

**Nantucket School Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2026**

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

The January 20, School Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM in the Nantucket High School 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

Dr. Hallett reported that student enrollment has increased slightly from December to January, rising from 1,655 to 1,659 students. NES and NHS each gained four students, while NIS and CPS each lost two. In transportation, she highlighted the addition of a 7D van to the Cape Cod Collaborative fleet, which requires less training than a standard school bus and is currently used for morning pickups in Madaket and afternoon drop-offs for special education students. Plans are underway to add another 7D vehicle to help with overcrowded routes. She also reminded parents that drop-offs and pickups must follow designated areas to avoid traffic backups, emphasizing that NES and NIS parent traffic should use the parent circle, and CPS and NHS pickups should occur behind the schools. Dr. Hallett noted that ACCESS testing for English learners is ongoing, covering listening, speaking, reading, and writing over two to three days. All English learners, including those who opt out, must take the test, which helps guide student success plans and measure progress toward benchmarks. Additional details will be shared during the annual English learner update in March. She praised the Winter Tide event, noting its new location in the cafeteria, which showcased student artwork, musical performances, culinary creations, and woodworking. Then congratulated the high school art, music, and vocational departments for a successful event that highlighted student talent.

Presentations and discussions of issues to the Committee

Town of Nantucket FY27 Budget Presentation - Libby Gibson, Town Manager, Brian Turbitt, TON Chief Financial Officer

Libby Gibson, Town Manager, and Brian Turbitt, CFO, presented the Town of Nantucket's FY27 budget to the committee. They summarized the budget process, noting that the town manager prepares the annual operating budget, which the select board reviews before it moves to the finance committee and eventually the town meeting. The presentation outlined revenue and expenses, proposed new positions, one-time and ongoing costs, and townwide priorities, including infrastructure maintenance, affordable housing, employee retention, enforcement needs, and school funding.

Projected revenue is \$170.4 million, with expenses at \$170.3 million, leaving minimal unused levy capacity. For the schools, operational expenses are projected at \$7.8 million, including \$37.4 million for forecasted rollover costs, and \$1.045 million in expense increase requests. Health insurance, retirement contributions, and other rising costs also impact school budgets. One-time expenses for the town may indirectly benefit schools, such as leased office space supporting administrative needs.

Outstanding concerns include state aid (which affects school funding), citizen warrant articles, escalating construction costs, solid waste management, retirement assessments, cyber security, stormwater management, PFAS-related expenses, aging facilities, and unfunded regulatory mandates. The presentation emphasized that continued collaboration between town and school leadership will be essential, including discussions of a potential budget override within the next two to four years as projected expenses exceed revenue.

Next steps include continued review by the finance committee, public hearings, and preparation for the annual town meeting on May 4th and town election on May 19th. Ms. Gibson acknowledged the extensive work of deputy town managers, finance staff, department heads, and school administration in developing the budget.

Mr. Murphy asked about a \$150,000 request for the Community School and \$75,000 for the school to cover contractual obligations, seeking clarification on the numbers. He emphasized the value of the Community School's programs, including early intervention, language courses, and swimming classes, noting their importance to families and the community. He expressed concern that budget constraints could lead to program cuts or staff reductions, particularly affecting part-time and full-time employees, and questioned how the Community School could balance its budget. Ms. Gibson explained that the Community School's budget is primarily the responsibility of the superintendent and staff. She noted that fees could be increased or low-participation programs reduced if needed. She referenced a recent ad hoc budget meeting with the superintendent, staff, and Community School director, where the school's importance and benefits were clearly acknowledged.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked about the status of the \$225,000 request for the Community School and how the committee could remain part of the discussion. She emphasized the importance of the Community School's services, including extended day programs that support families and employee retention, and expressed concern that potential cuts could have wider impacts on the community. She sought clarification on how the school committee, superintendent, and the Community School's executive director could stay involved in ongoing budget conversations. Ms. Gibson stated that the funding request would continue to be discussed at the Finance Committee level, where further questions may arise. She noted that the chair and vice chair participated in the ad hoc budget work group meeting and that these concerns would remain part of the ongoing conversation. Ms. Gibson explained that if the funding cannot be identified through adjustments, it would need to be offset by cuts, fee increases, or reductions in other areas of the school budget.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked whether the appropriation for the Community School has not had an increase in four years. Mr. Anguelov, Nantucket Public School CFO confirmed that was accurate.

Dr. Lepore asked what is encompassed in storm water and what the funds are being used for. Ms. Gibson explained that stormwater runoff from surfaces, inadequate drainage, and loss of vegetation has led to flooding and potential harbor pollution. She stated that the funds would be used to improve drainage and stormwater infrastructure to better manage and absorb runoff.

Bullying Update - School Principals/Assistant Principals

Kim Albertson, Assistant Principal at Nantucket Elementary School, reported that there were four investigations that had occurred so far this year. She explained that two cases involving Pre-K and kindergarten students were determined to be developmental communication issues rather than bullying. A first-grade situation involved friends where behavior had escalated, requiring additional instruction and counseling support, and it was not substantiated as bullying. A second-grade concern reported by a family involved behavior occurring at an outside program, and the school is continuing to work with partners to address the situation and ensure student safety.

Ms. Gallagher-Byrne asked how incidents are reported

Ms. Albertson explained it varies, could be a teacher, family, friend, and gave credit to school counselors who are strong listeners and are teaching once a week in classrooms.

Becky Janda, Principal at NIS, reported that there have been no confirmed bullying incidents to date this year. She explained that all concerns brought to the administration are thoroughly investigated, and if a situation meets or may meet the criteria for bullying, a formal investigation and safety plan are implemented. She noted that several situations have been proactively addressed early, preventing them from escalating to the level of bullying.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked for a definition of bullying. Ms. Janda explained that bullying is primarily defined by repeated behavior involving a power imbalance, where one individual targets another who is in a less powerful position. She noted that conflicts between friends are typically addressed as friendship issues rather than bullying, with support and strategies provided to help students resolve them.

Michael Horton, Principal at CPS, reported that there have been three formal bullying investigations since the start of the school year, all involving Grade 8 students. One investigation resulted in no finding and was resolved amicably between the students. The other two investigations confirmed repeated bullying and harassment, and safety plans were developed and closely monitored. He explained that while conflicts or isolated incidents are addressed as they arise, reports of repeated and ongoing behavior lead to formal allegations. Safety plans included measures such as schedule adjustments, limiting contact between students, staff awareness, and six-week counseling interventions. He noted that there have been no further incidents in these cases and emphasized that bullying prevention and response remain a priority at the middle school.

Ms. Hilemn, Principal at Nantucket High School, reported that there were two bullying reports investigated this year, one at the ninth-grade level and one at the eleventh-grade level. After thorough investigations, both cases were determined not to meet the definition of bullying, and no safety plans were required. The situations were addressed as issues related to hurt feelings and misunderstandings. She noted that the report would be corrected and resubmitted and highlighted the guidance department for their key role in receiving reports and supporting investigations.

Mr. Murphy asked whether the implementation of the phone ban has helped reduce tensions among students and whether there has been a noticeable impact on student behavior and related issues.

Ms. Hilemn responded that, while she did not have data available at the meeting, there has been a noticeable decrease in incidents related to phones and social media. She noted that the school has observed a positive difference since the phone ban and stated that data comparing discipline issues from last year to this year will be shared during the upcoming Yondr presentation.

Ms. Bloise-Murphy asked what a safety plan looked like at the high school.

Ms. Hilemn explained navigating the students traveling through the hallways, making staff members aware what they should be looking for. Could mean switching up a student's schedule.

FY27 Budget Forecast Martin Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools

Mr. Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools, presented the budget roll forward forecast, explaining that it reflects projected costs to carry forward the current budget based on existing contracts and assumptions, including ongoing negotiations with the teachers' union. He reported that the FY26 starting budget is approximately \$43.1 million, consisting of about \$36 million in salaries and \$7.1 million in operating expenses. No new positions are included in the roll forward. After adjusting for a one-time \$300,000 operating expense funded through free cash and accounting for known increases in transportation and tuition costs, the projected roll forward budget totals approximately \$44.8 million. He noted that this represents a 3.8% increase and reflects contractual obligations rather than new budget requests.

Budget Development

Facilities & Grounds, Charles Clunie, Director of Facilities

Charles Clunie, Director of Facilities and Grounds, reported that the facilities budget represents approximately 12% of the overall school budget, with about 54% allocated to salaries and payroll. He noted that the primary challenges facing the department are aging facilities and rising operational costs, particularly due to increased expenses associated with labor and materials. He explained that these cost increases are being experienced across departments and that the team is working collaboratively with town officials to address budget needs. Mr. Clunie added that there have been no significant vandalism issues this year, and overall facilities operations are currently stable.

IT/Technology - Stephanie Hoban, Director of Technology

Stephanie Hoban, Director of Technology, reported that the technology department represents approximately 3% of the overall school budget, with 53% allocated to salaries. She noted that the department's primary challenge is aging infrastructure but highlighted recent capital projects that have significantly improved internet reliability at CPS and NHS, with similar upgrades planned for NES and NIS. She explained that these improvements have led to increased licensing costs associated with new access points, which occur in five-year cycles. She also reported on the upcoming installation of a new PA system beginning in mid-February, noting the possibility of unforeseen costs. Overall, the department is largely level-funded. Ms. Hoban emphasized the district's focus on cybersecurity and announced the implementation of multifactor authentication for Google accounts as the final major component of the district's cybersecurity efforts.

Mr. Murphy asked about the replacement of switches and servers and it being a costly expense.

Ms. Hoban explained that replacing technology infrastructure is costly and confirmed that there is an analysis and replacement plan in place. She noted that the replacement of aging network switches is included in this year's capital budget request, with an expected lifecycle of approximately eight to ten years. She added that access points follow a similar replacement cycle and that the district is currently at the point where these upgrades are necessary.

Athletics - Travis Lombardi, Athletic Director

Travis Lombardi, Athletic Director, reported that the athletics budget accounts for 3% of the school committee's overall budget, with 75% allocated to payroll. He explained that the department's operating budget is

supplemented by a revolving account and user fees, which cover travel, overnight tournament stays, coach buses, special equipment, and larger purchases not included in the annual budget. He stated that the department will continue to operate under the current system and does not plan to request additional funds.

FY26 2nd Quarter Budget Update - Martin Anguelov, CFO of Nantucket Public Schools

Mr. Anguelov provided the FY26 second quarter budget update, noting that expenditures are \$1,133,000 higher than at the same point last year, with 50% of funding currently committed, similar to the previous fiscal year. Payroll increased by \$816,000, primarily due to hiring contractors in special education for evaluations and Chapter 766 tutoring where full-time staff could not be hired. Net Community School revenues rose by \$191,000, while town appropriations have remained at \$600,000 for the fourth consecutive year. Overall expenses increased by \$176,000, driven by higher medical insurance and contractual salary obligations. He emphasized the importance of retaining Community School employees, who are among the lowest-paid staff, and noted that grants and donations help supplement funding but are limited. The School Launch program operated with a \$25,000 surplus, serving nearly 17,000 more meals than the previous year, benefiting from increased reimbursement rates and reduced management expenses, resulting in a positive financial outlook for the program. Mr. Murphy asked whether the increase in meals served reflected a change in quality, making students more willing to eat school lunches. Mr. Anguelov deferred to Ms. Lewis, the student council representative, who responded that she has heard positive feedback about this year's lunches. She noted that there is more variety and credited the staff for their hard work, adding that even seniors are now more likely to eat in the cafeteria, and she assumed similar improvements are seen across the other schools.

Committee discussions and votes to be taken

Vote to approve the FY 2027 Calendar, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the High School overnight field trip to the Southeast District Music Festival, New Bedford High School January 8 - 10, 2026, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation to the NHS/CPS Music Department's Disney field trip from Bessey Construction in the amount of \$200.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation to the NHS/CPS Music Department's Disney field trip from Thirty Acre Wood LLC in the amount of \$500.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation to the NHS/CPS Music Department's Disney field trip from South Arm Campground in the amount of \$3,000.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Stop & Shop to the CPS student activity account for \$29.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Stop & Shop to the NIS student activity account for \$250.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from the Nantucket Education Trust to the Nantucket Community School financial assistance fund for \$15,000.00, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the Cape Cod 5 Educational mini grant for \$300.00 to CPS, Rebecca Hickman, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Mac Davis Flooring for \$200.00 to the NHS/CPS Music Department's Disney field trip from, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the donation from Nantucket Book Partners for \$300.00 to the NHS/CPS Music Department's Disney field trip from, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the CPS, Project 351 overnight field trip to Boston January 16 - January 17, 2026, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the November 6, 2025 Workshop Meeting Minutes, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

Vote to approve the November 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Shantaw Bloise-Murphy made a motion to approve, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with no opposed vote, the motion was approved unanimously

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

Student Council Representative - Danielle Lewis

Ms. Lewis reported that students returned from a long weekend feeling happy and excited. She noted that upcoming field trips are generating enthusiasm, winter sports are underway, and musical rehearsals have begun for the school production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Sub-Committee/Work Group Report

Ms. Bloise-Murphy reported that the Ad Hoc committee had met and teacher negotiations were underway. Dr. Hallett reported the Policy committee will meet January 26.

Agenda for the next meeting - February 10, 2026, Student Enrollment, YONDR Initiative, School Committee Self-Evaluation Process, NHS Program of Study, Budget Development - Schools and Academic Departments

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 7:27 PM by Shantaw Bloise-Murphy, seconded by Timothy Lepore, and with none opposed, the motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Katie Bedell
School Committee Clerk