

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 12, 2024**

Present Members: Chair Pauline Proch, Laura Gallagher-Byrne, Timothy Lepore, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and Student Council Representative Cecilia Wendelken.

The November 12, 2024, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM in the Nantucket High School LGI by Chair Pauline Proch to amend the agenda by removing the proposed FY26 calendar, as it had not yet been reviewed by the NTA, and to move the Superintendent Report to follow the presentations. A motion was made by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne. The amended agenda was approved unanimously.

Public Comment

David Dixon, a Nantucket resident and education analyst, raised concerns about poor MCAS math results for grades 3–8 in Nantucket Public Schools. He noted that only 1% of students exceeded expectations in 2023 and 2024, compared to 7–8% statewide, with zero students in grades 5–7 meeting this benchmark. Mr. Dixon criticized school leaders for failing to address these results during meetings, including a detailed MCAS review. He urged action to improve outcomes for Nantucket's students.

Homeschooling Report - Mellisa Devitt, Director of Curriculum & Assessment for Humanities

Melissa Devitt, Director of Curriculum & Assessment for Humanities, provided an update on homeschooling. She noted that the district currently has nine homeschooled students, but this number will drop to seven as two students are returning to school. Mrs. Devitt explained the homeschooling process, which is outlined on the district's website. Parents must notify the district 14 days before starting homeschooling, submit an educational plan detailing their curriculum and assessment methods, and receive district approval. Parents must also provide written certification of their child's name, age, residency, attendance hours, and chosen curriculum. Most parents select and manage their own curriculum and resources, although some seek guidance from the district. Periodic standardized testing is conducted to monitor student progress, based on the chosen program. Mrs. Devitt shared historical data showing fluctuations in homeschooling numbers, with a single student in 2018, an increase during COVID-19, and a recent decline back to seven students. She also highlighted the district's compliance with state laws and procedures, which are available online for parents.

Dr. Lepore inquired about verifying the accuracy of the homeschooling numbers. Mrs. Devitt explained that the district relies on reports from the community about children not attending school. Such cases are addressed through DCF and appropriate channels. Currently, the district's only mechanism to track homeschooling is when families voluntarily notify the district.

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne inquired about the number of families involved in homeschooling the nine children, to which Mrs. Devitt clarified that these children came from seven separate families. Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked how students returning from homeschooling are supported. Mrs. Devitt explained that the school provides tailored support to help these students reintegrate, similar to any other student needing assistance. She noted that a returning student, who had missed significant time, is receiving dedicated support both from the school and the student's parent, who has followed a structured curriculum.

Ms. Wendelken questioned whether parents often inquire about homeschooling programs. Mrs. Devitt confirmed that many parents contact her to learn about homeschooling requirements, accountability, and state standards. She shared that while some parents decide against homeschooling after understanding its demands, others proceed with guidance from the school to align with state standards, especially if they plan for their children to return to the school system later.

Mrs. Proch noted that homeschooled students are allowed to participate in school sports, which Mrs. Devitt affirmed. She added that homeschooled students can also engage in special areas, social-emotional groups, or other school activities, emphasizing the various ways the school collaborates with homeschooling families.

Preliminary Annual Budget Forecast - Martin Anguelov, CFO Mr. Martin Anguelov, CFO, presented the preliminary annual budget forecast for FY25. The starting point is the current fiscal year's budget of \$41,783,395, as approved in Article 8 of last year's town meeting. This budget is divided into payroll (\$33,345,870) and operating expenses (\$6,832,525). Mr. Anguelov noted that discussions with the town's finance director, Brian Turbitt, and meetings with Town Manager Libby Gibson have highlighted challenges due to lower-than-expected revenue in the latest quarter. To maintain existing staffing levels, payroll costs are projected to rise to \$36,047,000, an increase of \$2.7 million. This reflects current contracts and anticipated negotiations with the Education Support Personnel. He expressed concern about the increasing share of payroll in the budget, which is projected to grow from 83% to 84%, further constraining operating expenses. Mr. Anguelov emphasized inflationary pressures on products, services, and labor costs for external providers. Additionally, the district is losing part of its Title I funding, previously used to offset a teacher's salary, and the ESSER III grant of \$970,000 expired on September 30, impacting funding for personnel, summer school, and professional development. These expenses will now return to the main budget. The preliminary forecast estimates a total budget of approximately \$43 million, reflecting a 7% overall increase. With no questions from the committee Mr. Anguelov moved onto the first quarter budget report.

First Quarter Budget Report

Mr. Martin Anguelov provided updates on the first-quarter budget report. He explained that the first quarter encompasses two summer months and one month of the school year, making it an early indicator rather than a definitive reflection of the year. Currently, 26% of the operating budget has been committed, with an \$877,500 increase allocated to payroll. Payroll expenses have risen to 11% of the budget compared to 9% last year, largely due to the school system being almost fully staffed, unlike previous years with vacancies. Additional costs stem from professional development, curriculum purchases, and ongoing district-wide math curriculum initiatives. Regarding the Community School, revenues have increased by \$99,000 compared to the previous year, while expenses have risen slightly by \$1,800 due to contractual obligations. The town subsidy remains stable at \$600,000, reflecting continued positive trends in programming post-COVID. For the school lunch program, Mr. Anguelov reported a \$42,000 reduction in the program's deficit. However, he anticipates the year-end deficit to be around \$60,000 to \$70,000 due to inflation, increased wages for food service staff to ensure retention, and the ongoing challenge of understaffing. Massachusetts' universal free meal reimbursement provides \$4.48 for lunch and \$2.37 for breakfast, which helps cover costs but does not fully offset inflation and personnel expenses. Mr. Anguelov also explained the Chartwell contract, which outsources food service management. Chartwell covers operational costs and passes them to the school, including a management fee. If costs exceed the budgeted subsidy of \$127,000, the school can request reimbursement of the management fee. He noted that reimbursement rates have slightly decreased compared to last year, further contributing to the projected deficit. Mr. Anguelov expressed hope that actual figures at the end of the year may be better than projected.

Dr. Lepore asked what the reimbursement covered. Mr. Anguelov explained that costs are exceeding revenue due to personnel expenses and inflation on goods and services, and he projected a deficit of \$60,000 to \$70,000.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked why the subsidy would be more. Mr. Anguelov explained that salary increases were negotiated for Chartwells employees this year to address long-term understaffing, with at least two positions unfilled since 2016 or 2017. Higher wages were offered to retain staff, who have worked hard under difficult conditions. He praised Linda for her dedication, taking on multiple roles to keep the program running. He noted that staffing challenges and inflation remain ongoing issues unlikely to improve soon. Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked to explain the Chartwell contract Mr. Anguelov explained that the Food Service program is fully outsourced to Chartwells, which handles all management, ordering, supplies, and personnel costs. These costs are then billed to the school along with a management fee. If expenses exceed the budgeted subsidy. Mr. Anguelov noted that last year, starting in January, the program received an additional reimbursement of 14 cents per lunch, which is not being provided this year. He expressed hope that his projection of a deficit is incorrect and that the program will break even within the next eight to nine months.

Nantucket Community School Update - Alicia Graziadei, Executive Director, Andrea Wulffleff, Assistant Director

Alicia Graziadei, Executive Director of the Nantucket Community School, provided an overview of the school, focusing on grants and gifts to help clarify its unique budget. She highlighted how these funds support various

programs that greatly benefit the community. The Community School operates as the fifth public school on the island, offering programming for all ages, from birth to adulthood. It is organized into four main departments: Early Childhood, Sports (including dance, which was recently integrated), Adult Education, Summer Camp, Driver Education, and Pool Programming.

The school operates out of three locations: the elementary school, 56 Center Street (a rented space downtown), and the pool facility at the high school.

Andrea Wulffleff, Assistant Director, explained that approximately half of the Community School's budget comes from program income, while the other half is funded by town appropriations, gifts, and grants. The budget is separate from the broader school district. The school pays for its own health insurance, with the town appropriation covering insurance, administrative salaries, and fees. However, the funding is insufficient to cover all expenses, so program fees are necessary.

Some departments, like Early Childhood, have fewer fee-based programs, while others, such as Dance and Sports, can charge higher fees. Wulffleff also highlighted several grant-funded programs, including:

- ESOL Classes: Twice-weekly sessions over three months, with over 80 students in the fall and slightly fewer in spring. The program serves participants from 10–15 countries, offering four levels of instruction in five classrooms. It is primarily funded by the Nantucket Fund at the Community Foundation.
- Memory Café: A bi-monthly program for adults with memory impairments, held at Our Island Home and Sherburne Commons. Caregivers and participants engage in activities, music, and socialization. It is funded by grants from the Massachusetts Council on Aging and the Town of Nantucket's Health and Human Services Department.
- GED Program: Year-round classes with bilingual and proctor support, held Wednesday evenings at 56 Center Street. Attendance varies, and it is funded by a state grant.

The school also operates a test center for proctored exams, serving educators for MTEL testing and other needs. Wulffleff emphasized that grants help bridge the gap between program fees and actual costs, ensuring accessibility for the community.

Mrs. Graziadei expressed gratitude for the donations and grants from the community, emphasizing that the school wouldn't be able to offer its programs at the current costs without them. She then provided an overview of some of the early childhood programs that receive funding.

1. Ready Set School: A kindergarten readiness program held at the 56 Center Street building, for children and their caregivers. The program, which runs Wednesday mornings, is free and funded by Remain Nantucket Fund. It often leads to participation in the Summer Boost program.
2. Summer Boost: An intensive kindergarten readiness program that takes place at the elementary school. It serves about 30 students who have not attended preschool, preparing them for school. Donations from the Nantucket Fund, NET, and Sconset Chapel allow the cost to be affordable.
3. Free Family Swim: A popular program held on Saturdays at the pool, providing families the opportunity to swim together. It is free, thanks to support from the Nantucket Athletic Association and Nantucket Half Marathon and features two sessions each Saturday.

Mrs. Graziadei also highlighted the importance of collaborations with local nonprofits, including Nantucket Conservation Foundation, Mariah Mitchell, Linda Loring, STARR, NISHA, and others, which enhance the school's programs through in-kind support. She concluded by expressing appreciation for all the partners who contribute to the school's success.

Dr. Lepore asked for a little more information about the GED program.

Mrs. Graziadei explained that the GED program runs throughout the school year on Wednesday evenings at the computer lab at 56 Center Street. The program is self-paced, with students working through the online materials at their own speed.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy asked how many teachers are involved in the ESOL program, given the variety of languages, and whether the teachers are paid. Mrs. Graziadei responded that there are five classrooms, each with a teacher and an assistant, as well as a director overseeing the program. She confirmed that the teachers are paid.

Mrs. Bloise-Murphy Summer boost cost?

Mrs. Graziadei replied this past summer it was \$200 to participate for the entire session but we didn't turn any families away so we did have a few families that required some financial aid which we were able to offer them

Ms. Wendelken asked how long the summer boost program runs. Mrs. Graziadei responded 4 weeks.

Chair Proch expressed gratitude for the leadership of the Community School, acknowledging the school's growth and the hard work involved. She noted that even with the increase in town appropriation, more support is needed. She also praised the school for managing to operate in buildings that aren't technically theirs with grace. Chair Proch emphasized the importance of the Community School to the community and asked, as her final question, what the biggest challenge or barrier is for the school, recognizing that this isn't a budget meeting.

Mrs. Graziadei responded that hiring and space are significant challenges for the community school. While they are grateful for the spaces they have, having a dedicated building with its own gymnasium and pool would greatly improve operations. She acknowledged that the principals have been very accommodating, allowing the school flexibility to use various spaces, and thanked them for their cooperation over the past few years.

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Hallett reported that enrollment has increased by 13 students, bringing the total from 1,722 in October to 1,735. The elementary school saw an increase of three students, NIS added two, CPS remained the same, and the high school gained eight students. Although this is a significant jump, enrollment trends fluctuate, and they will continue monitoring it. The superintendent noted that student enrollment may rise during the winter months as families from Central and South America, where school starts in February, return to the area.

Regarding the school calendar, the final version will be confirmed after feedback from the Nantucket Teachers Association, and a date adjustment was made.

Superintendent Hallett also shared insights from attending the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents and Massachusetts Association of School Committees conference. Key highlights included a keynote by Tim Shriver on dignity and skills like empathy for students, a session on mental health professional development, and discussions on improving school traffic circulation. Additionally, the conference covered new policies on parent advisory councils and the role of school librarians. Superintendent Hallett emphasized the importance of the conference and the valuable information gained.

Dr. Hallett reported that the bus situation is becoming critical due to a shortage of drivers on the island. The Cape Cod Collaborative has only four drivers, and the demand for transportation has increased. To address this, new early and late routes have been added for grades 6 through 12, with stops at Airport Road and Old South Road, serving areas like Richmond housing complexes. However, the situation is unsustainable, with 82 students waiting at one bus stop.

To better manage the situation, the Collaborative is updating its database to track ridership, which will help identify specific routes that are over capacity. Dr. Hallett mentioned the possibility of policy adjustments, such as limiting transportation for older students. Additionally, small passenger vans are being ordered, which require less training to drive and could be used for more remote areas. These vans would help ease the strain on the larger buses and ensure students are transported on time.

Dr. Hallett invited Stephanie Hoban to present. Ms. Hoban, the Tech Director, shared that she, along with Dave Evans, a technician, Joanne Johnsen, the Network Coordinator, and Jill Surprenant, the NHS librarian, attended the MASSCue (Massachusetts Computer Using Educators) conference for two days. The focus of the conference was cybersecurity and AI, with a specific emphasis on how they intersect.

Ms. Hoban mentioned that she and Mrs. Johnsen attended most of the cybersecurity sessions. Mrs. Johnsen also had the opportunity to attend some workshops and meet with the Aspen Users Group. Mr. Evans' main focus was on the new interactive boards, known as New Line boards, that are being installed in schools. While many of the boards are in use, they are not yet connected to the internet, limiting their full functionality. Mr. Evans spoke with New Line representatives to learn how to get the boards online and secure them. There were concerns about protecting teacher Google accounts when they leave the boards logged in. Mr. Evans' attendance at MASQ provided him with valuable contacts to move the project forward, and Ms. Hoban hoped the capital budget request for additional boards would be approved. They also discussed training opportunities, both in-person and online, for staff to learn how to use the boards effectively. The cybersecurity sessions were particularly impactful for Ms. Hoban, highlighting the critical importance of protecting student data. She explained how cyber attackers target young students' data, which can be used for years without the student even knowing. In contrast, data from older individuals is less valuable. This issue reinforced the need to improve their cybersecurity measures. Additionally, the conference addressed the importance of using AI-powered tools to protect data, as hackers also utilize AI. Ms. Hoban emphasized that the conference was not just about cybersecurity but also provided an opportunity to explore new tools and technologies. While the school district is satisfied with their current networking tools, it's

valuable to stay informed about potential future advancements. This was the first time Mrs. Johnsen and Mr. Evans had attended the conference, and Ms. Hoban was pleased they had the chance to experience it, as it helped strengthen their collective efforts to improve the district's technology initiatives.

Superintendent Hallett congratulated Vince Murphy, noting that the Select Board had unanimously approved the School Committee's recommendation to appoint him to fill the school committee vacancy for the remainder of the year. She expressed excitement about Vince joining the team and shared that he had hit the ground running. Vince attended the MASC (Massachusetts Association of School Committees) course titled "Charting the Course" for all new school committee members, which took place in Hyannis. Superintendent Hallett expressed hope that Vince learned something valuable from the course and acknowledged the big shoes he has to fill. She mentioned that a celebration for the outgoing School Committee member would be held later..

Superintendent's Evaluation

Chair Pauline Proch shared that the school committee has the responsibility to hire and evaluate the superintendent, a process that involves collaboration. The committee met with Dr. Hallett in a workshop where she provided evidence and indicators based on the standards they must evaluate her on. The evaluation process now follows a biannual cycle, rather than annual.

Dr. Hallett's goals were discussed, including professional practice goals, student learning goals, and district improvement goals. The committee agreed that these goals were met.

In the performance evaluation, the committee assessed Dr. Hallett on four standards:

1. Instructional Leadership – Proficient
2. Management and Operations – Proficient
3. Family and Community Engagement – Proficient
4. Professional Culture – Proficient

The overall summative performance evaluation was also Proficient. Comments highlighted Dr. Hallett's dedication and leadership, noting the district is fortunate to have her.

Under the performance goals, all were rated as significant progress or met. These goals include professional practice, student learning, and district improvement.

Dr. Hallett's performance was evaluated as Proficient in all areas, including Curriculum, Instruction, Evaluation, Operational Systems, Human Resources, Family and Community Engagement, and Cultural Proficiency. There were no major issues, but suggestions were made for continued professional development for staff at all levels.

The committee expressed gratitude for Dr. Hallett's leadership and looks forward to her continued leadership.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the Grade 5 Outdoor Classroom, Yarmouthport, MA field trip from April 15, 2025 to April 17, 2025. Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the NHS Diversity and Spanish Club multicultural field trip to Boston from November 22, 2024 to November 23, 2024. Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Updates to Policy IKF, Graduation Requirements. Through the chair Dr. Hallett explained the change in the curriculum requirements. Previously, there was a requirement for four full-year English courses, but one semester of writing seminar has now been removed. The new requirement is 4.0 credits at the English course level, which still includes four full years of English. In mathematics, the requirement remains four full years, including algebra and geometry, but the one semester of financial literacy has been removed. Instead, financial literacy is now required as part of the social sciences curriculum. This results in a change from 4.5 to 4.0 credits in mathematics. For social sciences, three full years of courses are still required, including two years of U.S. History, plus one semester of financial literacy. This brings the total credit requirement for social sciences from 3.0 to 3.5 credits.

Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Updates to Policy DKC-R&P, Expense Authorization/Reimbursements-Rules & Procedures. Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

New MASC Recommended Policy GBEE, Person Use of Technology, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to remove the following policies per MASC recommendation GA - Personnel Policies Goals and GDOD-Suspension and Dismissal of Support Staff Members, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Vote to approve October 15, 2024 Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously
Transfers & Invoices, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Laura Gallagher-Byrne, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Student Council Representative - Cecilia Wendelken

Ms. Wendelken, reported that the school is currently in a quieter period, often referred to as "no school November." While not entirely slow, there has been a lot of club and group activity, with many fundraisers taking place. The Book Club, Diversity Club, Latin Club, and Spanish Club held a joint fundraiser selling items through a catalog. Additionally, there were bake sales organized by the Student Council and for students traveling to Europe in the spring, raising over \$2,000.

The Drama Club has started preparing for their show, with auditions having taken place today. Whaler Word, the school's weekly advisory video news, has also resumed.

The National Honor Society has welcomed several new members and has elected new officers, including a president, treasurer, and scribe. Ms. Wendelken noted that the National Honor Society is growing this year.

Lastly, the senior class attended a production of The Great Gatsby at Dreamland, which was a fun break from school. Overall, it has been a busy time with a mix of activities and events.

Mrs. Proch asked who runs Whaler Word. Ms. Wendelken replied Ms. Mason

Also mentioned the CPS musical is starting Thursday - Finding Nemo Jr.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Mrs. Gallagher Byrne reported the policy committee recently met. She then shared a contract was offered for the executive director position at CCC.

Mrs. Blouse-Murphy reported that NET has also met.

Agenda for the next meeting, December 3, 2024 - Enrollment, Town Annual Report, English Learner Update/ELPAC, Veritas - need to have a reorganization meeting

Superintendent Hallett expressed her gratitude with mixed emotions, congratulating Chair Pauline Proch, with a hint of sadness, on her departure. She highlighted Pauline's significant contributions to the district, emphasizing her deep involvement and connection to the schools, not only as a parent but also through her role as Director of the Community School and her husband's position at the high school. Superintendent Hallett expressed how fortunate the district was to have had Pauline's leadership and dedication. She also shared that it had been a pleasure working alongside Pauline during her tenure, and though she was sad to see her go, she was excited about Pauline's next chapter in an area that continues to serve students. While the district would miss Pauline, Superintendent Hallett was confident that Vince Murphy would step in and work hard, acknowledging the "big shoes" he had to fill. She concluded by wishing Pauline all the best, encouraging her to stay in touch.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:43 PM by Dr. Lepore, seconded by Laura Gallagher Byrne, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk

