

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2025**

Present Members: Vice-Chair Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, Esmeralda Martinez, Vincent Murphy, Student Representative Danielle Lewis and Superintendent Elizabeth Hallett

Guests: Steven LaRosa, Weston & Sampson, John McMeeking and Ken Costello - SMRT Architects & Engineers

The December 8, 2025, School Committee hybrid meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM in the Meeting Trailer, Room A by Vice-Chair Shantaw Bloise Murphy. A motion was made by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Vincent Murphy. The agenda was approved unanimously. Roll call was then taken.

Announcement: this meeting is being audio and video recorded

Vice Chair Bloise-Murphy explained public comments are limited to 3 minutes each with a total of 30 minutes. Hybrid tonight will be bouncing back and forth online.

Student Madden Myers spoke during public comment on behalf of Nantucket High School students, emphasizing broad student support for the installation of a turf field and synthetic track. She referenced more than 300 student signatures, concerns about injuries caused by current grass field conditions, and the impact on student-athletes who miss instructional time due to off-island competitions. She noted the large student turnout as evidence of the issue's importance and urged the committee to consider student input when voting. She advocated for a turf and track facility that would improve safety, reduce maintenance, support multiple sports, and reflect the pride and commitment students bring to their athletic programs, and expressed gratitude for the opportunity for students to be heard and for the planned renovation.

Meri Lepore spoke during public comment as a parent and alumna, acknowledging the time and effort invested in the Capizzo Stadium planning process while expressing concern about what she described as an imbalance in priorities. She stated that while the turf proposal has received extensive attention over several years, academics and curriculum have not received comparable focus despite concerning student performance data. She cited recent MCAS results indicating low percentages of students meeting grade-level expectations in reading and English language arts, and emphasized that literacy, math, and early intervention represent the most pressing challenges facing the district. She urged the committee to prioritize academic outcomes and teacher support, advocate for safe and well-maintained natural grass fields, and direct greater time and resources toward improving student achievement.

Libby Garrette, joined by teammates from the Grade 5 girls soccer team, addressed the committee to express their support for installing turf fields and a regulation track. They shared that soccer is an important and valued part of their school experience, but practices and games are frequently canceled or disrupted due to muddy, unsafe, or uneven grass fields. They emphasized concerns about player safety, including injuries caused by poor field conditions, and stated that a turf surface would provide a safer, more reliable environment for skill development and enjoyment of the sport. The students also noted a desire for facilities that reflect school pride and are comparable to those of other schools, concluding that a turf field and track would benefit young athletes across all sports on the island.

Brian Sullivan spoke in support of both the turf field and track, noting his experience as a spring sport coach and the positive reception his athletes had when playing on turf at Nobadeer. He emphasized that the community has the resources to support both projects, highlighted the potential for increased participation and activity, and praised the student voices advocating for the upgrades.

Jennie Cook, Nantucket Soccer Club board member, coach, and parent of four student-athletes, spoke in strong support of turf fields and a synthetic track. She highlighted the poor condition of existing fields, safety risks, and the difficulties of maintaining them, echoing points made by other community members. Ms. Cook emphasized the benefits of turf for students and the wider community, including safe year-round use, and urged the committee

to honor the clear advocacy of student athletes and community preferences. She referenced updated science on turf safety and asked the committee to prioritize the well-being and opportunities of the students in their decision.

Grace Hanlon, a high school student-athlete, spoke in support of a new turf field and track, emphasizing the positive impact on athletic programs, school pride, and student recognition. She noted that current field conditions are unsafe and uneven, causing injuries and limiting performance. Ms. Hanlon highlighted that a modern turf field would provide a reliable, safe surface for athletes and allow the school to host meets, ensuring students compete on the same level as other schools. She spoke on behalf of her teammates and classmates, urging the committee to prioritize student needs.

Addysen Veysey, student and student-athlete, spoke in support of a new turf field and track, emphasizing the importance of consistent practice and safe playing conditions. She noted that rainy weather often forces cancellations on the current fields and highlighted injuries caused by uneven surfaces. Veysey stressed the value of team support, both on and off the field, and cited the petition of 300 students advocating for improved facilities. She urged the committee to take action and prioritize student input in the decision-making process.

Willa Arsenal, representing the Nantucket Land and Water Council, spoke against the installation of synthetic turf and track materials at Capizo Stadium. She emphasized the council's mission to protect Nantucket's land and the sole source aquifer supplying public drinking water. Ms. Arsenal cited concerns about PFAS contamination, microplastics, and long-term material degradation, noting that stricter state regulations and improved testing highlight these risks. She referenced actions by other municipalities banning or placing moratoriums on synthetic turf. Ms. Arsenal advocated for prioritizing natural grass alternatives, which can meet athletic demands while protecting the community's water supply, and urged the committee to require independent third-party analysis for any proposed materials.

Michelle Whellen, speaking as a parent and community member, urged caution regarding the installation of artificial turf fields. She emphasized that synthetic turf can release harmful substances, including PFAS, heavy metals, and microplastics, which pose risks to Nantucket's sole source aquifer and public health. She highlighted environmental concerns, noting that turf has a limited lifespan and creates toxic waste that cannot be easily recycled. She advocated for natural grass fields, citing their safety, sustainability, and preference among professional athletes, and stressed that any alternative materials should undergo thorough independent testing before use.

Bailey Lower, a Nantucket High School alumna and former lacrosse and cross country athlete, expressed support for the turf field and synthetic track. She emphasized that the project would benefit both high school and middle school sports programs, providing young athletes with opportunities to pursue their goals safely and effectively. She reiterated points from a previously submitted letter and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak.

Kate Garrette emphasized that the committee hired Weston & Sampson, an independent consulting firm, to conduct real-world studies showing that turf fields pose no safety or environmental risks. She urged reliance on data and science rather than opinion or fear, noting that PFAS levels in turf are far lower than in common consumer products. She stressed that the full report is available online and should guide decisions, highlighting that science, not conjecture, should lead the discussion.

Rory Murray, an NHS alumnus and former cross-country runner, expressed support for a turf field and synthetic track. He recalled frequent ankle injuries on the gravel track that cut seasons short and emphasized that safer, all-weather surfaces would allow athletes to practice consistently and perform at their best. He thanked the committee for considering the changes and highlighted the potential to enhance the school's athletic programs.

Graham Veysey noted that after years of community discussion and an independent review by Weston & Sampson, the proposed turf materials were shown to be safe, with no detectable harmful chemicals. She contrasted this with the maintenance requirements of natural grass, noting its uneven surfaces, chemical use, and high water consumption. She highlighted rising costs, outdated facilities, and the inability of the track team to host

meets, stressing that delays only harm students. She urged the committee to prioritize the needs of the children, follow the science, and advance the turf and track plan for community approval.

Ayesha Khan, a parent of two public school students, emphasized the importance of safe and healthy playing fields for both children and the environment. She acknowledged the school's maintenance team for improving field conditions but noted that professional support could further enhance safety. She highlighted that elite athletes across major sports overwhelmingly prefer natural grass for safety and performance, citing NFL and FIFA standards. Ms. Khan suggested that Nantucket could maintain high-quality, safe grass fields with some additional resources, aligning local practices with the preferences of professional athletes.

Jami Lower expressed full support for the turf field and synthetic track, thanking students, alumni, and younger athletes for sharing their perspectives. She highlighted the courage of the fifth and sixth graders who spoke and noted the passion all athletes feel for having a turf field. Lower emphasized that a turf field would give students more opportunities to play, develop skills, elevate their game, and take pride in their school.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy closed public comment and noted that the numerous letters received will be made public. Dr. Hallett clarified they will be included in the next meeting packet on the 16th for transparency.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Hallett reported that student enrollment decreased by five, from 1,660 in November to 1,655, with losses at NES, NIS, and NHS, while CPS remained unchanged. She highlighted the Massachusetts Graduation Council's preliminary recommendations following the repeal of the MCAS graduation requirement. The council envisions graduates as thinkers, contributors, and leaders, emphasizing rigorous study, mastery demonstrated through exams and portfolios, career planning beginning in middle school, completion of FAFSA and MASFA applications, and financial literacy coursework. Optional seals of distinction, such as for bilingualism or career and technical education, were also noted. Nantucket Public Schools will next update the required IKF policy to include end-of-course assessments and mastery language, with submission expected by December 31st.

Dr. Lepore inquired about the specific concerns regarding the graduation requirements. Dr. Hallett explained that, without assessments to demonstrate mastery, expectations would rely on local scoring and would need to contribute to final evaluations. Ms. Lewis asked for clarification on the FAFSA and MASFA requirements. Dr. Hallett noted that these are currently recommendations, with expectations still being developed and the guidance in its early stages. Mr. Murphy asked if end-of-course assessments will be required for a high school diploma. Dr. Hallett responded that while these assessments will be important, not passing one does not automatically prevent a student from graduating. The district will determine how much the assessment counts toward a course grade, likely between 10–20%, based on state recommendations. Students are expected to take the assessments seriously, but they will not replace MCAS, which will continue to be administered annually and remain necessary for certain scholarships, such as the John and Abigail Adams scholarships.

Dr. Hallett provided additional updates, including a reminder about the E-bike regulation, noting that electric bikes without a throttle are limited to 20 mph, and Chief Kasper expressed thanks. She congratulated CPS Coral teachers, highlighted upcoming NHS band and choir events, and announced that December 23 will be a half day.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Vito Capizzo Stadium Renovation Discussion - Steven LaRosa, Weston & Sampson, John McMeeking and Ken Costello - SMRT Architects & Engineers

John McMeeking, a landscape architect with SMRT, spoke alongside Ken Costello, senior landscape architect and senior principal, and Nantucket Public Schools environmental consultant Steven LaRosa from Weston & Sampson. Mr. McMeeking shared his screen and provided updates in response to questions from the November 6 meeting. The project includes a 400-meter running track (asphalt or synthetic), a natural grass or synthetic turf athletic field, a 980-seat home grandstand, a 100-seat visitor bleacher, LED field lighting, team and concessions buildings, visitor parking, ADA upgrades, and utility improvements. Three options were presented: (1) natural grass with asphalt track, (2) natural grass with polyurethane track, and (3) synthetic turf with polyurethane track. SMRT emphasized they are providing information, not advocating for any option. Cost estimates by PCM show a \$3.7 million difference between options one and three, excluding design, management, and testing fees. Field usage analysis was updated from 2021 to 2025, showing that over 1,000 hours of play on natural grass leads to turf loss,

field damage, and higher injury risk. John McMeeking provided an overview of the project schedule. Design and engineering are expected to take about three to three and a half months, with schematic design already completed. Permitting through the Historic District Commission could take one to one and a half months. Public bidding under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 149, including subcontractor bids, may take another month to a month and a half. Construction is estimated at 12 to 18 months, accounting for island conditions, weather, and contractor performance. The project will require an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) for oversight and regular cost estimating after design development. The design timeline progresses from schematic design to design development and then construction documents. If design authorization is immediate, design and engineering would finish by mid-March, permitting could proceed simultaneously, and bids would be received by late April. Assuming town approval in May, construction could begin after graduation in late June and potentially be completed by December 2027. He also addressed turf recycling. He explained that synthetic turf is fully recyclable, including the carpet, backing, and infill. Infill materials are cleaned and repurposed for other fields, while the carpet and backing are shredded into low-density polyethylene pellets for manufacturing reuse. He noted that Turf Recyclers USA in Rockland, Massachusetts, handles this process locally, avoiding long-distance shipping. The facility has the capacity to recycle approximately five million square feet per year, equivalent to 50–100 fields.

Ms. Bloise- Murphy then invited Steven LaRosa from Weston & Sampson to present.

Environmental consultant Steven LaRosa shared analytical test results from Tencate for **Brock** artificial turf systems, which were tested for PFAS using two different methods. The tests, conducted in September and November 2024, found no individual PFAS in any components, a significant improvement from low levels detected in 2022. Detection limits have improved, giving greater confidence in these results. Total organic fluorine tests, which indicate intentionally added PFAS, also returned nondetectable results at one part per million, far below the 100 parts per million threshold used by states with PFAS regulations. Mr. LaRosa noted that manufacturers have been working to remove PFAS and that recycling facilities are operational. He recommended that all project materials be independently tested and documented to ensure compliance and safety from production to use.

Dr. Lepore asked about the difference between parts per million in materials and the much lower parts per trillion standard for water. Steven LaRosa explained that the parts per million measurement reflects total organic fluorine in the turf material, much of which is not PFAS. Regulations consider materials below 100 parts per million as having no intentionally added PFAS. The parts per trillion standard applies to water, representing the safe limits for PFAS that might leach from soil or materials into groundwater. Massachusetts uses parts per billion thresholds in soils to ensure water stays below parts per trillion levels.

Dr. Lepore asked about microplastics. Mr. LaRosa explained that his focus was on chemical testing, not microplastics, which are harder to measure. He noted a synthetic field has about 20 tons of plastic that will break down over time, releasing microplastics. In other fields he's worked on, runoff is captured and filtered to reduce environmental impact. Mr. Costello explained that the field will use a closed drainage system, capturing all runoff into a collection system that can be filtered. Additional physical measures, such as grates and walk-off mats, can be added to prevent plastics from leaving the field. The infill will be organic, leaving only the plastic fibers, which will gradually break down. He noted that while microplastics are inevitable, design measures can help mitigate their impact. Costello also acknowledged the field sits above a recharge zone for the aquifer, highlighting the importance of careful management.

Dr. Lepore asked about heavy metals and lead. Mr. LaRosa noted that there were past concerns with crumb rubber infill. Mr. Costello added that the synthetic turf manufacturer eliminated all lead from the product several years ago.

Mr. Murphy asked about the draining system so we can understand that the water is minimized. Mr. Costello explained that the field uses an underground drainage system. Rainwater drains vertically through the field into a stone basin, then through flat drains to perimeter pipes, and finally into an underground detention system that infiltrates the water on-site. No drainage leaves the property.

Mr. Murphy asked if the system requires maintenance to ensure it functions properly and whether testing could be done to confirm that any groundwater risk during maintenance is minimized.

Mr. Costello explained that all water is collected in one or two manhole-accessed locations. The system undergoes periodic maintenance and inspections, and water could be tested there if desired.

Mr. LaRosa added that rainwater falling on the field already contains PFAS, so any water sampled from the collection system should be compared to rainwater to determine if there's a change.

Mr. Murphy asked if PFAS from uniforms and balls could enter the grass. Mr. LaRosa confirmed, noting that the grass already contains PFAS.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked what would happen if the project approved at town meeting ended up costing more. Mr. Anguelov responded that projects of this size could request supplemental funding. Mr. Murphy noted that costs would likely continue to rise. Ms. Bloise-Murphy clarified that no vote would occur that night. Ms. Bloise-Murphy explained this was not being voted on tonight and if anyone has questions to please email.

Dr. Lepore would like to test a sample of the proposed turf by an independent lab. Mr. LaRosa agreed and strongly recommended doing so.

Federal Grants - Mellisa Devitt, Assistant Superintendent of Academic Operations, Barbara Cohen, Director of English Language Learners, Deb Gately, Executive Director of Special Services

Ms. Devitt began the presentation on federal grants, covering Titles I, II, and IV, while noting that Title III would be addressed by Ms. Cohen, and the IDEA program by Dr. Gately. She explained that all federal grants must align with the district improvement plan (DIP), supporting strategic initiatives such as professional development and summer school. The 2026 summer school program will run at least five weeks, funded by Title I and Title III, with Title I focusing on literacy and instructional practices, Title III on language acquisition, and Title IV on equity. Title II funds are supporting a mentoring program for 35 new educators, while parent engagement initiatives are funded through Title III. Ms. Devitt outlined the grant allocations: Title I at \$639,000 (including \$20,000 for summer school, \$100,000 for literacy coaching, and \$75,000 for high-quality instructional materials), Title II over \$35,000, and Title IV \$10,000, which was incorporated into Title I funding. Ms. Cohen will later cover Title III, which totals \$53,216, with nearly \$17,000 allocated for summer school teaching positions.

Ms. Cohen reported that the Title III grant totals \$53,216, with nearly \$17,000 allocated for summer school teaching positions, \$32,000 for professional development and online platforms used to track English learners' progress, and \$3,700 for family engagement and cultural events.

Dr. Gately reported on the district's IDEA federal entitlement grants, which support services for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). She explained that the grants ensure students receive the services legally outlined in their IEPs. Fiscal year 2026 allocations were restructured but no programming was reduced. The district has two IDEA grants: the 240 grant and the 262 grant for early childhood education. The 240 grant totals \$550,372, with over \$252,000 allocated to professional salaries, funding an occupational therapist, a grade three special needs teacher at NIS, and a new special education compliance liaison who also provides services in private schools and ensures IEP meetings meet compliance requirements. Dr. Gately explained that IDEA grant funds are used primarily for required personnel costs, including retirement contributions, teaching assistant salaries, and related benefits. She noted that a portion of the grant supports special education services for private school students and early childhood education. She reported that funding increased slightly from the prior year and that the district is no longer required to set aside funds for disproportionality. She concluded that IDEA and Title grants must be used for direct student services, and to maintain service quality, additional support from the general fund is now necessary as most IDEA funding is fully allocated to salaries.

Dr. Hallett, through the Vice Chair, shared that federal Title funding for FY27 is expected to be significantly reduced. She noted that cuts are likely to affect Title I and Title II, while changes to IDEA funding remain unclear. She also reported that oversight of some grants is being shifted to other agencies and that Title III may be eliminated. Dr. Hallett stated she would provide further updates as more information becomes available.

Mr. Murphy asked whether DESE had indicated that the state might help offset potential federal funding losses. Dr. Hallett responded that she is hopeful the state will provide support and do everything possible to maintain funding for students who are economically disadvantaged, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities, while noting that there are limits to what the state can provide.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the donation of the Backus Lane Dugout with the estimate value of \$116,400. *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the fundraising check from Hayward Photography for \$2,200.92 to NES student activity account. *Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Esmeralda Martinez, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously*

Vote to approve the fundraising check from Edukit for \$150.54 to NES student activity account, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check from Hayward Photography for \$1,417.94 to NIS student activity account, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check from Hayward Photography for \$1,598.57 to CPS student activity account, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the fundraising check from Hayward Photography for \$1,487.64 to NHS student activity account, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation to the NHS/CPS Music Department to be used for the Disney Field trip from Custom Ink for \$2,063.95, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation to the NHS/CPS Music Department to be used for the Disney Field trip from Mary Kathryn Leclercq for \$3,000, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Stephen Spinelli and Carol Fulton Spinelli for \$1,000 to the NHS/CPS Music Department to be used for the Disney Field trip from, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Toscana for \$500 to the NHS/CPS Music Department to be used for the Disney Field trip from, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the September 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the September 22, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the October 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the October 22, 2025 Workshop Meeting Minutes, Timothy Lepore made a motion to approve, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

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

Student Council Representative - Danielle Lewis

Student representative Danielle Lewis reported that student voices regarding the turf fields remain strong and active, noting the issue continues to be a significant and often heated topic of discussion among students. She clarified a prior statement, explaining that while many student athletes continue to support the turf fields, some non-athletes and additional voices also hold concerns that were not fully represented previously. Ms. Lewis shared student feedback indicating that field conditions have impacted athletic participation and pride, including students choosing to stop playing sports or ending seasons early due to injury concerns. She noted that winter sports began on December 1 and highlighted positive performance by several teams this season. Shifting to lighter topics, she reported that the winter break half day has been widely accepted. Ms. Lewis also shared updates from the music department, thanking the community for its support of the February Disney field trip, noting the success of the Custom Ink fundraiser, and requesting continued community support. She further acknowledged a successful Jamaican fundraiser dinner and expressed gratitude for community assistance to families affected by Hurricane Melissa, and encouraged attendance at the upcoming December Delight event scheduled for Saturday the 13th.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report Negotiations meeting will take place this Thursday. The first meeting will be remote. Mr. Murphy reported participating in negotiations training and found it extremely useful.

Agenda for the next meeting - December 16 2025, MASS/NSDC Student Awards, Adams Scholarship Recipients, FY 27 Proposed Calendar, YONDR Initiative, Competency Determination Update, Vito Capizzo Stadium Renovation (if needed)

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:12 PM by Timothy Lepore, seconded by Vincent Murphy, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk