



Lunenburg Public Schools

Dr. Kate Burnham, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, February 7, 2024
Town Hall, Meeting Room
6:30 - Hybrid

School Committee

Carol Archambault, Chair - Present
Brian Lehtinen, Vice Chair- Present
Anthony Sculimbrenne, Secretary - Present
Peter Beardmore, Member - Absent
Laura Brzozoski, Member - Present

Superintendent

Dr. Kate Burnham
Business Manager/ HR Director
Michael Cassidy

Recording Secretary

Courtney Fuller

Guests: Julianna Hanscom – Director of Special Services

In accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg Public Access channel, on Facebook Live on the Public Access Facebook page.
(<http://www.facebook.com/Lunenburg-Public-Access-Cable-157427270975305/>) and will be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube after the meeting.

The agenda lists all the topics which may be discussed at the meeting and those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Votes may be taken as a result of these discussions. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by Open Meeting Law

1. **Call to Order** by Carol Archambault at 6:31
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Executive Session:** To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health, rather than professional competence of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to enter executive session, Ms. Brzozoski seconds the motion, All in favor**

Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to waive the 10 minute limit for Public Comment, Mr. Sculimbrenne seconds the motion, all in favor

4. **Public Comment**

Mary Foyle, 985 Flat Hill Road I'm president of the Lunenburg Education Association and speak on behalf of employees who work and have worked tirelessly through trying times, and times were often trying even before a global pandemic. As a visual my comment is written on a print out of school per pupil expenditures for every district in Massachusetts ranked from those spending the most to the least. Lunenburg is highlighted on the last page, a teacher put this together for me I didn't spend my time on it and this is actually an improvement sadly for those of us who have taught here for years this is often our norm though these cuts are more significant than in other years we've been making due for a while. Teachers have learned to spend school budgeted money at the start of the year otherwise they and their students are penalized because a frozen budget in November means an inability to purchase needed materials later in the school year. Teachers and parents donate supplies for students to have a more full educational experience or LEA members take years of no raises or partial freezes in order to make the budget work this can't keep happening. Though education has become a more difficult field to attract and retain people this has not typically been a Lunenburg issue, now we are losing employees not simply to move closer to home but for significantly more pay and support elsewhere, others leave the field completely after working here and we can't fill positions or have to offer a job to multiple people before someone accepts. It's heartbreaking to say that these are not signs of a vibrant district this can't keep happening. We've stayed here because we love teaching and our students and feel invested in the community however, job expectations continue to grow and our budget does not keep pace. Proposed non-

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personnel cuts save money but increases workload and decreases student and staff efficiency, monetary cost savings often carry a significant cost elsewhere. In our current education climate this cost worries me what you see in those who've left and in current employees is that your staff can't keep doing this, we are doing our jobs for our students please do yours for us and then we need to do differently. Lunenburg Public Schools operates on a razor's edge budget each year spending less than most districts while achieving better because the educators and the parents in this district make up the difference. Lunenburg cannot constantly rely on the same course of action yielding the same results this can't keep happening. I implore you to take hold of the vision of the education our children deserve consider articulate and move towards what that looks like. An action not mere words, provide a learning and working environment where people are proud to learn and be employed for a position in this district. Be the vulnerable and courageous leaders our staff and students need and deserve. Be the leaders and school committee members who stand up and say that this is not good enough this can't keep happening.

Sophia Mulè 139 Cove Road and Kara Harunkiewicz 165 Gilcrest St. We held a meeting after school with a large group of students involved in the music department and we gathered ideas and bullet points. We wanted to hear their ideas about it as well and I'm just going to read off some of them. It is more difficult to start learning an instrument or any skill the older you get, and it is imperative to start the music education program as early as we can, which for us is 5th grade, that's not our opinion that's just science. The parents of the kids involved in music in Lunenburg give their all, they are generous and selfless towards this department and have given up their time, money, and energy for us. This all goes without saying that the department would not be half of what it is without parent support and that of the music boosters, especially if you belittle department, they will not go away but, instead have to work even harder to keep music education in Lunenburg afloat. Extra-curriculars are vital in Lunenburg just look at the numbers of those involved in sports and how successful they are if the fifth grade band is cut, the sixth graders are starting from scratch which does not set them up well for marching band or Jazz. These bands are just important as are just as important as sports. When transitioning from 8th grade to 9th grade the numbers are reduced in the high school band. (Kara speaking) I was just in that position last year and those guidance counselors will convince every single kid that they need a study that they can't do it without a study and there's already a bunch of scheduling conflicts so you end up only taking up like less than a third of the students in the eighth grade band into the high school, but that's more of the fault of the way that our guidance departments. It is more of a personal school issue than something that has to do with the budget, but it's just another example of our department being sort of belittled and put on the back burner. Numbers in middle school band and chorus are lower when there's no fifth grade band that's just a fact. Kids who love and are passionate about music even if they want to learn it on their own may not qualify for some scholarships when applying to college that they would have been eligible for if they had been able to take band on chorus all throughout Elementary, Middle, and High school. Some kids are scared that music is too hard and are discouraged by the small numbers that we have in our school, so they decide not to join band or chorus, because the rehearsal time for high school band and chorus is essentially cut in half due to the classes being in the same period. What is stopping us from just hosting more rehearsals after school? The problem is that we shouldn't have to do that when we have such an excellent staff and teachers who get paid to do it.

Noah Lind, 95 Gilcrest Road I am a band student who was part of the Lunenburg music department for all of my middle and high school years. As a freshman I take a large amount of responsibility in helping out the music program this year the sixth, seventh and eighth grade bands are thriving showing a bright future for the Lunenburg Music Program. However, this could have not happened without the fifth grade band, this bridges the gap between elementary and middle school music education. If the fifth grade band is cut from the budget the music program will begin to lose members the marching bag will be negatively impacted as well. As the only drum line member I could safely say that the future generation's understanding of music would decrease dramatically making the chances of a future Middle High School Marching Band for the years to come seem bleak. I have seen that there are supposed to be cuts to the current High School band teacher, where the electives he teaches such as Music Tech will be non-existent. While band and chorus will still be supported, which is great these electives are a safe haven for many students, such as myself, and my friends that came here to support the music program. To have this taken away from us as well would be a damaging blow to the courses that Lunenburg has to offer. My parents moved here over 11 years ago partly because of the school system, my mom was a band student who cherished the band the same amount, if not more than me. We can clearly see that many families are flocking to Lunenburg year after year because of the school. The new proposed budget for the music program will weaken one of the main foundations of the Lunenburg Public Schools. One of the main reasons why many family choose to move here, so given this information if you choose to cut any part of the music program you should think about the repercussions.

Mr. Passios, 56 Whiting Street Speaking to you as a lifelong resident of Lunenburg. I have been wanting to make a comment in regards to the extra-curriculars, I understand the position you guys are in, it's tough, I stated that to you over a month, I was a band geek from grade three forward in the school system and that was a big chunk of my life through late elementary school, middle school, and especially High School. The experiences that kids get with extra-curriculars and things outside the box of the general education requirements are the things that bring them into the future and help guide them as to what their true interests are for the long term. Again I know the problems that the town and the school district have from a budgetary point of view but, we've got to balance these extra-curriculars, as to if they're taken away how much does that affect those students down the road, and unfortunately requirements trump extra-curriculars in most cases

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Tatum Furman, 1024 Massachusetts Avenue I am a student in 10th grade at Lunenburg High School, I have lived here for 8 years, since 2015, I have gone through multiple extra-curriculars including basketball, softball, mock trial, student counsel, etc. so yeah these extra-curriculars have not only shaped me into the person I am today but also helps me make friends and countless bonds with teachers or coaches. I get that these may need to be cut for reasons that are out of people's control, but having these activities really shapes kids into what they grow up to be. I found my love for softball and my love for mock trial through the school I would not have found these or had these opportunities if our extra-curriculars were cut. I know many students have many different extra-curriculars that they enjoy and they find solace in, along with friends and coaches who support them throughout their life and throughout their college decisions. While I think it is a shame to cut extra-curriculars I know that sometimes it may be necessary, but I do hope you take this into consideration; that the extra-curriculars at our school, whether they're in kindergarten, fifth grade, middle school, or seniors in high school, these extra-curriculars shape the people at our school into who they are today and who they grow up to be.

Caylen St. George, 38 Francis Ave. Music is something I'm truly passionate about and have found a community in, so if you cut any part of the music program it's cutting and reducing our education. Fifth grade band is a vital stage of learning music it is scientifically proven that it's easier to learn anything including music at a younger age. I never had the opportunity to be in fifth grade band or chorus but it would have been beneficial to me so much. By taking away fifth grade band it is making the middle school band smaller in the future, thus leading to the high school band and marching band being even smaller so please don't take this amazing opportunity away from anybody, especially these little kids.

Joseph James, 756 Northfield Road I have been a member of Lunenburg bands all the way since I've been in fifth grade which was 7 years ago now, and I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience that is gained from it, I think that not only has it helped just my music career but, I also think it's helped my academic career, showing me the value of working with other people and pushing through to work towards something that you might want to get. I think taking away the fifth grade band would drastically decrease the numbers in our band, and that is taking away from the experience of all the people who might continue band, which would harm not only just the band people but it might also harm their academics as well, because the people who enjoy band will probably also enjoy going to school more and if they enjoy going to school then they will probably do better in all of their things as they have a better mentality collectively.

Brandon Harris, 8 West Street I have been a member of the Lunenburg music department ever since I moved here back in April of 2016 and to be quite honest with you, ladies and gentlemen, I have fallen in love with this because I've been singing in school choir ever since I was in third grade and no matter what songs we sing, no matter how, no matter what grade I'm in, no matter who the teacher is, I have fallen in love with singing for Lunenburg. It has been brought to my attention that there are possible reductions in the extension of the music program in Lunenburg and I just want to say that with music being a very crucial part of every young person's life whether they are or not part of any sort of musical organization, whether that be choir or band, music plays a very important role in the minds and souls of the youth. I feel that by reducing the choir and band in any sort of way would cause just a massive defeat for the student body. In short I love singing don't take this away

Lily Jordan, 120 Robb Hill Road I have grown up playing sports through Lunenburg programs all the way since I was a little kid playing basketball to now I am a junior in high school playing all these sports. It is really hard to watch our middle school programs get threatened to be lost because, those are a bunch of feeder programs into our high school programs. I would never have really known about the intensity level of playing field hockey, the intensity level of playing basketball, or softball without those programs. So many kids meet so many friends through sports and they gain a sense of community through the sports they're playing. I know Tatum from softball I know so many people I have made lifelong friends through these sports and it's a really crucial part for kids to grow up having these extracurricular activities, whether it's band or chorus which I never took part in but I know a lot of people love it or sports. People always have their favorite thing to do so I just ask you take into consideration, how much this will affect all of us

Deena Qasim (not currently living in Lunenburg but attending the High School) I grew up here and I still go to the school, I think that cutting Middle School sports would be a big mistake. When I was growing up all I wanted to do was join sports in middle school because, you're young so you could basically put yourself in whatever and learn from there if you like it, If you took a kid that was in eighth grade and just threw them into a sport, they're not going to have the same amount of time and experiences to determine what their passion really. Right now our track team, have so many middle school students that are helping our team these opportunities really mean a lot. Middle School sports helped me grow as a person, because I was wasn't really good at making friends or bonding with other people and then when I joined basketball that brought me closer together with everybody and it made me want to be an athlete, it gave me something to do, and it made me happier overall as a person. Same with band, I was in band for 3 years and that really shaped me, I really don't know how to word this but it was just a really good program, most of it is the connections you make with people, the things you learn, and I wouldn't have had these experiences if they weren't available to me.

Mr. Sculimbrene I think that every time that we do an open public comment and the students speak I learn new things that I didn't know before, I'm also really impressed at how good they are at collecting their thoughts and taking time out of their day to come and talk to us, so every single person who talked I will tell you that I changed my mind the last time we had a meeting like this and the

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things you say do make a difference. I think about every single student, I've written down every single thing you guys have said so it does make a difference and it is very compelling to hear the students talk.

Ms. Brzozoski That took a lot of courage, I've been there, its scary standing there, and we're up on a stage and looking down, it's scary, I'm feeling pretty good about the school district right now. That you guys had the strength and the courage to get up there that was wonderful thank you for sharing. I also wanted to share a few things, number one I wanted to say thank you to the PTO for putting on the special someone dance this weekend fantastic, my kid got to go with her special someone and from reports it was a really wonderful time, the kids had a blast I heard the DJ was really good and played a lot of good music. I also wanted to say thank you to the volunteers for putting that on, that's a lot of work to organize, and put that together, thank you for everybody who set up, everybody cleaned up after, and made that happen that's a lot of effort, and we also had local sponsors for it so thank you. Number 2 a lot of parents are asking what can we do; and I've been thinking about it a lot; how we can turn how we're feeling about the budgets into action. Parents and those over 18 come to town meetings, we vote on the warrant articles, new Town bylaws, we spend the money, it goes through town meeting and each registered voter gets one vote. We as a legislative body approve the budget, the finance committee makes recommendations to the town manager and the town manager will present a budget, but we vote on it, it is in our best interest as a town to pass a well- balanced budget that maintains services to both the town and the school, but the authority to pass that budget lies in town meeting This is important because there's not a lot of people who go to town meeting it's a handful of people which means that it's a handful of people making the important decisions about the town we live in. It's the people who show up to town meeting, it's those votes that ultimately make the decision, so I'm asking begging parents to please go to town meeting and people who support the school system to come to town meeting. I know that's asking a lot because it's a Saturday in May which as parents we are busy, it's a Saturday in May when it's lacrosse games and soccer games and dance -it's a couple hours long you got to sit in the auditorium, it's hard to find the time and for some reason town meeting is always on the first nice day of May. I know that in the past few years we've had child care available and I really hope we can have it again this year. But that is one action you can take to participate in that final part of the budgetary process is to go to town meeting and not just this one, I mean everyone go to every town meeting and participate in that process so that we can pass a budget that we're happy with. The second actionable item that I think it would be good to put our efforts into is at the state level, so I'd like to encourage people to continue writing to our state reps and our state senator, and to continue to write to them, talk to them, call them I know that we've had a lot of people reaching out and it's been fantastic, keep doing that let them know as voters that school funding is a priority of yours, Chapter 70 in Massachusetts is a really complex funding structure, the finance committee did a presentation on it, you can find it on YouTube on the Lunenburg public access page, if you haven't seen it. Last week the finance committee also did a great presentation on proposition 2 ½ and property taxes and how the rates can increase but only 2 1/2% each year, unless we do an override and they really go into that in detail and it's a lot of good information, so if you haven't seen that yet either I recommend that. But we are limited in the funds we have available right now, Chapter 70 funding in Lunenburg has remained relatively stable, there was a large jump in fiscal year 23 I believe that was because of the development that was finished and we added some housing, but funding in fiscal year 24 actually fell by 1% so we got less money in FY 24 than we did in FY 23. But our cost as a school district didn't fall by 1% which means that the town had to shoulder that cost, but at the same time the town is limited with how much we can increase revenue by proposition 2 ½, so as a parent I can say I would like it if more of my state tax money would go towards the schools, it's more equitable if more of our state tax money went to schools but, right now it's becoming more and more dependent on property taxes and the value of homes in the town in which you live. We're not the only school district dealing with budget shortfalls this year, we are by far not the only district across the state dealing with this, everyone is dealing with the rising cost it's not just us everyone is dealing with the loss of ESSER funds, we've been planning for it long term, as soon as the money came in, we knew it was going to end. My first meeting with Dr Burnham we talked about the ESSER funds, it's been known for a long time, but the extra stuff it hits us extra hard, because we're a small district so it's harder for us to bear the increases. Because we're small we're not regionalized, we're a small town we don't have a huge pool of revenue to call on so this hits us extra hard. Because we already ran pretty efficiently we're already asking our teachers and our staff to do a lot with not very much so there isn't a ton to trim from, it's not like we can look at the budget and trim the fat because it was already a pretty efficient system so I would like to encourage everyone to please continue to engage with state reps. continue to reach out let them know that school funding on a state level is something that you value that public education funding is something that you want to prioritize. Number 3 I just wanted to say thank you to all the parents, students, and community members who are engaged in this process, two weeks ago we had a lot of community members come and speak, we've gotten a lot of emails, I've got gotten a lot of texts, and I want to say thank you for caring, thank you for showing up, thank you for your communications, thank you for your engagement in this process. Something that really struck me about both last meeting and all the emails and comments is the tone is almost universally "how can we help" it's framed as "how can we as parents be a solution" "how can we find solutions" "how can we work together" "what can we do" "where can we put our efforts" it's really special and I think it's a testament to the kind of community Lunenburg is and I've really been struck by how a lot of it is about working together to find a solution that best serves the educational need of our kids

5. **Chair's Report Thank** you to the Finance Committee for the presentation last Thursday. I met with Senator Cronin and Representative Kushmerek and will meet with Representative Scarsdale tomorrow. So far they have asked us to find like

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communities that are being hit hard like us, I am working on that. They have asked us to focus specifically on what our concerns are, so they can work at a state level to determine what they can do to help us.

6. FY 25 Budget Q & A

Mary Foyle 985 Flat Hill Road I might be too early on this one but in reading questions online this is what I pulled from last year and it was the final recommended sheet that goes back a few years and has the line items. Is it possible to get this same information as of now? I'm not trying to put anything extra on people's plates but, I think in some of the questions that I'm seeing this would actually be helpful for people to see and for those of us who might get the system more to explain it with something like this, as opposed to the slideshow. **Answer: Yes it is in process**

Shoshana Mulè 139 Cove Road I have a question about the process so, I understand about proposition 2 ½% and my question is; in your budget process in March you're going to vote to recommend a budget, can you vote to recommend a budget that is more than 2 ½ % **Answer: We can recommend a budget that is more than the 2 ½%, but that means a different town department will receive less, the process is done together as a town.** Is that something that you have done is the past **Answer: Yes, I believe we have.**

Kara Harunkiewicz 165 Gilcrest St. I'm just wondering what's the plan moving forward for future years because, we know that this time next year we're probably going to be right back here with new cuts for the next year so is there a plan moving forward is this going to be the end of the cuts; what's the plan? **Answer: That is a very good question, I wish I had an answer for, what I can say is that I am working with legislators to see if they can do something to help. The Chair of the Select Board has an idea for something to go to the state house to ask for help. The other option if the town should decide to do an override, that would fix the problem for at least the time being, but as long as the tax levy has to stay at 2 ½%, when the inflation goes up more than that, we will be doing the exact same position. I know the Finance Committee is trying to figure out a way to help remedy this situation, so we are not in this same predicament.**

Cecelia Stanek 43 Hollis Road I just want to know where all of the money is going; how is it distributed to other people; and how we're here today? **Answer: So where the money is going, do you mean like in the school budget?** Yes, I want to know what's happening; why are we getting all these budget cuts for? People like me and others that don't fully grasp how we're losing this much. **Answer: What happened is we have so much money that we spend on the budget and every year certain things go up , and we keep things at 2 ½% increase, because that's all we are allowed, that is state law. We have gotten to a point where we have cut as much as we can out of supplies, but after that is as low as possible, staff members are cut next. Health insurance went up and the bus contracts go up because of inflation, our money doesn't stretch as far as it used to. Mr. Lehtinen adds that these items are going up more than the 2 ½% which adds to the budget problems.**

Laura Barooshian 389 Mulpus Road I had a very nice conversation with Mr. Sheldon in the music department and one of the questions I have is: who would be the appropriate person for me to speak with about applying for grants and other things. In part of my professional career I'm a chartered adviser in philanthropy so I work with organizations, private foundations, corporate foundations, and finding ways to supplement, sometimes the districts that are hit really hard, and I understand the struggle that you guys have. Who would be the appropriate person for someone in the town to speak with to talk about applying for grants? **Answer: You can speak to Dr. Burnham**

Joseph James 756 Northfield Road I'm not sure if this is a question you would be able to answer but, do you know if other parts of Lunenburg are suffering these same budget issues? I know that the ESSER funds are a large part of why we have such a large budget deficit but, also things like inflation and health insurance going up. Are the fire department the police department also suffering very similar budget deficits or is it not impacting them as much? **Answer: I don't know what their cuts are like; because we own more of the budget than they do. The school budget takes up slightly more than half of the town's budget so the police department let's say is a smaller slice of that pie. There isn't quite as much money, their health insurance went up more than 2 ½ %, the same as ours, did but I don't know what their deficits are. What happens is from now until the end of March, every Thursday night the Finance Committee meets here and each of those Town board departments come to the finance committee and say these are the things we want to do for next year this is our budget. That is when I would find out how the rest of the town is fairing but, I know from speaking with the Chair of the Select Board, things are very tight on the town side. The Finance Committees on Thursdays is available to the public, absolutely they also do hybrid meetings so you could get on zoom.**

Sophia Mulè 139 Cove Road I had another question regarding grants something was brought to my attention today at the meeting we had with students. A senior who is involved in visual art, she was at the meeting because she has also been involved in music before, and she brought to my attention that the two teachers who teach Visual Art in the high school have been sort of protected a little bit under a grant that they received. **Answer: No that is not a thing, their positions have nothing to do with the grant that is at play. There was a grant through the Culture Commission, we also used a curriculum review type grant, to review our Art Curriculum. Neither of those help pay for their positions, nor can they be used to pay for their positions. The reason that**

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there aren't any cuts recommended is because the number of students enrolled in our art classes, those classes are very full, whereas our music classes are not. I may have misspoke, I didn't mean influencing their positions as teachers to be kept in the school, more the program, but that answered my question.

Ms. Brzozoski Can I ask, did the money from the Artist in Residence program end up at the school? **Answer: None of that went to anything specific for the school, other than it took place in the school. The grant was for the Cultural Council, they purchased the materials and pay the artist.**

We will do the same Question and Answer section at the first meeting in March. You can also send questions by email to lps@lunenburgschools.net

Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to move Student Representative Report to now, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, All approve

- 7 Student Representative Report** The Primary School students enjoyed their Special Someone dance last weekend. Next week at Turkey Hill it is kindness week, boosting student morale and creating a safe environment. Middle School has 90 students registered for the DC trip. Project 351 ambassadors attended their launch day in Boston, and were incredible in representing Lunenburg's youth. The High School students are worried about potential teacher cuts as 7 teachers and 35 sections of classes are possible cuts
- 8. Review & Approve Minutes**
 - a. Regular Session 12/20/23, 1/3/24, 1/17/24 –**Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to approve minutes 1/3/24 & 1/17/24, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion all approve. Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to approve minutes 12/20/23, Mr. Lehtinen seconded the motion, all approve with Mr. Sculimbrene abstaining.**
- 9. Review & Approve Warrants & Line Item Transfers**
 - a. Warrant Total 1/23/24 to 1/29/24 \$87,144.85 No questions from the committee, warrants have been signed by Carol Archambault. No line item transfers
- 10. Superintendent's Report** Thank you to all the students for speaking upon programs that mean so much. Kindergarten registration is currently open, pre-k registration will open March 1st, extended day summer registration will open April 22, and will run the weeks of 7/8, 7/15, 7/22, 7/29, extended day before and after school for 24/25 will open May 1st and early learning center will open on May 20th. We participated in NEAP at the end of January, results will be in at a later date.
Upcoming Dates
February 28 School Committee Meeting LMHS 6:30 Hybrid
February 19th All Schools and Offices are closed in observance of Presidents Day
Feb 19-23 No School – School Vacation
- Mr. Lehtinen inquires on the joint meeting with the state reps. This will be held at Town Hall with the select board on February 20th and is open to the public
- 11. New Business**
Action
 - a. **FY School Choice** Dr. Burnham recommends having 5 seats open for school choice for 24/25 Freshmen and leaving the one available seat with the current Freshmen class, and any students currently in 10, 11, or 12 grade that move, be allowed to stay until graduation **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to approve the 5 seats, keep the one seat, and allow current 10, 11 and 12th graders to stay until graduation, Ms. Brzozoski seconds the motion, All approve**
 - b. **FY 25 School Calendar** Have not received any comments or questions on the calendar draft. Parent/teacher conferences will be added later on an amended calendar, tentative dates for Natures Classroom does not interfere with any religious observations. **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to approve the calendar, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, all approve.**
 - c. **FY25 Preschool Tuition Increase** Annually we come forward and recommend an increase, since 2019 we have suggested 4%, the 2 day program will go from \$1,824.14 to \$1,897.11 and the 4 day program will go from \$3412.10 to \$3,548.58. **Mr Sculimbrene makes a motion to approve, Mr. Lehtinen seconds the motion, all approve**
 - d. **Donation** PTO has supplied a donation of \$2,633.34 as a result of the Fall Book Fair, this will be deposited into the Primary School Student Activity Account **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to accept the donation, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, all approve**

- e. **Donation of days** Cafeteria workers want to make a donation of 219 ½ days to a coworker in need. **Mr. Lehtinen makes a motion to approve donation of days, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, all approve**
- f. **Appointment of Paraprofessional Representative for Negotiation** Negotiations will begin as soon as possible, with availability of after school times. **Ms. Brzozoski to be the committee rep with the help of Mr. Beardmore if available, and if not Ms. Archambault will be 2nd member**

Discussion

- g. **Chapter 766 School Approval** Ms. Archambault reports we need to make sure our schools meet the standards and criteria. It is recommended that Julianna Hanscom work on this and then the School Committee will create policy/procedure. An example from MASC has been shared with committee members. The School Committee designates Ms. Hanscom to reach out to the schools and collect all data and information. The school committee will send a drafted policy to the subcommittee for review.
- h. **ACE Program and MAICIE** A presentation about the program and how it works with kids ages 18-22 with intellectual disabilities. Fitchburg State adopted this program in 2023 and they reached out to our teacher Amanda Duggan (who is amazing and has developed relationships with all the surrounding programs for kids 18-22) to participate in the program. There were only 3 schools invited to this and we were one of them. Not all Universities offer this grant, but Fitchburg State does, so this will not cost anything for our students to participate in. We will need to provide a paraprofessional as a job coach for student support, however, we have done this in the past, supporting students.

12. Old Business

Discussion

- a. **FY25 Budget Update** Dr. Burnham shares new and updated information and options in relation to the budget as she had to send to the Town manager. On February 28th we will present a budget to recommend for your consideration, this information can be found online on our website. Conversation regarding the music program at Turkey Hill School, and how that would look, as far as reconfiguring the schedules at Turkey Hill, and potentially the Primary School as they share many staff members. The committee would like to see the music program to be saved in a recommended budget. Mr. Lehtinen brings up concerns regarding maintenance and custodial staff cuts, as we risk not being able to maintain the standards, and contractually we cannot have teaching staff doing the cleaning. In a recommended budget, I would like to see these positions restored. Ms. Brzozoski mentions advocating for guidance positions at Turkey Hill. Dr. Burnham shares there would be no guidance counselors, but we would have a license social worker, which brings us back to staff levels pre-covid.

- 13. **Reports Mr. Sculimbrene** reports the PTO met on Monday and reviewed the funds from the Special Someone Dance, they raised more than \$10,000 this year. In part because they had sponsors and had reference from last year to better balance what to order. They sold 500 light up accordions. They are planning the rest of the school year out. Contemplating eliminating Hollis Hills event and joining the Lions Club for the car show, potentially in May.

Ms. Brzozoski reports the Turkey Hill Advisory met in early January, and the after school activities filled up in one day, they added 60 more slots. They are looking for donations of board games, specifically boggle. Students need to come in appropriate snow wear, the school is in need of boot donations. Discussions on parent/teacher conferences and if report cards should be issued prior to the conference, also if we should have early release days on evening conference days also. In January at the PACSAL meeting the 688 referral process was discussed. DESE states all students with an Autism diagnosis must have a 688 done, making sure parents are aware of the early adult services available. New IEP process should roll out next school year, we have a team of people training staff members, its going to go from about 13 pages to 39 pages and be more in depth. Hoping to have a March meeting to review the new IEP process, and we will be updating bylaws at the next meeting. Yesterday, we had the THES committee meeting, winter after school activities are going well, they wanted me to mention a drainage issue around the playground, and a trench needs to be built. This area has become either icy, or mud pit.

Mr. Lehtinen reports the Primary School met on January 22, iready papers were sent home on the 30th. We will be switching to a more standard report card. The first Friday in March will be Hanks Helpers Awards, they will be doing their 100th day celebration. We reviewed some of the handbook and discussed safety and building security. There have been two Finance Committee Meetings, we did discuss the school committee budget and that meeting has been posted on our Facebook page as well. January 18th an update from the Town Manager the bid went out on the generator project and should be about 16-18 weeks for completion. Public Safety project is moving forward. The governor announced some funds available for damage from the September storm, they are waiting on the FEMA allocation. The expenses for Lunenburg were a little over \$100,000. The town accountant was hired on February 5th, Karen is going to stay on to mentor. A Capital Planning overview was done on the 10 projects.

Ms. Archambault reports the Middle School Advisory met on the 25th in January, there was a discussion about the budget and impact, and the NAEP testing, and school calendar. The Master Planning Committee met last Thursday to talk about shaping the surveys they've gotten into a vision of what we want our community to be.

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14. Public Comment

Kara Harunkiewicz 165 Gilchrest Street, I would like to thank Mr. Sculimbrene for bringing up literally over half of the points that I had written down I know there were proposed alternatives to the a cut of 5th grade music, and I just wanted to mention that as far as Middle School Sports go that's a very same program with getting into high school sports, as that fifth grade Band program. You're thinking about cutting the equivalent in music and when you think about it I don't really see what the big difference is if both are communities with kids that are passionate about them they should be treated at least similarly. I noticed that a couple of years ago the position at the elementary school was already a .5 and the .2 was just recently added. Like you were saying about the Athletic Director there's only so much a part-time position can do, and that also applies to a high school music teacher. The electives that are offered, there are many students that are not interested in visual arts, but you need your Arts credits and so for those kids they take music electives, they might not be interested in band or chorus but that doesn't necessarily mean that they're interested in painting or drawing or ceramics.

Sophia Mulè 139 Cove Road I'd like to start by also thanking Mr. Sculimbrene. What we're concerned about that means more than you could possibly think. I want to comment on the fifth grade band thing and as much as I appreciate trying to be compensated for, with maybe lessons before or after school I've been doing music for such a long time to know that in no way at all is that the same equivalent to a band or a chorus. That will not be the same experience and you're missing that community part of it, you're missing the social part of it. Band and chorus is where you learn to work together to create something beautiful to create art, to create together and that's the whole point you can take music lessons and become perfect at your instrument or voice vocal artists, and that's amazing that's incredible but it's not something to do alone. I took private lessons for a long time actually this is the first year I haven't been doing it because, I have a lot going on but so many kids in the middle school and high school when they stay after school for band, jazz band, marching band, or something they also have lessons after school it's highly encouraged. We're actually so fortunate that we have that program. I have one thing to say about band and chorus in the high school and that is that for the past couple years and this year band and chorus in the high school particularly, is one period, it's one block, if you're taking chorus you are taking it at the same time as you are taking band and we have one teacher so that means we have to split our time. You are essentially getting half of the instruction in a year that you would be getting for the course you signed up for, you are not getting full instruction and it is still a class, think about if you took math or science but you had to take them in the same block you would get half of a year's worth of math half a week and you would get the other half for science you'd still be learning but not nearly what you're supposed to be learning. That's kind of how it feels to be honest, and I look at my friends who are in the course who don't play an instrument and they're so passionate about music just as I am and they're frustrated, they are sitting in the chorus room while we are rehearsing for band, sometimes they will practice by themselves, but there is still a part missing. The last think I'll say is the numbers are significantly lower in the music department and the electives, and the reason for that is there have been cuts at the elementary and primary level in the past, we have had trouble getting kids to transition to the Middle School level. I believe there is a stigma in our school against music.

Joseph James 756 Northfield Road I am talking on behalf of the music department as my two fellow peers have before me and I understand that the budget cuts are really big and that they are just not a thing that can be easily avoided but I do think that it is important to stress the importance of a fifth grade music program we can already see that going from 8th grade to high school is a we have a huge drop in the amount of people just because of the increase in stress in schooling and going from sixth grade trying to learn an instrument you may think it's just one year, they're one year older, it might not be that much more difficult, but trying to learn an instrument is like reading the new language that is sheet music, along with getting in a new building, learning all your teachers, having to actually rotate classes, that's just a lot of stress to put on someone in addition to trying to get them to learn music and I don't think that it would be fair to also say - you have to try and learn band in addition to. I think a lot of people would quit but if they had started in fifth grade they would have stuck with it. I was in the fifth grade band and there were seven trumpets, by the time we were in sixth grade we got to two, and that's just because of the increase in workload and how many people can do it and I think it's really important that if we want to maintain a music program that we start in the fifth grade when it is easier to join than if we start at a later time when the stress of school work is increased on top of trying to learn an instrument

Shoshana Mulè 139 Cove Road I appreciate the number of hours you've spent staring at spreadsheets, so I just want to start with that and I appreciate that you are the Superintendent of the entire School District. I have to say these kids are the product of Lunenburg Public Schools, they're also the product of the Lunenburg Music Department that was led by a teacher who you guys all knew, who was there for 20 years and she instilled a standard of Excellence in these kids that's what you're seeing, there that's where the passion and the commitment was driven home. After their marching band performances at you know 10:00 at night after they put all their instruments away and they're exhausted - would be a 10-minute conversation and at the end of that is they yell Pride! because of the standard of Excellence, so that's why these kids are here. The situation with the enrollment in the high school music classes so the, Music Gators had a meeting with Mr. Santry, and Mrs. Tousignant last year and there was discussion of a grant to study the blocks that are this scheduling mystery, I wouldn't say that enrollment would be doubled but there are at least three or four kids who haven't been in high school concert band because of scheduling conflicts with things like Honors English and Honors Math and Latin and so I get the numbers aren't there but, it's that it's also the chicken and the egg. There were two and a half years where the middle school kids didn't get to play their instruments in a band like they would have because of Covid and so those are your 10th and 11th graders

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right now there's maybe one or two in the band or chorus in high school, so those other kids still got to do art they still got to have art class the music kids did not get to do it. The last thing I want to say is I know there was discussion about the idea of private lessons being available even if they didn't have to be paid for, the equity as far as having before school or something instead of a fifth grade band or chorus in school is just such a huge equity problem.

Cecelia Stanek 483 Hollis Road Music is everywhere in our lives and not just with people in band or chorus but as a whole. Music is a part of everyone's day-to-day function and music are things that people look forward to with some people with social anxiety feel like band and chorus is more of a community than a class. The pandemic not only put me but other members in my school behind the screen which affected not only me but others if I could have gone to band in fifth grade I absolutely would have. I feel like fifth grade is such an important jump start to our music interests and cutting any band could result in a smaller interest for future students. During intervention in fifth grade I never had it, I was behind a screen, nowadays I would like to say band is not the same as lessons you can't expect to get the same enthusiasm when not practicing as a whole when in a group. Band not lessons you learn teamwork as a whole and build your overall social development so please, relook the amount of benefits coming from just lessons before making your final decision.⁴

Emma Barooshian 389 Mulpus Road Expressing yourself with music can make you feel limitless taking these feelings away especially from fifth graders can limit their exposure to the music they should be able to learn. Band and choir, both teach commitment, passion, determination, and persistence. I know that if I wasn't exposed to music when I was 8 years old I wouldn't be in band right now and it's really crazy to think about because when you're young you're able to learn it faster and you're just able to experience it and really internalize it and 5 years ago when I was 8 years old learning piano by myself I never really knew about the band experience and I really wanted to do that when I was in sixth grade, but I was too scared and I feel that in fifth grade you're able to experience that and you're really able to know, okay this is what I want to do when I'm older because when we go perform at the Turkey Hill School, we are there to show them what we know and we're there to show them - hey you can do this in middle school and high school and it's an amazing experience. I feel strongly that cutting the fifth grade band will decrease the numbers in our middle and high school band and it'll be so hard to recruit new students.

Mary Foyle 985 Flat Hill Road I've taught Civics for the past few years I'm not teaching it currently but, it was great sitting back there it felt like a mini civics class on its own and I think these kids just really challenged the adults in our town to start showing up as well, so I encourage people to show up to town meeting Some of us even play a little game of like Bingo like when's your bingo card full for who's speaking. I'm challenging people, it's sad to see that it's tough times that have to bring people out, but I hope people get more actively involved in this. I hope it's not like just speak up now and then okay problem solved. Your community only works if you work together as a community, when I taught Civics I always said town government only works if people are actually doing the work and so I appreciate people who are doing the work but we have jobs to do too, even if we're not sitting on committees it is part of our job to make the schools work, to make the community work, so I challenge people to show up for that. As a teacher, speaking just as a high school teacher in this moment we just had a faculty meeting and I'm a systems person and so with these cuts as people have said I know it's hard to make them and I think we really have to start looking at why are we in this situation and how do we improve for the future it's what I've said before looking, at over five teachers cut from the high school, you're like okay five teachers that's at least 27 classes on our schedule 27 classes that's a really large number I've lived in town for 14 years I now have a high school a I have a high school student and I've said this before, 10 years ago, five years ago I'm really concerned that we're not going to have a comprehensive high school anymore, that we're going to have a core high school and as a parent that is not the school I want for my child and I teach here I should be one of the most invested people in the school system with the roles that I fill especially in the high school and I'm having serious thoughts of is this the right place for my student to be and I don't like that is a thought of mine.

budget so I feel for you, I get it but, I'm really scared about next year if we're making these kinds of cuts now to get to bare minimum, that you got to two and a half percent is really something, but I'm really scared of what the conversation will be next year and which teachers will be getting cut and going to a core school, I'm very proud of the students who spoke tonight. Emma is our project 351 student as well so they put themselves out there tonight and they put them put themselves out there every time they take the stage and they take the field. Band has given them the confidence to do this and I ask you to imagine a football game without the band, the homecoming parade without the band, or the tree lighting without the carols. Please find a way to make this work I really implore you to do that.

Dave Passio 56 Whiting Street I'm going to uh keep pretty much all my comments as a citizen and taxpayer in Lunenburg. I am on the finance committee and I will be here tomorrow night probably half the night. First of all I have a question that was asked in public comment, I believe in a finance committee meeting and I'm not sure that it's ever been answered I don't need the answer immediately but, the mention of the student body at 40% plus participation I believe that was in the High School that the superintendent mentioned and the question was and I have the same question is that 40% of the bodies figured against the total population or is that if you have a student who is in three sports they're counted as three students makes a huge difference. Dr. Burnham replies, that would be each season we have about 40% participation, so does that mean so they're not double or triple counted each season. We report the participation, but are they in more than one sport in any one given season? In any one season –No. I know every year that the school

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district is required to report their total population to the state no later than October 1. Is there easy access to a spreadsheet that shows our population over the past 5 to 10 years? We include that in our budget presentation so that exists. The other question I have and we went through this on the town side wondering is certain departments are kind of split between policy elected boards and paid staff that develop their budgets and for a number of years those boards were not included in the budget process. Something that came to mind, listening to you guys talk about the superintendent and the management team working through these issues I remember my dad, different time I understand that, and maybe you can't do this now but he sat down with the staff and said here's our challenge what are your ideas, help me work through this, I'm wondering if the management team is doing that without fear of retribution to the paid employees of the district. I don't want an answer I'm just throwing it out there as you know that's a big part in manufacturing, I spent almost half a century in manufacturing and when management didn't listen to the people working on the floor with the equipment there were all kinds of problems but when they did problems were solved. Last thing is a public service announcement tomorrow evening one of the agenda items on the finance committee agenda is a very serious deep dive discussion into creating a grant writing position at least on the town side, or maybe a shared position both sides, really been no discussions as to what it might look like, but we're going to be formulating a letter to the Board of Selectmen and the town manager. We actually had a vote two weeks ago to push this recommendation forward from the finance committee and we're going to more formalize it tomorrow evening.

TJ Laughlin 207 Rolling Acres Thanks for everything you do, I've sent you guys a bunch of emails so probably already aware of all my questions and I'm just going to reiterate them publicly. The magic word is spreadsheet I think a lot of us are talking about a spreadsheet. I just wanted to show some examples of why I think that would be important, I think in this meeting assuming I heard the numbers correctly the health insurance is coming in at half of what we expected and yet we're still having the impact even though I think at the beginning of this process we said insurance was a big impact to us at the 10% or more but now that it's half of that we're still talking at the same intensity - where did we gain by that half? So some of the other things I heard and I think I might have misheard is with some suggestions, is reinstating the music, janitors and maintenance. I think that was said to go up to potentially 6% again if we were to read those from 2 1/2% it's a 3 1/2% increase I think. That is hard to understand without a spreadsheet. To say that huge percentage for that .5 FTE position increased the percentage that much and then the other one is just the music program. I think it's hard without a spreadsheet to see the impact. If we hear you know cutting the music program at .5FTE, how much are we actually saving by cutting that program, is it a huge amount, is it a not a huge amount, it's we're just taking that and saying we need to do this but we don't really know the impact. When we are talking Middle School sports, a lot of the families were saying we're paying for Middle School sports so how are we reconciling those numbers? I think that spreadsheet will really help us be on the same page to agree with you guys, and see why you're making these cuts. I know they're not easy, but that spreadsheet with those numbers would help us be on the same page

Mr. Lehtinen I do a public comment on the sports participation, because we've had a meeting before and I still have the file from a discussion on winter sports participation 23/24 and Fall data as well. But the winter we had 200 students participating at the high school level and in the fall there was 184 students participating at the high school. The percentage of students participating in the winter was 40%. There could definitely be students that participated in a sport during the fall and winter.

15. Topics for Future Discussion

16. Adjournment Mr. Sculimbrene made a motion to adjourn at 9:17 p.m. Ms. Brzozoski seconds the motion, all approve

Respectfully Submitted

Courtney Fuller