

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 22, 2025**

Present Members: Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne, Vice-Chair Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Vincent Murphy, Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett, and Student representative Danielle Lewis

The September 22, 2025, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM in the LGI by Chair Laura Gallagher Byrne. A motion was made by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Announcement: this meeting is being audio and video recorded
There was no Public Comment

Superintendent's Update

Superintendent Hallett provided updates on e-bike usage and transportation. She reported a sharp increase in e-bike use on school property, including inappropriate riding on fields and sidewalks, resulting in at least three accidents. The student handbooks outline rules requiring e-bikes to be walked on school grounds and parked at least ten feet from buildings. Facilities staff, in coordination with Beth, identified improved bike parking locations to reduce sidewalk use. She noted that electric dirt bikes are classified as vehicles and require a license.

On transportation, Superintendent Hallett rode the Old South bus route for two mornings to observe student experiences. She noted that it is the longest route, taking approximately an hour and 15 minutes, and praised the students for their good behavior while highlighting the high demand for bus transportation. She reported that the route was overcrowded, carrying 71 students, which exceeded bus capacity. In response, the district has added a fifth bus route, with Morgan Gray recognized for creating it and a new bus color planned. When asked about bus color codes and procedures for students who forget or lose their pass, she advised that students check in at the front office to verify parent registration.

Dr. Hallett congratulated Dr. Lepore on his debut feature on *60 Minutes* for his work with genetically modified field mice. She acknowledged the impact of his research on students affected by Lyme disease and expressed appreciation for his contributions. She also noted the strong support the project has received from the Select Board and conveyed her regret that Dr. Lepore was not present to receive her congratulations in person.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Athletic Complex Renovations Update - Chip Clunie, Director of Facilities

Chip Clunie, Director of Facilities, provided an update on the Athletic Complex renovation plans. He explained that the stadium currently lacks a track and requires several upgrades. The proposed plan includes an asphalt track with a natural grass infield for football, soccer, and lacrosse, which is expected to accommodate current spring track participants and potentially increase enrollment. Additional improvements include new bleachers, an ADA-compliant press box and visiting team seating, and a new team building with training rooms, bathrooms, and storage. The booster shack will be updated with a kitchen, merchandise room, and attached ADA-compliant bathrooms. Lighting will be enhanced with 70-foot poles designed to minimize light pollution. ADA compliance has been incorporated into the plans with input from the ADA officer and relevant staff. Cost estimates currently range from \$15 to \$18 million. The presentation sought School Committee approval to proceed, after which the project would be submitted to the Finance Committee and potentially placed on the spring ballot for public vote.

Mr. Murphy asked whether the vote being sought was to advance the project to the design phase or to move forward with cost estimations. Mr. Clunie clarified that the vote is intended to advance the project to the appropriate committees so it can be placed on the ballot for public approval.

Mr. Murphy shared that he had conducted extensive research and reviewed past School Committee votes in response to numerous community questions regarding turf, spectator distance, and other concerns. After careful consideration, he expressed support for the plan, noting that while change can be difficult and multi-use surfaces are often preferred, natural grass remains the most appropriate choice. He emphasized the need for a facility better suited for track and field activities. Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked whether the public would be able to use the new track. Mr. Clunie replied that this is the goal, though security and vandalism are concerns. The project will include

added security cameras and other built-in protections. Superintendent Hallett inquired about the track material, and Mr. Clunie confirmed it will be asphalt, similar to standard roads, and the project aims to be PFAS-free. The grass field will be natural, with irrigation supplied by on-site wells rather than the town water system, and a new drainage system will support easier maintenance. Mr. Clunie noted that challenges with field space, usage, and compliance with town fertilizer regulations remain ongoing considerations for the health of the harbor. Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked how construction would impact school teams. Mr. Clunie acknowledged that the project will be challenging and disruptive for everyone, including daytime wellness classes, noting that the fields are heavily used and careful planning will be required. A committee member asked about the timeline. Mr. Clunie replied 2 years. Dr. Hallett emphasized that moving forward with the project is necessary. She noted that while the current field conditions are acceptable, they do not meet safety standards or the needs of student athletes. She expressed hope that the project can proceed quickly to begin the necessary work.

4th Quarter Budget Update - Martin Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools

Martin Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools, provided the fourth-quarter budget update, describing FY26 as an extremely challenging year due to ongoing pressures on operating expenses and inflationary increases. He noted that while payroll remains the largest portion of the budget, operating costs have struggled to keep pace, and reliance on revolving accounts to cover deficits is not sustainable. Special education expenses, particularly out-of-district tuition, increased by over \$340,000, though use of the special education reserve mitigated much of the impact. Circuit breaker reimbursements have improved, thanks to the efforts of the Special Education Director, but the budget has remained under pressure. The Community School program ended the year with an \$83,000 deficit, largely due to rising staffing costs, prompting discussions with the town regarding increasing the \$600,000 annual subsidy to maintain program affordability. The School Lunch program saw an improved financial position, reducing its deficit to \$71,000 from \$291,000 the previous year, performing well below the budgeted \$140,000 deficit. Mr. Anguelov highlighted the transition in food service leadership, with new director Theresa Flores taking over from Erin Long, and emphasized continued focus on quality, nutrition, and ensuring all eligible students receive free lunches and breakfasts. He indicated that FY27 planning will incorporate these pressures and adjustments, with further details to be shared in upcoming budget directives.

Ms. Danielle Lewis, student representative, reported positive feedback on school meals, noting that both the lunches and free breakfast program are well received, and commended the food service staff. Ms. Gallagher-Byrne inquired about the status of 56 Centre Street and whether the Community School pays rent. Mr. Anguelov stated that the rent has been affordable for years but is expected to double. Dr. Hallett noted that the Community School will be losing some office space in the building to accommodate the music center. Dr. Hallett noted that the Community School is facing challenges as its rent is doubling and it is now expected to cover the full cost of supplies. She stressed how essential the school is to the community, highlighting programs such as Learn to Swim, driver's education, journeyman classes, and English as a Second Language, among many others. She expressed concern that increased financial pressures could force the school to raise prices or risk losing staff, which could impact the wide range of valuable services it provides to the island. Ms. Gallagher-Byrne also asked about the dance program following Kelly Corbett's departure, and Dr. Hallett shared that the program continues to thrive and that additional information can be obtained from the Community School.

Budget Planning Calendar - Martin Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools

Mr. Anguelov provided an overview of the FY27 budget process. He explained that initial budgets were delayed to allow for more accurate projections, including filling positions and accounting for current costs in a volatile economic environment affected by tariffs and other pressures. He outlined the upcoming timeline: by October 1, the budget calendar and directives will be finalized, followed by internal meetings with principals, department heads, and student councils through December to refine requests. Mr. Anguelov also noted that teacher contract negotiations with the NTA will be a key factor, along with operating pressures in athletics, facilities, special education, and curriculum. Capital requests, including the athletic complex, technology, and building repairs, will be presented to the Capital Program Committee on October 2, then forwarded to the Select Board and incorporated into the town's overall capital plan. School Committee presentations are scheduled for January 6 and 20, with a public budget hearing in February. Once approved by the School Committee, the budget moves to the town finance committee, with final approval incorporated into the town's general fund budget. Town Meeting is scheduled for May 4, with a potential continuation on May 5 if necessary.

Budget Directives - Superintendent Hallett

Superintendent Hallett outlined the FY27 budget directives, noting the unusual timing of beginning the process so

early in the school year but emphasizing the need to be prepared for the town's budget schedule. She stated that all building and systemwide budgets must align with district strategy and improvement plans, reflect projected enrollment and curricular needs, and ensure that any new staffing or programs are offset unless additional appropriations allow otherwise. She highlighted the importance of supporting programs that meet students' physical, social, and emotional needs, while acknowledging the unpredictability of special education costs. She emphasized continued investment in professional development to strengthen equity, access, and inclusivity. She noted that the district will pursue federal and state grants and other revenue sources to support the budget and that all proposals must reflect three-year expenditure trends, accurate utility data, and close monitoring of food services and Community School finances. She added that budget planning will continue in coordination with town officials and that the district will actively communicate and seek community support for the FY27 budget through public forums and meetings.

Mr. Murphy asked how far ahead the district plans. Dr. Hallett explained that planning looks approximately five years ahead, considering birth rates on the island, student arrival trends, and overall enrollment.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked how much support is from local grants. Dr. Hallett noted that the district continues to benefit from support provided by longstanding local partners, including the Golf Club, the Nantucket Education Trust, and the Community Foundation for Nantucket. She explained that most available grants tend to be smaller, project-based awards for individual teachers, while larger state grants offer significantly higher funding levels. She added that the opportunities pursued depend on the district's priorities at any given time.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked whether teachers who are not union members receive benefits from upcoming negotiations. Dr. Hallett explained that non-union teachers do receive the benefits, as negotiations apply to the positions covered by the contract rather than individual teachers.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the 2025-2026 Nantucket Elementary School Handbook, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the 2025-2026 Nantucket Intermediate School Handbook, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the 2025-2026 Cyrus Peirce Middle School Handbook, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the 2025-2026 Nantucket High School Handbook, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to support the proposed athletic complex renovations, Vincent Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation of school supplies with an estimated value of \$1,200.00 from St. Paul's Church to Nantucket Elementary and Intermediate School, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve June 25, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the July 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve Transfers & Invoices, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Student Council Representative - Danielle Lewis

Ms. Lewis, the Student Council Representative, introduced herself and reported that the first day of school went smoothly and that sports programs are fully underway, noting the football team's undefeated record. She stated that Yondr pouches are meeting their intended purpose, though student opinions remain mixed. She added that she is a big fan of Raptor, but the student body generally feels uncertain about it. She highlighted the success of the high school's recent club fair, which helped students learn about available activities, and mentioned that band classes are planning a trip to Disney. She also shared the excitement surrounding ongoing homecoming preparations and asked the Committee if there was anything further they wished her to address. In response to questions, Ms. Lewis explained to Ms. Bloise-Murphy that student concerns about Yondr pouches stem mainly from having another item to carry and from the perception of the system as a mandate, resulting in roughly a 50/50 split in support. When Mr. Murphy asked about wait times for unlocking the pouches, she noted that the

process is improving. Dr. Hallett asked her to remind students that the pouches are simply a tool to support the school's no-phone policy.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Through the chair Dr. Hallett requested the policy committee meets and she will be sharing an invitation for the bargaining of the teacher unit.

Agenda for the next meeting - October 8, 2025 - October Student Enrollment, Homeschooling Report, Competency Determination Update, Advanced Placement Results

Adjournment

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Motion to adjourn at 7:14 PM by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, seconded by Timothy Vincent Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk