

**LEXINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Tuesday, January 13, 2026**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**AGENDA:**

**CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME: 6:01 PM**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Eileen Jay, Chairperson  
Deepika Sawhney, Vice-Chair  
Sara Cuthbertson, Clerk  
Kathleen Lenihan  
Larry Freeman

**SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS PRESENT**

Dr. Julie Hackett, Superintendent

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

The School Committee convened remotely via Zoom. Please note that this meeting is being recorded and that it is in-person only. 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.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Payroll and Accounts Payable Warrant Approval

***Mr. Freeman read the following consent agenda items:***

- Payroll and Accounts Payable Warrant Approval
  - f. December 12, 2025 - BMO Warrant in the amount of \$24,196.64
  - g. December 12, 2025 - AP Warrant in the amount of \$2,875,912.61
  - h. December 26, 2025 - Payroll in the amount of \$5,255,123.50
  - i. January 9, 2026 - Payroll in the amount of \$5,062,599.62
  - j. January 16, 2026 - AP Warrant in the amount of \$1,014,850.23

***Ms. Carter read the following consent agenda items:***

- Payroll and Accounts Payable Warrant Approval
  - a. November 28, 2025 - BMO Warrant in the amount of \$41,374.79
  - b. November 28, 2025 - AP Warrant in the amount of \$2,056,248.38
  - c. November 28, 2025 - Payroll in the amount of \$5,223,440.78
  - d. December 12, 2025 - AP Warrant in the amount of \$1,351,014.20
  - e. December 12, 2025 - Payroll in the amount of \$5,238,552.76
  - k. January 16, 2026 - BMO Warrant in the amount of \$24,592.60

***Ms. Lenihan read the following consent agenda items:***

- Minutes
  - a. October 28, 2025

***Ms. Lenihan read the following consent agenda items:***

- Donations
  - a. \$1,000 Fidelity Charitable donation for the Fund for Lex and Lex Scholarship Fund
  - b. \$2,500 Hudson River Trading LLC donation for LHS Math Team
  - c. \$5,000 Symbotic LLC donation for First Robotics Club
  - d. Vote to approve a QuickTalker Freestyle device mount and an iPad mounting cradle from Ablenet, Inc. to use as needed for students

***Ms. Lenihan moved the entire consent agenda, Mr. Freeman seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote, the motion passed 5-0.***

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS AND LIAISON REPORTS**

Ms. Cuthbertson announced that numerous Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) Day related events are taking place this week. Although MLK Day is Monday, the events began the previous evening and will continue through next Monday, with schedules and volunteer sign-ups available through Lexington's MLK organization website.

Ms. Carter reiterated that there are a lot of great events happening and encouraged people to attend.

Ms. Lenihan shared that the School Building Committee recently reviewed interior design plans and encouraged the community to view the work, noting its importance for student learning and well-being. She also expressed support for educators, families, and community members in Minneapolis during this difficult time.

Ms. Jay announced upcoming Lunar New Year events, including the Chinese American Association of Lexington (CAAL) Lunar New Year celebration on February 7, 2026 at 7 p.m. in Cary Hall. Tickets are currently available through the CAAL website. She also noted that other organizations typically host Lunar New Year events such as Chinese Americans of Lexington (CALex) and the New Legacy Cultural Center (NLCC); additional details will be shared as they become available.

Mr. Freeman encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming MLK Day events.

## **COMMUNITY SPEAK**

Melanie Wood - 25 Butterfield Rd: She is a parent and educator who expressed support for the new AP science pathways but raised concerns that they significantly increase course

requirements for high-achieving students, creating schedule constraints and concentrating AP exams in junior and senior years. She suggested reconsidering the Environmental Earth Science requirement or allowing freshmen to take Biology as an alternative or elective to provide greater flexibility and better support advanced science students.

Wendi Hoffer - 3 Crawford Rd: Ms. Hoffer is representing 79 parents, caregivers, and community members advocating for the creation of a Technology Advisory Committee to address concerns about student technology use, review emerging research, and promote a collaborative, transparent process that supports student learning, equity, and well-being.

Jun Xu - 80 Outlook Dr: Ms. Xu is a parent with one graduate and one middle school student, who raised questions about a proposed curriculum change, expressing concern that AP opportunities are heavily concentrated in junior and senior years, creating added student burden. She asked about the rationale for this imbalance, whether earlier access to AP courses or placement testing for advanced students could be considered, and whether the school would support independent AP study and exam access. Ms. Xu requested clarification of the proposal and consideration of revisions to better balance academic demands across grade levels.

## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Hackett reviewed her [Superintendent's Report](#) with the School Committee. The highlights from her report include:

- Congratulations to Ainsley Cuthbertson for being number one in the United States for weight throw!
- Dr. Hackett shared a New Year update reflecting on positive accomplishments and memories from the past year, highlighting the successful debt exclusion vote on December 8.
- On December 16, 2025 we had a wonderful Core Values Award night, congratulations to all of the people who were recognized.
- Dr. Hackett attended a conference on December 3rd with Lexington elementary staff where Bowman, Bridge, and Estabrook were recognized by the state for MCAS scores returning to pre-pandemic levels. Dr. Hackett expressed appreciation for the recognition of educators' hard work.
- Lexington High School senior Vedant Saran was recognized as one of only 21 global winners in the 2025 John Locke Institute Essay Prize, earning third place in theology among over 63,000 submissions worldwide.
- Janet Novak, a Lexington High School math, policy debate, and public forum teacher, earned the 1st Diamond degree of membership in the National Speech & Debate Association's Honor Society. Janet will be formally recognized at the 2026 National Speech & Debate Tournament.
- Kevin Sylvia, Director of School Nutrition for Lexington Public Schools, received the national SNA Awards (School Nutrition Association) Trailblazer Award in recognition of his innovation and leadership in school nutrition programs.
- A list of upcoming performing arts is linked in the report.

- UMass Boston psychology professor Dr. Vivian Ciaramitaro visited LHS to meet with AP Psychology and Intro to Law students, sharing real-world research that sparked strong student engagement and thoughtful questions.
- Two important links are in the report for the Special Education review.
- The Student School Building Committee (S-SBC) has been working directly with designers to select a sculptor and a signature artistic element for the new building.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be conducting standard reviews of LPS.
- The Technology Department has been actively engaging with AI in education over the past two years through conferences and professional learning, developing district-wide guidelines for acceptable AI use. Staff will also participate in an upcoming AI in Education Summit at Bentley College in April, with opportunities for central office staff, educators, and School Committee members to attend.
- There has been a spike in flu cases, a reminder to the community to get vaccinated.
- LHS Asian American History students visited Chinatown, providing them with an authentic learning environment.
- On March 14, the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) and its community partners will host the 12th annual Parent and Caregiver Academy from 10:00 AM to 2:15 PM at the Lexington Community Center. Julie Fenn and her team organized this event, and everyone is encouraged to attend.

#### School Committee Questions/Comments:

Ms. Lenihan encouraged the School Committee or Policy Subcommittee to review the 2026 AI and Education Summit, noting the changing themes such as student use of AI for Learning. Ms. Lenihan raised concerns about AI's impact on children, academic integrity, environmental and energy demands of data centers, and disproportionate impacts on marginalized communities, and suggested considering how these issues align with Lexington's values. She also expressed interest in attending the summit.

#### **PRESENTATION: SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED FY27 BUDGET**

Dr. Hackett and Dr. Scully, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, presented the Superintendent's Recommended FY27 Budget PowerPoint.

Highlights from the presentation:

- Overview of the FY27 recommended budget and budget process, noting it is more challenging than prior years due to limited revenue growth.
- The budget is aligned with the district's four strategic goals and School Committee budget guidelines.
- The town's revenue allocation model provides 74% of new revenue to schools; however, the FY27 increase is the lowest percentage increase in the past 10 years.
- The FY27 budget reflects a 3.6% increase, below the 4.6% requested to meet projected needs.
- To balance the budget, the proposal includes 14.5 FTE reductions, with the possibility of additional reductions (20–30 FTEs) in the spring.

- Additional balancing measures include reduced high-risk special education tuition projections, use of revolving accounts, elimination of unallocated positions, and reliance on in-year circuit breaker funds.
- Expenses are largely driven by special education tuition and transportation costs; principals and administrators conducted detailed reviews to identify efficiencies.
- Line-item budgeting is being implemented to improve expense monitoring and accountability.
- Grant funding remains stable, enrollment is within projected ranges, and further review will occur in the spring.
- Administration emphasized efforts to preserve programs and reassign staff where possible and thanked staff for their extensive work on the FY27 budget and budget book.

#### School Committee Questions/Comments:

Mr. Freeman thanked Dr. Hackett and the finance team for their hard work, acknowledging the pressure to maintain a balanced budget while identifying cost savings and continuing to provide quality education for students. He also thanked Dr. Scully and team for increasing the circuit breaker reimbursement. Mr. Freeman asked for clarification about planned cost reductions in the spring and their potential impact. Dr. Scully explained that circuit breaker spending is difficult to predict until later in the year and expressed optimism that actual spending may be lower than projected due to careful monitoring and higher-than-expected reimbursements. He noted that the budget currently assumes 14.5 FTE reductions and use of up to \$4.4 million in in-year circuit breaker funds, and that any additional staffing efficiencies identified in the spring would reduce reliance on circuit breaker funding. Dr. Hackett added a shout-out to Heidi Zimmerman for bringing in the highest amount of reimbursement in Lexington's history.

Ms. Cuthbertson thanked the administration for their extensive work on the budget and noted that the district would be in a more difficult position without those efforts. She asked about the reliability of projected federal grant funding, given current uncertainty at the federal level, and how confident the administration is in those revenue estimates. Dr. Scully stated that he is fairly confident about grant money. He explained that most funding comes from stable sources like IDEA, METCO, and state health grants. We do have backup plans in case other grants, like Title I, are reduced.

Ms. Lenihan asked about substitute teacher costs and how the district compares to others. She notes that after the pandemic, it's important for teachers to stay home when sick, but the district still has to balance the cost of substitutes with keeping classes covered. Dr. Hackett responded that there are no direct comparison data available right now. DESE attendance data suggest Lexington may have slightly higher attendance than other districts, possibly due to more generous leave policies. Ms. Lenihan also asked whether last year's budget freeze shifted more costs or responsibilities to PTOs and PTAs; she expressed concerns that they may be filling gaps to meet student needs. Dr. Hackett replied that the district communicates regularly with PTO leaders and continues to cover normal day-to-day expenses through the budget process. PTOs are not expected to take on typical costs just to avoid administrative procedures. She further explained that last year's budget freeze was due to unexpected costs, including increased

enrollment, housing instability, delayed reimbursements, and higher transportation expenses. Those conditions are not present now, and a budget freeze is not currently being considered. Ms. Lenihan lastly shared that she visited Hastings Elementary and noted seeing the literacy pilot program. She raised a question about the potential cost of adopting a new elementary literacy curriculum and whether those costs might be surprising to the community. Dr. Hackett explained that the cost of a new elementary literacy curriculum is significant, estimated at about \$700,000, with one-time funds identified for the adoption. The district is also reviewing five-year costs and potential savings from multi-year purchasing options. Further analysis is planned, and the district emphasized that curriculum changes are not cost-free and will be approached with attention to cost efficiency. Dr. Scully added that we also get generous local grants from the LEF as another source of funding for student needs.

Ms. Carter thanked district and municipal staff for their work, then asked for clarification about a reported reduction of seven ABA FTEs. Her understanding is that the positions are being reclassified rather than eliminated and is seeking confirmation. Dr. Scully confirmed that the seven ABA FTEs were not eliminated but reclassified. He noted that change is explained in the budget book, with the positions moved to a different budget line to accurately reflect where they now appear. This is the last year the adjustment will be shown separately, and the increase is represented in the top line of the budget.

Ms. Jay commented that Lexington is feeling budget pressure because biotech businesses haven't brought in as much tax revenue as expected, and expenses like healthcare have gone up. She asked about flexibility for unallocated FTEs since the 12 unallocated FTEs aren't included in this year's budget. Ms. Jay wanted to know how the district can address unexpected staffing needs that arise from enrollment changes or adding sections in schools. Dr. Scully replied that flexibility in the budget is limited. Adjustments can be made during the year through things like staffing attrition or identifying offsets, but using large amounts of funding (like circuit breaker funds) reduces flexibility. Dr. Hackett added that if unallocated FTEs aren't available and needs grow, the district will actively review and reallocate existing resources rather than waiting. Positions will be examined before being filled, and special education stabilization and reserve accounts provide backup funding. Additional measures, like another budget freeze, could be used if necessary. Principals and the special education department collaborate to address new student needs internally. Mr. MacCutcheon added that implementing line-item budgeting is the most important change. It will allow the district to track spending more accurately, project future needs, and monitor each expense closely, which is especially helpful as budgets become tighter. Ms. Jay asked for clarification on FTE reporting for Unit A. She noted that while the budget shows a net reduction of 13.6 FTEs, seven BCBA positions were moved into Unit A, which were not previously counted. Ms. Jay asked whether the actual reduction for the original Unit A positions is effectively 21.6 FTEs when accounting for this adjustment. Dr. Scully confirmed that the FTE difference is accurate. The budget book includes a detailed Unit A chart showing the seven BCBA additions, as well as other increases and decreases in special education positions. The reported changes reflect the difference between FY26 and FY27 budgets, not the elimination of currently working positions, so the budget book serves as both a planning and historical record.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Jay stated that the School Committee would first take up New Business item #2 on proposed LHS curricular changes. .

### **A. LHS Proposed Science and World Language Curricular Changes**

Andrew Baker, LHS Principa; Jennifer Gaudet, Director of Secondary Education; Amy Moran, World Language Department Head; and Reggie Hobbs, Science Department Head, joined the School Committee.

Mr. Baker requested that the World Language presentation be presented first. Ms. Moran presented the World Language slideshow, these are some highlights:

- Reviewed enrollment data for the seven world languages offered, noting highest enrollment in Spanish, French, and Mandarin, which begin in middle school.
- Highlighted American Sign Language (ASL), German, Italian, and Latin as languages that begin at the high school level.
- Note that ASL is currently only a two-year sequence, limiting students' ability to meet typical college recommendations for three to four years of language study.
- Shared equity data showing students with disabilities are five times more likely, and Black students six times more likely, to enroll in ASL.
- Reported that German enrollment has declined by approximately 50% over the past nine years.
- Proposed phasing out the German program by eliminating German I next year, while allowing current students to complete the program.
- Proposed expanding ASL into a four-year pathway to address equity concerns and better use district resources.

#### School Committee Questions/Comments:

Ms. Carter's child took American Sign Language in high school and they are now studying it in college. She is personally excited about this idea.

Mr. Freeman expressed strong support for the proposed change, noting that while it does not fully resolve equity concerns, particularly for some special education students who may not take a language in their first year of high school, it represents a positive step in the right direction and he commended the administration for pursuing it.

Ms. Lenihan emphasized that current students enrolled in German will be able to complete the full four-year German sequence, and that no student already in the program will be displaced by the proposed change.

Mr. Baker shared that the current German teacher will remain at the high school and teach

other languages, helping ease concerns about the change.

Ms. Jay asked if staffing levels would need to be increased to accommodate American Sign Language. Ms. Moran explained that discontinuing German while expanding American Sign Language is expected to be budget neutral. Although a 0.5 FTE ASL teacher is needed, she indicated that this can be done within the existing budget by adjusting staffing based on enrollment. Ms. Jay also asked how this will be communicated to families. Mr. Baker replied that it will be listed in our program of studies as well as a newsletter and at our rising ninth grade caregiver night. Ms. Moran added that there's a curriculum night where this information will also be provided.

High School science teachers Parul Kumar, Daniel Abramovich, and Edward Barry joined as panelists as well as two students, Isabella Ward and Sophia Kao. Mr. Hobbs, Ms. Gaudet, and Mr. Baker presented the Science slideshow, these are some highlights:

- The administration reviewed the background and rationale for proposed changes to science instruction at Lexington High School, rooted in recent contract negotiations that resolved inequities in teaching loads.
- Science was identified as the last department without full instructional parity, requiring changes to scheduling and course structure to align all teachers to a four-out-of-six block teaching model.
- Differences in instructional load across departments were explained, with the goal of standardizing to 16 instructional blocks per cycle per full-time teacher.
- College Board expectations for AP science courses were reviewed, including required instructional time, depth of content, and significant lab-based inquiry learning.
- It was noted that under a four-block schedule, AP science courses would otherwise fall short of recommended instructional time, particularly for AP Biology and AP Chemistry.
- The administration proposed shifting AP Biology and AP Chemistry to “second-pass” courses, requiring students to complete a foundational first-year course before enrolling in AP.
- AP Physics was presented as an exception, remaining a first-pass course, since the conceptual content remains the same and the primary difference is the mathematical level.
- Changes to AP Physics C were outlined, including separating Mechanics and Electricity & Magnetism into distinct four-credit, four-block courses starting with the Class of 2027.
- A phased implementation timeline was shared, with AP Biology moving to a four-block model in FY27 and both AP Biology and AP Chemistry in FY28.
- The administration emphasized that students will continue to have access to multiple science electives and the opportunity to take up to three college-level science courses.
- Perspectives from AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and AP Physics teachers were shared, highlighting instructional benefits and student learning considerations.
- Student feedback from a pilot second-pass AP Biology course was presented, showing improved understanding, less memorization, more lab time, and stronger conceptual learning.

- Isabella and Sophia described their experiences, noting that second-pass AP Biology reduced stress, improved comprehension, expanded access, and made AP coursework less intimidating.
- The administration concluded that the proposed changes maintain rigor, align with College Board guidance, support equity, and better prepare students for advanced science learning.

School Committee Questions/Comments:

Mr. Freeman thanked staff for their work and for including teacher and student voices in the presentation. He shared that while he initially questioned removing the option to take AP Biology as a first-pass course, the student feedback helped clarify the rationale. Mr. Freeman expressed support for the decision, acknowledging potential community questions, and stated that the changes move the high school science program in a positive direction.

Ms. Carter expressed concern about changing a long-standing AP science model that has worked successfully for many students over decades. She requested broader student feedback beyond the two students presented and questioned whether moving from a six-day AP cycle to a two-year sequence results in instructional time that exceeds College Board recommendations; she asked for clarification on that issue. Mr. Hobbs clarified that the College Board's recommended instructional time applies to a second-year AP course. The current six-block model at the high school provides about 120 meetings that effectively combine first- and second-pass content in AP Biology and AP Chemistry. Ms. Carter also noted that most schools follow the recommended model, unlike Lexington, which is outside typical norms. She pointed out that many districts offer biology in freshman year, rather than Earth Science, or engineering, and suggested this may be worth reconsidering. Ms. Carter expressed concern that the proposed sequence could require students to double up on AP sciences in junior or senior year to take three APs, and suggested that offering biology in freshman year could better support students who wish to take one AP science each year in sophomore, junior, and senior years. Mr. Baker acknowledged feedback and explained that the changes reflect both a long-standing commitment to environmental and earth science and practical constraints related to science licensure, staffing, and FTE requirements. The changes are required by contract mandates, with the goal of preserving rigorous science opportunities for students. He noted that a 10th-grade honors biology course will be offered next year and expressed confidence that the revised sequencing will better support students by building stronger foundations, reducing stress in later AP courses, and improving integration across science disciplines. While recognizing that change can be difficult, Mr. Baker emphasized that feedback is being heard and considered. Ms. Gaudet added that second-pass courses allow students to reach a much greater depth of understanding than introductory courses, which are limited by time. Teachers and students do not have enough time in first-pass courses for deep exploration or independent scientific work. She noted that compared to other STEM schools, Lexington High School has offered fewer opportunities for independent research. The goal of second-pass courses is to provide deeper learning and inquiry, which she believes will be transformative for students.

Ms. Lenihan expressed strong support for the proposed science changes, noting that many peer

schools require introductory biology and chemistry before AP courses. She shared concerns that taking AP science without prior introductory classes can discourage students and turn them away from science. M. Lenihan emphasized that introductory courses help students discover interest in science and better prepare for AP classes. While supporting the importance of environmental science, she suggested exploring ways to fit required content more flexibly. Overall, she viewed the changes as a positive opportunity to better support students and expand access to advanced science.

Ed Barry, a long-time teacher, stated that while Lexington remains a strong science school, the proposed changes will help students become better scientists and learners in the long run, not just strong test takers. He noted that students are often overextended and under too much pressure, with little time to be kids. Mr. Barry emphasized the importance of balance and he reminds students that there is more to life than academics.

Mr. Freeman highlighted the significant mental health pressures faced by high school students, including self-imposed, peer, and parental expectations. He stressed that curriculum updates should consider student well-being alongside academic success.

Ms. Cuthbertson thanked the presenters for their work and expressed support for the proposal, noting it could expand access to AP courses, especially for students who need more time to adjust to high school. She acknowledged mental health and workload concerns, particularly the potential for increased pressure during junior year, and noted there is no perfect solution for all students. Ms. Cuthbertson valued the opportunity for deeper learning and stronger foundational knowledge before AP courses. She asked for clarification about how concurrent enrollment for college credit would work. Mr. Hobbs explained that LHS offers three concurrent enrollment (CE) science courses: Honors CE Physics, Astronomy, and Environmental Studies. These courses are taught during the school day by LHS teachers and are aligned with college-level standards. Through a partnership with Middlesex Community College, students may opt in to earn one semester of college credit per course by paying a fee of approximately \$500. Participation is optional, and about 30–40% of eligible students currently choose to enroll for credit. Mr. Hobbs noted that these credits may be especially valuable if students later transfer colleges and emphasized ongoing efforts to increase student awareness and participation. Mr. Abramovich shared a brief anecdote illustrating the long-term benefits of concurrent enrollment credits. He explained that having a college credit from high school can help students later in life. Ms. Gaudet explained that concurrent enrollment (CE) credits are part of the Massachusetts Core Block of transfer credits, meaning all public colleges in the state must accept them. This is a key advantage over AP credits, which are not automatically accepted. Many private colleges also accept CE credits, providing significant benefits and flexibility for students.

Ms. Jay supports the proposed science changes, noting the thoughtful consideration behind them. She emphasized the importance of teaching science process skills and independent research as essential for students to understand and engage with science beyond memorizing content. She highlighted that AP courses, like AP Biology, focus on narrow, in-depth topics and

can miss broader areas such as ecology, human anatomy, and plants/animals. A foundational course before AP allows students to gain this broader knowledge while still offering in-depth study for those interested. Ms. Jay also noted that jumping straight into AP courses as a sophomore can be stressful, supporting the mental health considerations mentioned by others. Overall, she believes the changes provide flexibility, a stronger foundation, and thoughtful opportunities for students to succeed in science.

Dr. Hackett thanked the students, teachers, and staff for their contributions, noting that the student stories were thoughtful and demonstrated a strong understanding of learning. She emphasized that the changes are about what is best for students, not just fulfilling contract requirements.

## **B. Transportation and Athletic Fee Proposal**

Dr. Scully summarized the Transportation and Athletic Fee Proposal memo, these are some highlights:

- Structural deficits were identified in athletics and transportation revolving funds.
- Early childhood (LCP) funds are also noted, but issues are separate due to prior tuition increases.
- Revolving Funds collect user fees to cover program-specific costs.
- Fees are used to subsidize actual costs, which often exceed fees collected.

Transportation:

- Fees: \$330–\$550 per student; actual cost > \$1,000 per student.
- Carryforward balance has dropped approximately 50% over 3–4 years.
- Fees largely unchanged since fiscal year 2013, not keeping pace with rising costs.
- Options to address deficit: increase operating budget or raise transportation fees.

Athletics :

- Carryforward projected to drop from \$654,000 (FY22) to \$49,000.
  - Fees support coaches, officials, game management, etc., but have remained stagnant despite rising costs.
  - Revenue depends on student participation; deficit could impact next fiscal year.
  - Options to address deficit: increase operating budget or modestly increase fees.
- The goal is to stabilize revolving fund balances so year-to-year costs match revenue.
  - Dr. Hackett expressed support for a fee increase and noted that the historical context provided was helpful. No fee adjustments will be made at this meeting, as this was intended as a preliminary discussion. The proposal will be placed on a future agenda for further discussion and a possible vote, with an emphasis on providing advance notice so stakeholders can plan for the fall.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **Special Education District Review**

1. Special Education District Review - Superintendent's Cover Letter
2. Special Education District Review - Full Report

Dr. Hackett reported that the special education district review, which was delayed due to the pandemic, is now complete. The superintendent's cover letter and the full report addressing special education from K-12 have been shared with committee members, outlining seven key recommendations. The review focuses on improving outcomes for students, supporting staff, and increasing system efficiency. Community and staff sessions are planned in January through April to discuss the findings and gather input for developing an action plan. No decisions have

been made at this stage.

- Laura Spear, Executive Director of Student Services, highlighted four out of seven areas of opportunity that were identified;
  1. Implementing a consistent district-wide approach to reading and literacy.
  2. Implement best practice interventions at the secondary level to ensure that all students who struggle have access to extra time direct instruction delivered by content strong teachers.
  3. Increase general education teacher capacity and confidence to play a larger role in supporting students who struggle through expanded instructional coaching.
  4. Implement objective, transparent, and automatic criteria for identifying students who require additional academic support.
  
- Sara Fenzel, Director of Special Education, reviewed five through seven;
  5. Redesign the severe needs special education programs to focus on a narrower range of student needs in each classroom.
  6. Place a greater emphasis on fostering lifelong independence for students with more significant disabilities.
  7. Closely manage student group size to expand the reach of specialized staff.

## **COMMUNITY SPEAK**

Olga Guttag, Emerson Rd: She emphasized the importance of collecting detailed, account-by-account budget data and developing a bottom-up budget that fully accounts for all positions and responsibilities. Ms. Guttag suggested reviewing staffing, including possible eliminations or reallocations, and recommended using stipends for additional duties to reduce costs. She also encouraged replacing some outside consultants with in-house staff and improving transparency by clearly showing total compensation and program costs.

## **POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS**

None added.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

***Ms. Cuthbertson made a motion to adjourn at 9:29 pm, Ms. Lenihan seconded. Ms. Jay took a roll call vote, passed 5-0.***