

LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, October 28, 2025
Meeting Minutes

AGENDA:

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME: 5:05 PM

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Eileen Jay, Chairperson
Larry Freeman, Vice Chair
Sara Cuthbertson, Clerk
Sarah Carter
Kathleen Lenihan attended the meeting remotely.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT

Dr. Julie Hackett, Superintendent

The minutes were taken by Julie Kaye, School Committee Meeting Recording Secretary.

The School Committee convened at the School Committee Meeting Room at Central Office and remotely. Members of the public can view and participate in person or in the meeting webinar from their computer or tablet by clicking on the link provided with the meeting agenda. Please note that this meeting is being recorded and that attendees are participating by video conference. This evening's meeting is being broadcast live and also taped by LexMedia for future on-demand viewing. All supporting materials that have been provided to members of this body are available on the Town's website unless otherwise noted.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee enter Executive Session under Exemption 3, for the purpose of discussing strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Superintendent of Schools, as the Chair so declares, an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee, Ms. Carter seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The School Committee entered executive session at 5:07 PM and re-entered open session at 6:06 PM.

CONSENT AGENDA

Ms. Carter read the following consent agenda items:

- Minutes
 - a. September 30, 2025

Mr. Freeman read the following consent agenda items:

- Payroll and Accounts Payable Warrant Approval
 - a. October 31, 2025 - AP Warrant in the amount of \$2,278,157.50

Ms. Cuthbertson moved to approve the entire consent agenda, Ms. Carter seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote, passed 5-0.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Freeman had no announcements.

Ms. Cuthbertson had no announcements.

Ms. Carter noted that October is Hindu Heritage Month and acknowledged the many valuable contributions of this group, who are such a vital part of our community.

Ms. Lenihan had no announcements.

Ms. Jay had no announcements.

COMMUNITY SPEAK

Avon Lewis - (on Zoom): Dr. Lewis presented a petition urging the School Committee and Select Board to act quickly to help Lexington employees who will lose SNAP benefits because of a lapse in federal funding. She noted that while many town and school employees earn too much to qualify, some make under \$31,296 a year and will lose about \$298 a month in food aid. Those with two children earning under \$53,304 could lose about \$785 a month. She warned that some employees may struggle to feed their families by Monday and asked the town to provide temporary assistance until federal support is restored. The petition has 145 signatures.

Ms. Jay stated that the meeting will proceed out of order from the agenda because Ms. Lenihan needs to leave by 6:30 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Vote on Superintendent of Schools Contract

Ms. Cuthbertson moved to approve the amendments to Dr. Hackett's School Committee contract with the Superintendent of Schools for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2031, Mr. Freeman seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote, the vote passed 5-0.

B. Vote on SC Positions for Special Town Meeting Articles

Since these articles are related to the LHS Building project, Ms. Jay, who is an abutter to the LHS property, recused herself for this portion of the meeting. Mr. Freeman filled in as chair.

- a. Article 3 - Establish, Amend, Dissolve, and Appropriate to and from Specified Stabilization Funds

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee support the passage of Article 3, Establish, Amend, Dissolve, and Appropriate to and from Specified Stabilization Funds, Ms. Carter seconded. Mr. Freeman took a roll call vote, passed 4-0-1 recusal (Ms. Jay).

- b. Article 8 - Appropriate for Lexington High School

- Presentation Slides
- Presentation Video

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee support Article 8, the Appropriation for Lexington High School, Ms. Carter seconded. Mr. Freeman took a roll call vote, passed 4-0-1 recusal (Ms. Jay).

- c. Article 9 - Home Rule Legislation for Lexington High School

- Presentation Slides
- Presentation Video

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee support Article 9, Home Rule Legislation for New Lexington High School, Ms. Carter seconded. Mr. Freeman took a roll call vote, passed 4-0-1 recusal (Ms. Jay).

Ms. Jay returned to the meeting.

C. Vote on SC Positions for MASC Resolutions

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee recommend the approval of Resolution One, Removing BMI Testing from Schools, Mr. Freeman seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote, passed 5-0.

Ms. Cuthbertson moved that the School Committee support the Reauthorization of Previously Approved Resolutions Regarding Sanctuary Laws for Transgender Students, To Increase the Maximum Balance Allowed by the Special Education Reserve Fund, Membership on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Preserving Local Governance of Massachusetts Schools, Personal Financial Literacy Education, and Establish of a Regional School Assessment Reserve Fund, Mr. Freeman seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote,

passed 5-0.

Ms. Lenihan left the meeting at 6:23 PM.

YOUTH RISK AND BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS) PRESENTATION

Dr. Kavanaugh, Director of Data & Strategy; Eamonn Sheehan, K-12 Coordinator for PE Health and Wellness; Julie Fenn, Assistant Coordinator for PE Health and Wellness; and Bert Rothenbach, consultant, joined the School Committee to present the [slideshow](#).

Lexington Public Schools Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2025 Highlights:

- Substance Use
 - Alcohol is still the most commonly used substance among LHS students, followed by marijuana and vaping, so prevention efforts should stay focused on these areas. Overall, most LPS students report very low lifetime substance use.
 - In 2025, current alcohol use at the high school increased sharply from 2023, and this increase occurred across all student groups.
 - Marijuana use has gone down at the high school level and remains low in middle school, with most subgroups showing decreases.
 - Vaping has also continued to decline in both middle and high school.
 - LPS students use alcohol, marijuana, and vapes at lower rates than state and national averages.
 - Older students and those with IEPs or 504 plans are more likely to report current alcohol or marijuana use.

- Bullying & Harassment
 - Local bullying rates at the high school level remain lower than state and national averages for both in-school and online bullying.
 - In 2025, middle school bullying at school rose back to pre-pandemic levels, while high school rates stayed below pre-pandemic levels. Online bullying has decreased at the high school level, but has fluctuated for middle school students.
 - Bullying continues to differ across student groups, with African American/Black students, non-cisgender students, LGBTQ+ students, and students with IEPs or 504 plans more likely to report being bullied. Despite this, school bullying has decreased for all of these groups, and online bullying has decreased for LGBTQ+ and African American/Black students.
 - The type of harassment also varies, with race-based harassment more common among African American/Black students and identity-based harassment more common among LGBTQ+ students.

- Mental Health & Suicide Ideation
 - In 2025, LPS students reported lower rates of suicidal thoughts than in 2023, slightly below pre-pandemic levels, and lower than state and national averages.

Depression and hopelessness among high school students have been at their lowest since 2017.

- LGBTQ+ students and those with IEPs or 504 plans are more likely to experience suicidal thoughts, attempts, or depression, but their rates have improved since 2023. Differences between LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ students, and between cisgender and non-cisgender students, have decreased.
- African American/Black and Hispanic students are more likely to have considered suicide, but their rates have also improved since 2023.

- Sexual Health
 - In 2025, 13.3% of LHS students reported having had sexual intercourse, down from 2021 and lower than national rates.
 - Higher rates were seen in upper grades, LGBTQ+ students, and those with IEPs or 504 plans. Since 2023, rates have gone up for students with IEPs/504 plans but down for LGBTQ+ students.
 - About 4.4% of high school students reported dating violence, slightly lower than before and similar to state rates.
 - Unwanted sexual comments have gone up and down, and rates differ by subgroup. Sending or receiving sexual messages or pictures is decreasing in high school. In middle school, messages are increasing, but pictures are decreasing.
 - Girls, transgender, non-binary, LGBTQ+ students, and those with IEPs/504 plans are more likely to report these behaviors, with differences also by race/ethnicity.

- Gambling
 - About 10% of LHS students reported gambling at least once in the past year.
 - Higher rates were seen among upperclassmen, African American/Black students, cisgender males, and non-LGBTQ+ students.
 - Gambling with friends is more common than online gambling.
 - About a quarter of students who gambled reported spending more money or time than they intended.
 - Students reported that their friends gamble less than they do themselves.

School Committee Questions/Comments:

Ms. Cuthbertson asked whether a clear, age-specific definition of bullying is provided in the survey questions. She also asked how these match with the official bullying definition, since there is a disproportionate number of students reluctant to report bullying. Dr. Kavanaugh replied that the definition is above the questions on the survey, and that the definition is: “Bullying is when one or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove or hurt another student, over and over again. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or team up with each other in a friendly way.” Dr. Kavanaugh also discussed the varying patterns of reporting among different student subgroups. Ms. Fenn hopes that the Active Bystander trainings will help empower kids to come forward more.

Mr. Freeman asked if there’s an option for students to answer why they didn’t report a case of

bullying. Dr. Kavanaugh replied that the options for why a student didn't tell anyone are: afraid of retaliation, believed nothing would be done, concerns that you would not be believed, embarrassed about the situation, and "other." Ms. Fenn added that most kids want to be anonymous.

Ms. Jay asked who gets referred to the Think Forward Program, and is it ongoing? Ms. Fenn responded that it depends on the student and the incident that got them in trouble. Any teacher or principal can request this intervention, and sometimes it could be court ordered. It's typically six to eight sessions, 30 minutes per session for younger students, closer to an hour per session for high schoolers.

Ms. Carter asked if there was any conversation about having yoga classes available at the middle school level. Mr. Sheehan replied that we have experimented with some small classes, but the biggest challenge for expanding this program is finding the space. Ms. Carter highlighted the significantly higher rates of suicide attempts, depression, and anxiety among transgender, nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and gender-queer students. She would like to know if work is being done to identify these students and proactively intervene, or if we wait for them to come to us. Ms. Fenn responded that we have proactively reached out to our LGBTQ+ community. Ms. Carter would like to know more about the process and if there are any GSA groups in the elementary schools. Ms. Fenn responded that she will check with principals, but that she believes all six elementary schools have made a concerted effort to work with students and families. Ms. Carter also asked about this in middle school. Mr. Rothenbach added that a lot of national surveys, primarily federally funded ones, are removing gender identity and sexual orientation questions, so most of this kind of data is not available. Ms. Carter would like to see more effort put into identifying and supporting these students. Ms. Carter's favorite slide is number 37, which includes a chart on the primary influences in students' decision-making related to stress management, alcohol and substance use, and sexual decision-making. LHS students report that parents and caregivers are the most influential. Ms. Carter spoke about how it is both appropriate and expected for parents and caregivers to discuss expectations for their children's behavior with them.

Related to slide 37, Mr. Freeman wonders how these numbers change when looking at the bullying of African American and transgender students. He believes a lot of the hate students experience each day comes from home and from parents. He also wonders if this influence is affecting other negative student behaviors.

Mr. Rothenbach stressed the importance of communicating the message that overall trends are positive.

NEW BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

D. FY26 First Quarter Financial Report

- a. FY26 Q1 Report Narrative
- b. YTD Budget Report - Q1

Dr. Scully, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, and Mr. MacCutcheon, Director of Finance, presented the FY26 First Quarter Financial Report to the School Committee.

Presentation Highlights:

- Last year ended with a surplus of \$84,201.00, achieved through spending freezes and careful expense management.
- FY26 budget increased 3.93% from FY25. Budget tightly managed with reductions made to balance expenses.
- Salaries & wages: \$14M spent of \$127M (11.3%), with total expenses and encumbrances at 21.4%. Most salaries are paid over 10 months (September to June)
- Expense examples:
 - K-12 libraries: \$84,819 budgeted, \$68,488.51 expended, \$6,945 encumbered, 88.9% used.
 - Out-of-district tuitions: \$7.2M budgeted, \$385,599.56 expended, \$6,002,323.45 encumbered, 88.5% used.
 - High school salaries: \$34,934,600.00 budgeted, \$3,404,103.69 expended, 9.74% used.
- Salary Expenditure and Projection
 - 98.4% use of the salary budget is projected.
 - Reduction in elementary sections and restructuring helped slow the rate of spending in salaries.
 - 100% use of the expense budget is projected.
 - Expense Pressures: Transportation, substitutes, and tuitions.
- Conclusions
 - Expense lines and salaries should be closely monitored.
 - FY27 may require further cuts or additional revenue to maintain current services. Strategic Planning.
 - Working with an external consultancy (CLA) to project the next 5 years, results are expected within a month to guide long-term planning.

School Committee Questions/Comments:

Ms. Carter brought up last year's unprecedented number of high-need move-ins. She asked for an update on this trend. Dr. Hackett replied that what we are experiencing this year doesn't feel like what we've experienced in years prior; it appears to have stabilized.

Mr. Freeman asked what strategies are currently being considered to prepare for the anticipated tight fiscal year 2027 budget. Dr. Hackett replied that we have done restructuring and reduced the number of FTE's.

Ms. Jay expressed appreciation for the finance team's approach to presenting the information, noting that the format provided a more precise explanation than previous quarterly reports. She offered a few suggestions for improving the presentation slides. At first glance, the current format may suggest that expenses were overspent when, in fact, they were not. Ms. Jay also

asked if we are still transporting students from out-of-town. Dr. Hackett replied that there are 20 students, which is significantly down from last year. She also asked if we are still using outside consultants to fill positions. Dr. Scully answered that we are, but it is much less than in previous years.

E. EV Update - informational only

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Hackett skipped reviewing her Superintendent's Report.

POLICY READINGS

Draft policies:

- a. File IKFE: Competency Determination Policy - Second Reading
- b. File IKF: Graduation Requirement Policy - Second Reading
- c. File IHAIA: Middle School Pathway Policy; draft policy

Ms. Gaudet, Director of Secondary Education, joined the School Committee.

Ms. Cuthbertson moved to approve policy IHAIA: Middle School Pathway Policy, Ms. Carter seconded. The vote passed 4-0.

COMMUNITY SPEAK

No speakers.

POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

Items added:

- LHS Student Reps
- LPS Strategic Priorities
- AI Presentation
- SNAP and food insecurity for our staff

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Freeman made a motion to adjourn at 8:59 PM, Ms. Cuthbertson seconded. The vote passed 4-0.