provide more dedicated coaches for the Varsity and JV programs, replacing some volunteer roles.

Payroll accounts for 75% of the budget, totaling \$746,000, while dues and rental fees make up 2%. The department's operating budget is supplemented by its revolving account and continues to rely on a user fee system to cover travel expenses, including overnight stays, tournaments, and other unplanned costs. Mr. Hunt stated that the department will continue to operate within its current budget without requesting additional funds. Dr. Lepore asked if the user fees need to be supplemented. Mr. Hunt explained that a fee waiver form is available to ensure that every student who wants to participate in athletics can do so, regardless of financial need.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the November 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes. Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Vincent Murphy recused himself, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the mini-grant from Cape Cod 5 for \$500.00 to NES for Taylor Fasci. 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 mini-grant from Cape Cod 5 for \$500.00 to NES for Joseline Ramirez. Laura Gallagher Byrne made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

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 - Nora Sullivan

Nora Sullivan, the student council representative, reported that there was not much activity immediately after the break, but several sports teams had games and practices during the holiday period. She noted that the first rehearsal for the spring musical, *The Little Mermaid*, took place yesterday. She highlighted the upcoming Wintertide Fair, scheduled for Thursday, January 16, at the CPS cafeteria. This event will feature art displays, performances by the school's rock band, the Accidentals, and the Naturals, as well as culinary offerings prepared by students. Additionally, the Poetry Out Loud competition, a national poetry recitation event, will be part of the Wintertide Fair, providing an opportunity for students to showcase their passion for poetry and literature.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

ESP negotiations ongoing

A policy meeting is needed as soon as competency determination has been developed

Agenda for the next meeting, January 21, 2025 - Budget Development - Special Services, One8 Foundation, Bullying Update, Veritas

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:20 PM by Laura Gallagher Byrne, seconded by Vince Murphy, and with no opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk