



Lunenburg Public Schools

Dr. Jodi Fortuna, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 4, 2026
LMHS 7:00 – Hybrid

School Committee

Anthony Sculimbrenne Chair - Present
Laura Brzozoski, Vice Chair - Present
Mandy Gilman, Secretary – Present
Emily Young, Member - Present
Member, TBD

Superintendent

Dr. Jodi Fortuna

Recording Secretary

Courtney Fuller

Guests: Christopher McNamara – Business Administrator, Carla Squier – Primary School Principal, Tim Santry, LMHS Principal, Norman Yvon – THES Principal, Christopher Stevens – Director of Facilities, Hailee Attorri – LHS History Faculty

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 at 7:00 by Mr. Sculimbrenne

2. Pledge of Allegiance

- 3. Public Comment Sarah Cammer 304 Lancaster Ave** I want to thank the committee and our superintendent for your efforts this year and looking at what our students really need first. I want to mention that the 5% of children in Lunenburg live in poverty and 6% of our seniors according to the census, that is real data and if you are looking at the census, the majority of Lunenburg is not per our capita. So when I think about equity in town, I think about what our seniors need and think about what our impoverished students need first. I do serve on another board, but I am not speaking for them now. On the board of assessors, many exemptions have been put forth to handle impoverished seniors who maybe still own a home in Lunenburg and our town has worked to address that issue for the past two years at least. They are called exemptions of taxes and those exemptions had not been looked at for over 20 years, those levels have been raised, approved by the town, and that is how we address seniors living in poverty in Lunenburg. I bring this up because I am constant hearing that we are evicting seniors from their homes based on our taxes, but with these exemptions we are able to help the elderly. I think it is important to take care of the elderly and it is important to take care of the young. They do not have to be in conflict with each other. I am not sure there are many seniors that like to see younger kids have reduced opportunities because they themselves are impoverished. I think they would prefer to see those opportunities for kids. So, if we need to change those exemptions, there is a method for that. Another thing I wanted to say is 5% of our kids, think about that number, it is not hard for me to think about because I lived that life, I went to middle school wearing my brothers old clothes. I got a paper route when I was 11 and I didn't have to deal with that anymore, but that is not an easy thing to do around

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here, there are no sidewalks, and you will get run over on Mass Ave. This is why we have to bus our students, this why we should not have a bussing fee for our students, it is appalling. It is up to this board and town to put those thoughts before our tri-board, every time you meet, I am at the board of assessors handing abatements for people who have found their taxes are too high and I am signing letters of exemption for people who should have had those things. Aside from exemptions, we have also passed the senior means testing in this town to reduce those taxes as well, so next time someone brings up that Grammy is going to have to choose between paying for her house or her medications, that is not because the school is asking for too much money, they are doing the right thing by our students. I hope you will continue to impress that upon the boards you are talking to.

Chris Robarge I am the staff rep for ASCME Council 93. We represent about 65 workers here in Lunenburg serving as paraprofessionals, office personnel, and of course, school custodians. I wanted to comment on the discussion about potentially privatizing the school custodians. Privatization would result in the loss of jobs that these men and women love and the loss of their pension and affordable and quality health insurance coverage for themselves and their families. It would also be a loss for parents, students, and teachers across Lunenburg who rightly recognize these men and women for what they are, a critical part of the fiber of the school community. These students and teachers know and trust these custodians. I've seen it in person when I'm in your buildings. We rely on them every day, not just for keeping the schools clean, but for intangible things, the most important of which is serving as an important layer of security during these troubling times. They're the eyes and ears of your schools, when something or someone seems out of place, they're often the first to notice and take action. ASCME has decades of experience with watching employers hand over this important work to private for-profit companies. And what we can tell you for sure is that you will lose your current workforce to neighboring communities. Replacing that workforce would be a revolving door of strangers with no connection to your students, your teachers, or your community. And that's because the only way these proposals are profitable for private companies is if they drastically slash the wages and benefits of the workers. We realize that tough economic times are happening right now and they require tough decisions. If you are considering taking a vote that would cut the legs out from under these workers, I respectfully request you challenge and fully vet any supposed cost savings that you will achieve through privatization. We can tell you again based on decades of experience that any savings will be short-term at best. That's because the pattern is always the same. A for-profit company secures the contract with a low ball bid. A few years pass and then the district loses the infrastructure to provide the service in house and then the cost of the contract starts going up every single year. You'll also start to see hidden fees and extra costs for things such as shoveling school driveways and walkways and staffing special events, things that are currently handled by the in-house staff. Before long, the district is paying more for much less. In addition, you'll also be dealing with a whole other set of problems that you perhaps never envisioned. When you have some time over the next few days, search the Mobile Sun archives for what happened in Chelmsford when they made the mistake of privatizing their school custodial services, a mistake they ultimately had to correct by bringing the service back in house. You'll find that the cost savings were exaggerated. You'll also see that over just a few years, four employees of the contractor were arrested for offenses ranging from outstanding warrants to prescription drug crimes to theft of school laptops, cash, and even students prescription drugs out of a locked cabinet. This is one example of how things can go bad very quickly when you get rid of trusted employees for the possibility of some short-term savings. In closing, we want to stress that we stand ready to work with the district to find solutions that will not replace your trusted custodians with a part-time minimum wage cleaning crew. To close, I just have two specific questions for the administration to ponder as they continue to crunch numbers. When you lay off these workers, what's the cost of meeting your contractual obligation to pay them for unused paid leave time? And will that cost be reflected in what you present to the committee? And when all these workers refuse the lousy job offers that they get from the private contractor, have

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you estimated the cost of unemployment benefits that the town will have to reimburse to the state? For those who may not be aware.

Ms. Young I don't know many of the custodial staff, but Mr. Jose I just to kind of jump on how it's more than just cleaning up messes and fixing things. When my daughter Norah entered kindergarten, Mr. Jose was the one that put in the sinks that she could reach and the faucets and the extenders and offered to build things if needed. Every morning we see Mr. Jose and he's more than just a custodial staff to her, we talk about you a lot actually and his songs that he sings. We have lots of conversations about how it's really helpful when you clean up your mess and we don't we don't leave it for other people to clean up and things like that. But he is more than a custodial staff to my daughter. He made school accessible for her in many ways which I greatly appreciate.

Kara Harunkiewicz I would like to, for the people at home, recognize the sheer amount of custodial staff that we have shown up today. I'd also like to mention, I mean, from a student's perspective, it's not just cleaning up messes. I mean, I see someone here who has let me into the tech booth multiple times when, when it gets locked. As a band student, I've made personal connections with two different people who have had the band hallway when I come in very late at night realizing I forgot my saxophone. You can ask almost any of my friends. I was devastated at one point, the old custodian that was in the band hallway when we were in middle school got moved down to Turkey Hill and we were all so sad when he told us he would not be there. It is not just about cleaning messes even to students, and the students do recognize you and do appreciate everything that you do for us.

Chris Stevens, Director of Facilities I rely on these custodians every day. I call them at night, Can you do this? Can you do that? And they do it! They might not like it, but they do it. And to get rid of them would be devastating. There are so many moving parts to a school to have it work like that. It might work well in an office building when everybody's gone and they're in there for an hour and they take the trash out and shut the door behind them, but when everything is going on, on a daily basis here, these guys make this place run behind the scenes and nobody even knows. So, that being said, terrible idea, it will not work.

4. **Chairs Report** – After 42 years, Coach K finally has a girl's state championship division 5 winner for Indoor track. At our last meeting and at the end of the finance committee meeting, I had mentioned that on March 18th we will be presenting our budget with cuts and because we don't know exactly what the cuts were but, we knew they were going to be bad based on prior experience, I flippantly called it the "shoot your favorite puppy" budget, I have received feedback, that this was insensitive and I want to apologize but, also want to make sure people are aware. I wanted to get people alerted to the problem, but it is hard to do when you don't know the scope or scale of the problem. I didn't want to scare anyone but at the same time I didn't want to make people think that it wasn't a big deal. I hoped that the language would engage with people, and it very clearly did, but maybe it was a little too much. I apologize.
5. **Student Representative Report** – On Friday, districtwide, we are wearing green in support for Haddie. I am here to speak on behalf of our student body in the decisions that are being made.
6. **Review and Approve Minutes** None
7. **Review and Approve Line Items, Transfers, Warrants**
 - a. **Line Item Transfers** A transfer of \$54,548.50 to transfer funds to represent the new allocations for the SOA account, these funds will be going from instructional staff salaries to the list
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provided to the committee (and available online). A transfer of \$462.07 will be transferring from the supply line items, math, art, periodicals, library, guidance, repair office machines and general supplies to the Primary School special educations instructional material amount for testing supplies. **Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to approve the line item transfers, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve**

b. Warrants

- c. Donations** There is a donation from the book fair for \$2,096.65 and a donation from box tops for \$23.10 this will be used for field trips and presentations. **Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to accept, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve.** There is a donation for \$220 for Girls On the Run **Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to accept the kind donation, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion, all approve.** There is another donation that is for a scholarship, it is the Betsy B Parker Scholarship, and this will go to a senior in Lunenburg and has played and earned a varsity letter in at least three sports during their 4 high school experience and expresses an interest in becoming a teacher. Mr. Sculimbrene read the write up provided that explained all of the accomplishments Betsy achieved throughout her lifetime. **Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to accept the generous donation in honor of Betsy B Parker, Ms. Young seconds the motion all approve.**

Action

- d. History Minuteman Field Trip Grant** Ms. Attorri states she has been teaching in Lunenburg for 14 years. I have a deep personal love for place-based learning. I've seen firsthand how a student's face lights up when they realize they aren't just reading a story, they are standing exactly where the story happened. That is why I made place-based learning my smart goal this school year. And this field trip will be the culmination of a year-long practice of place-based learning in my US history classes. I am planning to bring my 10th grade US history and 11th grade AP US history classes to Minute Man National Historical Park. This trip is a hands-on history learning opportunity for our students to walk the battlefield and see where the soldiers of the revolution once stood. If all students come who are eligible, there will be 48 students in total on this trip. This trip is especially important because this year our country is celebrating the 250th birthday of our country. At Minute Man, our students will visit the very place where our country was created and defined. To make this happen, I applied for and secured a competitive grant from the American Battlefield Trust. They are the largest battlefield preservation group in the country and they award these grants based on a competitive national application process. It's an honor for Lunenburg to be recognized and it shows our commitment to excellence in the classroom. I want to be very clear on the financial side so we can ensure a reimbursement with their grant. We are keeping costs very low. Students will only need to pay \$5 each. The trust provides a reimbursement of up to \$500. We will need to pay Dee Bus Company upfront and that cost is \$731.50. To get our money back, we have to be perfect with our payments and paperwork. I must submit all receipts and the reimbursement form within five business days of the trip. We need to be good about paying on time and have no delays to guarantee the trust honors the grant. And there are specific grant requirements. The National Battlefield Trust has prepared a press release, which I've given you their copy of, and I would need to send it with my personalization's to our local newspaper so the community can celebrate our students and also feature the generous gift by the National Battlefield Trust. And I will need the school committee's help of getting that published. I hope in the Lunenburg ledger. I will also be required to take and submit at least seven "rights free" photos of the trip to the trust and required to send those along with student thank you notes shortly after the conclusion of our trip to the trust. Thank you for considering this and helping to bring this experience to our 10th and 11th graders. **Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to accept the grant reimbursement for the field trip to the Battlefield, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve**

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Discussion

- e. **Outsourcing Facilities and Grounds** Dr. Fortuna has given a memo recommending that we not take this action because of the many reasons that the ASCME rep stated earlier, we will never get the quality of employee s that we currently have. In the long run it will cost us more then we will save. Overall, the committee agrees this is not a good idea.

8. Old Business

Action

- a. **FY 27 Budget** Dr. Fortuna reports an important update and correction regarding financial figures we have been reviewing. Recently TJ Laughlin reached out to point out a discrepancy in our latest numbers, and after reviewing the information, he was correct. Based on this information the previous deficit was artificially inflated, our actual deficit is now anticipated to be \$1,978,307. As we move forward we will be working from these corrected numbers. The committee has been provided with updated FY 27 projections. The committee discusses the fluidity of numbers and possible changes
- b. **Facility Updates** Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to move the facilities update before the budget, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve Mr. Stevens gives an overview of all the projects happening within the school district, the list and information has also been provided to the committee in their folder. Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to accept the report with gratitude, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve

- 9. **Public Comments for issues discussed tonight Mandy Gilman** I have drafted a letter that is in your packet that I would like you to review and for us to send to The Ways and Means Committee and also our own legislators.

Mrs. Squier I've been listening to the discussion about positions and it's really challenging and it's really difficult. I think I've said this the last this is probably my third time saying this, but we're going to be forced to make some difficult decisions. One of the things I hope that we can approach the process with compassion for colleagues across the organization, and when I say across the organization, I mean our whole town of Lunenburg, our police department, our fire department. We work collaboratively with all of the departments across the town of Lunenburg. So different groups are going to experience an impact differently. That should not turn into a competition about who is more deserving of the resources because everyone every student in this town is deserving of the resources. But we're going to be faced and have to make some difficult decisions. I think everyone is working hard. Everyone's going to be affected. So our focus should be on understanding each other's constraints and finding the most thoughtful path forward. We're working hard as an administrative team. We're working with Dr. Fortuna. It's not going to be perfect and yes we have to as Tony was saying something's got to give. We can't keep everything that we want, but we have to work together as a community and come together. Without that, we're going to have fighting within one another. It's not going to be productive. It's not good for students. We've seen this in the past. We've lost really good educators. We can't continue to do that. I think we have to come to an understanding everyone's going to have to give something if our override doesn't pass. And even with the override passing something, but we have to have some understanding because fighting back and forth. How did our custodians and maintenance feel? Today we talked about outsourcing. We're going to have uncomfortable conversations. We have to understand everyone and just know that everyone is doing their best.

Ms. Brzozoski It was a really challenging week for our bus drivers, so I wanted to recognize them and say thank you for getting our students home safe. It was absolutely a crazy few days for them. We have amazing drivers. We are very lucky to have bus drivers who very much care about the well-being of our kids, and I just I wanted to say I very much appreciate them.

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Ms. Gilman I read at Read Across America Day and it was wonderful and I want to thank the teachers and Alicia McAllister who put it together and I got a really nice pile of thank you notes from the students yesterday which is really cute.

10. Reports from Sub-Committees

11. Topics for Future Discussion Budget, Athletics, HR Staffing report

12. Adjournment Ms. Brzozoski makes a motion to adjourn at 9:34, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve.

Submitted Respectfully,

Courtney Fuller