



Lunenburg Public Schools

Dr. Jodi Fortuna, Superintendent of Schools

MEETING MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, June 24, 2026
LMHS 7:00 – Hybrid

School Committee

Laura Brzozoski Chair - Present
Anthony Sculimbrene, Vice Chair - Present
Mandy Gilman, Secretary – Present
Emily Young, Member - Present
Jean Russell, Member - Absent

Superintendent

Dr. Jodi Fortuna

Recording Secretary

Courtney Fuller

Guests: Christopher McNamara – Business Administrator, Dr. Kimberly Sarfde – Director of Teaching and Learning, Nadine Lorenzen – Food Service Director

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 7:11 by Ms. Brzozoski

2. Pledge of Allegiance

- 3. Public Comment Daryl Plant, 490 Lancaster Ave.** the failure of the override was not primarily the result of a tactical error or a messaging problem as suggested by the school committee chair, rather, it reflects a deeper issue. Many Lunenburg residents have lost confidence in our public institutions, particularly our schools. Over the past 7 to 8 years, school leaders have increasingly emphasize social equity initiatives, while academic performance has declined. Regardless of one's views of these initiatives, the results are concerning. According to statements made by both the superintendent and school committee chair at town meeting, the district is close to losing its accreditation and approximately 40 to 45% of students are not reading at grade level proficiency. Many explanations have been offered including curriculum changes, funding challenges, and demographic shifts. However, neighboring districts such as Lancaster, Ayer/Shirley, Groton, Pepperell, Townsend, Leominster, and Fitchburg have faced similar challenges while achieving stronger outcomes. According to DESE data, parents increasingly feel that the district has focused its attention on struggling students while insufficiently challenging those performing at or above grade level. Every student deserves to be appropriately challenged and supported. Equal opportunity should not require identical outcomes, nor should academic excellence be sacrificed in pursuit of other objectives. At the town meeting, I asked the superintendent to provide three specific strategies that would improve student performance, there was no response. If the district hopes to rebuild public trust, it must articulate a clear plan for academic improvement and demonstrate measurable results. To restore confidence and improve out comes, I recommend the following: (1) re-evaluate student support programs, conduct a comprehensive review

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of all nonacademic support programs and staffing. The goals should be to determine which programs demonstrably improve student outcomes and which can be streamlined, restructured, or eliminated. Resources should be directed toward services with measurable benefits. Students with significant behavioral or mental health concerns should receive appropriate support in partnership with parents, guardians, and qualified professionals (2) Prioritize academic achievement. Implement an aggressive reading, writing, and mathematics remediation program for students who are below proficiency. At the same time, expand opportunities for advanced learners through accelerated coursework, enrichment programs, and differentiated instruction. Students who have mastered grade level materials should be encouraged to advance rather than being held back by the pace of the class. Physical education and wellness opportunities should also be expanded recognizing the important connection between physical and mental well-being. (3) Review special-ed services. According to the superintendent, approximately 25% of students currently receive services through an IEP. The district should conduct an internal audit of all IEP's to ensure they are appropriate, compliant, and effective. Students with documented disabilities should receive the support they need to succeed while ensuring the resources are allocated efficiently and responsibly. (4) Improve efficiency and accountability. By focusing resources on academic achievement and evaluating administrative and support costs, the district may identify opportunities for savings and improve effectiveness. Any savings should be used to strengthen classroom instruction, preserve extracurricular programs, and reduce financial burdens on taxpayers whenever possible. Most importantly, restoring academic excellence will require accountability at every level of leadership. The community deserves clear goals, transparent reporting, and measurable progress. If current leadership is unable to deliver meaningful improvement, residents should consider whether new leadership is necessary to move the district forward.

Matt Nazarenko 79 Robbs Hill Road Thank you to Dr. Fortuna and Laura for having a meeting a couple weeks ago with boosters, that was very helpful. One of the things out of that was the parents and boosters are looking for a by sport line funding. We were able to find the fiscal year 24 actuals online if you go through your budget files and I did put those in the third and fourth column. I applied 6 1/2% compounded annual growth rate to the costs in fy 24 moving through the past year, the second page, the last two columns are the impact per athlete. The black numbers would be revenue, positive meaning \$350 athletic fee that we would charge the student covers the sport, if you roll that out to the rightmost column that would be the revenue impact per sport. You can see that football is a \$20,000 negative revenue impact and other sports are positive. One thing that is concerning to me is that in the meeting we had a couple weeks ago, it was mentioned that middle school sports specifically do not cover the cost of the sport, which I now have two seasons of middle school sports under my belt, with my oldest, I don't know how that is possible. Field hockey and track, they are using hand me down jerseys, field hockey had 11 games last year and one official per game at \$50 per official. Track had zero officials, the coaches were the officials and they are using hand me down jerseys from varsity. I don't know how track costs anything other than overhead allocations, which I would call programmatic cost. The programmatic costs appear to be transportation and allocation such as the athletic director, insurance, hudl fees etc. The stipends would actual be the operating costs not the programmatic costs. Operating costs in my mind are direct costs associated with the sport. Another clarification I would like to make is related to MIAA rules, 6th grades are not allowed to play on JV or Varsity sports, only 7th and 8th graders, if there is room, that would pretty much eliminate football, basketball, baseball, softball, any major sport, there probably is not enough room. Track and field hockey are not offered at the middle school level at any clubs locally. The first time picking up a field hockey stick for a lot of these girls is 6th grade, last year the varsity field hockey team won the Midwach League undefeated, it is a very good program. There were 20 girls on the turf this morning working out to try and repeat that for the upcoming season. Middle school sports was \$19,400 revenue positive, effectively off setting football. So we made the decision to cut middle school sports because of a funding issue and they are revenue positive, I don't see why we are doing that. Additionally, they are not under the MIAA, the coaches

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make the schedules, so it is really easy, you don't have to contact anyone, the AD is not involved. I know Coach Rios kind of scheduled the games last year. We started the field hockey season with actually no games scheduled and finished the year with 12. I have put in a formal request records to Dr. Fortuna and the school to help out, I would like the actuals for this. These are what I would consider estimates moving forward and myself and some other parents are happy to provide this analysis for you.

Chris Hurlbut 469 Sunny Hill Road Education is about more than academics alone. Athletics are an integral part of the educational experience. Sports build teamwork, discipline, leadership, accountability, and school pride. For many students, putting on a Lunenburg uniform is one of the most meaningful parts of their school experience. Following the failed override, middle school athletics were eliminated as a budget reduction of \$14,415 from roughly a \$29 million budget. Since that decision was made a growing number of parents and community members have come together with a shared goal, preserving these opportunities for our students. Community members have already begun making financial commitments and are prepared to fund the gap if an approved path forward can be identified. Community members have asked straightforward questions regarding the actual cost of middle school athletics and the process required to apply community raised funds towards these programs. Yet the answers have been inconsistent. As a result, the community still lacks a clear understanding of both the financial picture and the path forward. Based on information shared publicly, there are also legitimate questions regarding the actual financial impact of middle school athletics on the district. Available data suggests that user registration fees may exceed the known cost of operating these programs, suggesting that middle school athletics may generate net revenue for the district. If accurate, this would mean the district eliminated programs that were operating in the black. We are not asking the school committee to solve this problem alone. We are asking for accurate information and a clear path forward so that we can help solve it. To move this effort forward in time for the upcoming athletic season, the community is requesting these three things by mid-July. First a detailed breakdown of costs and revenue for each sport, including transportation, overhead, administrative expenses, and user fees. Second, guidance on the process required for community raised funds or donations to support these programs. Third a commitment to work with the athletic directors, coaches, and schedulers to restore middle school athletics for the upcoming year. This is a solvable problem if we work together. Finally, I want to address the future of athletics and extracurricular activities in Lunenburg more broadly. The school committee has recently stated that looking ahead to next year and I quote "All extracurricular activities, including all athletics, will be on the table for future reductions, and that would result in a full dismantling of Lunenburg schools, if the district's financial challenges persist". If the district leadership believes these programs may be at risk, the community deserves to know right now.

Nikki Jeannotte, 111 Mulpus Road, I am the president of the football boosters and I am here tonight on behalf of the boosters and the football program at the high school and also the head coach who just had a baby a couple days ago and wasn't able to be here. Casey, the head coach put in a request to the athletic department to purchase five new helmets earlier this spring, we currently have more heads than we have helmets, we haven't heard whether that was approved or denied. If it is denied, which is probably given our financial predicament, we are hoping to get permission to purchase the helmets out of the booster funds, which we understand, we need permission from the school committee for. The second matter is a bit trickier, I will preface with some background, we are all aware transportation to and from away games has been cut from the athletic budget. The football boosters would like to fund one-way transportation to away games and have families bring their players and equipment home, which we have been told may or may not be a violation of Title IX, because there isn't a female team with enough funds to purchase transportation. However, it is our understanding that two mini buses were purchased by the district to help provide transportation to and from away games. These buses are not a reasonable option for the football team given the number of athletes who travel and the amount of equipment they require. With that in mind, any question of inequity stemming from football boosters funding alternative transportations should be settled because the mini buses aren't a viable option for us

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and they are a viable option for many of the other smaller teams. Our asks are first and ideally that the athletics department purchase helmets for the program, but if they can't or are unable to, we have permission to purchase the helmets from boosters and also that we have permission to fund transportation to away games, which comes to about \$1500. I'd also like to add that I was on a zoom a couple weeks ago with several other booster people and you all stated that football is one of the wealthier programs, more wealthy than the other programs, and I respect that people believe this and I understand why, but we have more money because we work our tails off, fundraising at every available opportunity. We do 50/50 at every game, we sell merch at every game, we latch on to any fundraising opportunity we can, we don't get a dollar for admissions to the football games, we don't get a dollar from concessions at football games, we don't see any of that money. We are basically asking to spend our money that we work really hard for in a responsible and meaningful way for our program.

Mr. Sculimbrene I was unable to attend the boosters meeting, I want to make sure that as we go through these discussions that everybody keeps in mind that a solution that only solves one of the problems is not going to work. If we solve a problem for one sport without considering the legal implications for other sports, all we are doing is inviting costs related to litigation, and those kinds of costs would be huge and they would be difficult to sustain and would not necessarily go away within a single calendar year. So if sports and the booster organizations are trying to solve the problem, which it sounds like everybody wants to we need to make sure that it's not just a numbers thing, that it is also a legal thing and that we work together to make sure that as much as we can we can comply with the law. One idea would be to pair sports, if you have a shared interest and shared facility, such as shared officiating boys' and girls' basketball that would be a natural pairing. Some sports do not have necessarily natural pairings and some sports are automatically Title IX compliant, but it would be problematic and really sad if everybody puts all this effort in and then it all gets washed away because we didn't comply with the law. Solutions need to be mindful of those legal requirements, otherwise we just spend money that will be taken away by lawyers, which I don't want to have happen.

4. **Chairs Report** – It is officially the end of the school year, so, thank you very much to Dr. Fortuna for her first successful Lunenburg school year and for getting us through this very difficult year. So, thank you. I very much appreciate it. For the foreseeable future, the school committee will be meeting here in the media room at the Middle High school. The town hall meeting room is sadly not handicap accessible. There's serious accessibility concerns with that meeting space and we can meet here. I understand this makes it more difficult for some people to watch the meetings remotely via public access and I am very sorry about that. You can still watch our meetings via Zoom when it works, and the recording of the meetings will be available the next day on the Lunenburg Public Access YouTube channel and Facebook. Just a plug, this town needs meeting spaces that are accessible to all members of the public, and all meetings should be taking place in handicap accessible places that don't require a terrifying outdated ancient lift to the second floor. I want to state up front that I will be asking the committee to vote to ask for a special town meeting as soon as legally possible. Once we have the final conference committee state budget. Also there was new snow and ice money that the town got. It's looking very likely that the state legislature will be sending us extra chapter 70 money specifically address the statewide ongoing education funding crisis. This money as chapter 70 funding is intended for public education in the schools, 35% of the entire school budget in Lunenburg is covered by chapter 70 funds uh which are dispersed to the town but intended to go towards education. And I would like to ask that we have a special meeting to reopen the FY27 municipal budget once the state has finalized the number and that we allocate all of that additional chapter 70 money to the school budget. Things are going to be hard next year. That's not news to anyone. They're going to be very hard, they were already hard this year. This was not an easy school year because of the cuts that we had to make the year before. But this next upcoming school year, things are going to start breaking. I am really sorry. This affects my kid too. Many things that you as a parent or you as a citizen or you as a student care about will be

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affected negatively. Many other things that may not affect you personally but affect other people in the town will be impacted negatively as well. I understand the urge to try and save specifically the things that matter to you. I really love the energy to try and make things better. I love the way our community continues to try. I love that we keep trying even in such adverse conditions and we don't give up. That's what it takes to change the world is a group of committed people working together to bring about the change they want to see in the world. But I want to make really clear as school committee members, it is our job to see the big picture to take in the entirety of the system and to look out for all members of the system. It is our job to keep an eye on the main goal and our core mission which is educating children and preparing students for the best possible future for each and every student. That is our job as school committee members. So I understand and I especially understand as a parent the impulse to fight precisely for what matters personally to you and your child. I don't ever want to stop anyone from advocating for your children and you should be very proud that you are good advocates for your children. But please just know that sometimes there are going to be important critical things that may not be as popular or have as many or any advocates, but are still vitally important. My example for that is toilet paper. No one is lining up to advocate that we buy it, but we really need it. It's something we have to spend money on. It's not visible. It's not something you think about. It is an expense, but there's nobody advocating for that, and it is our job as school committee members to look at the big picture and keep the big picture in mind. And I also want people to be cognizant of administration time and our staff time as we are facing such a dire gap between our needs and what we have. Requests are going to take longer. We're not going to have everything. Certain things you ask for may not exist or cannot be created because of the time. We are focusing on the core mission and we do not have enough personnel to get everything done. It is important that we together collectively as people who want to improve things who want to maintain quality schools in Lunenburg and all that that means it's important we keep our eyes on the big picture and not turn into infighting over specific programs or issues. The big picture, adequate school funding for the entire system is where your efforts are going to do the most good. Continuing to engage the select boards, send emails, go to meetings, advocate for the school. So, run for office. Go to meetings twice because it's important. Make the phone calls. Email your state senator and state rep. Be a fierce advocate for every kid in this town and making sure that everyone is getting what they need.

5. Student Representative Report – None

6. Review and Approve Minutes

- a. **Regular session 4/15, 5/6, 5/20, 6/3/26 Ms. Gilman makes a motion to approve the minutes, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion is approve with one abstention**
- b. **Tri-Board 1/12, 1/27, 3/10/26 Mr. Sculimbrene makes motion to accept the tri-board minutes, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion, motion is approved with one abstention**

7. Review and Approve Line Items, Transfers, Warrants

- a. **Line Item Transfers** Mr. McNamara explains the four line item transfers for this meeting **Ms. Gilman makes a motion to accept the transfers as outlined by Mr. McNamara, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, all approve**
- b. **Warrants 6/2/26 to 6/17/26 \$515,921.28**
- c. **Donations – One donation in the amount of \$196.56 to the Turkey Hill Elementary School from the author of Taco and Pizza visit. Ms. Gilman makes a motion to accept the donation, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion all approve**

8. Superintendent's Report Dr. Fortuna shares updates on some key areas that have been focused on. We were successful in our bid for transportation vans, we are currently waiting on the state contract and

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after receiving that we will be able to execute quickly to meet the spending deadline of June 30. We will be able to purchase two new vans and have enough left over to cover driver training, registration, and insurance. On the facilities front, we have secured an additional \$175,000 in state earmarks for FY 27 specifically for facilities improvements, one of the priorities will be making the main doors at the central office fully handicapped accessible, anticipated projects include ADA bathroom sinks at Turkey Hill, interior and exterior doors at primary and add a DMT antenna to remotely control security systems the JACE upgrade at LMHS, the generator install at Primary, a fan replacement in the hallway and gym at the Primary school, the installation of new gym lighting at LMHS and lift rental or purchase, this list is subject to change. We are looking into possible portable AC in the upstairs at Turkey Hill also. Staffing and personnel updates include: Ms. Tousignant will be the new Assistant Principal of the Middle School, Mr. McGrath will take over as principal at Turkey Hill. We have hired two new assistant principals, Kaitlyn Angulo at Turkey Hill and Eddalizi Viola at the High School. Dr. Fortuna lists a few positions that are currently open and are recruiting for, while also working closely with Dr. Mancini to develop a comprehensive plan for how athletics will operate and be supported when the season starts again. The process with Title IX and boosters' guidance is explained.

9. New Action

Action

- a. **Adult Meal Price Increase** Ms. Lorenzen proposed to increase the adult meal price to \$6.00 **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to improve the increase, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion, all approve motion passes.**
- b. **FY 26 Budget Carryover PO's** – already discussed by Mr. McNamara with the encumbrances
- c. **T-Ball Field T.C. Passios** We are proposing T-ball be able to use the grassy field at TC Passios and the town has generously offered to mow and maintain that area. **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to approve the proposal regarding the use of TC Passios, Ms. Young seconds, motion approved with 1 abstention**
- d. **July School Committee Meeting Calendar** a proposal to add a July school committee meeting on Wednesday July 29th remote only, it will be financial only in nature. **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to add July 29th to the school committee calendar, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve**
- e. **2026-2027 School Committee Meeting Calendar** follows a typical plan schedule **Ms. Gilman makes a motion to approve the meeting calendar, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the motion, all approve**

10. Old Business

Action

- a. **Year End Curriculum Report** committee has been provided the report in their folder from Dr. Sarfde **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to accept the report, Ms. Gilman seconds the report all approve**
- b. **FY 26 Quarterly Budget Report** Mr. McNamara presents the quarterly report **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to accept the end of year quarterly budget report, Ms. Young seconds the motion all approve**
- c. **FY 26 Personnel Report** Dr. Fortuna runs through the list of new hires as well as the staff that will be retiring. **Ms. Gilman makes a motion accept the personnel report, Mr. Sculimbrene seconds the report, all approve**
- d. **Request for Additional Chapter 70 Fund** **Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to ask the select board to schedule a special town meeting, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion, all approve**

- 11. Public Comments for issues discussed tonight Laura Barooshian, 389 Mulpus Road** I did find the fundraising policy that you mentioned, it has not been updated since 2019. And one thing that just caught my eye is it does say that families and athletes will not be asked to participate in more than two fundraisers per sport per year. So just as the groups are getting themselves organized. I am here as president of the Music Gators we had a meeting we talked about fundraising, that was the major topic of discussion, we do want to work with you guys to figure out what we can fundraise for, transportation is one of the items. Also part of our mission is to provide the schools with the uniforms. I am very pleased we are going to be pushing 30 kids in marching band. That's up from 18. Ms McGregor is hopeful that we're going to be band and color guard. We are going to need to purchase color guard uniforms. We have different people of different sizes and different shapes and different needs this year. Um I'm still working on getting information from Ms. McGregor, I can't wait until band camp at the end of August to order color guard uniforms or we will not have them for football season. So we have a pool of funds available we are looking to donate, and we are looking for guidance on how to present/use them. – email Liz Peterson, and it will be on the agenda for July 29th. Also I can tell you the juniors are already feeling the stresses of having to choose certain classes and making choices of can I take an AP class, or honors class, or is it going to have to be a required elective. If there is anything we can do to help restore the 6th grade Jazz band, please let us know.
- 12. Reports from Sub-Committees** Ms. Brzozoski reports the Municipal Building Design Committee is meeting on Monday, we met two weeks ago and did send a survey to departments about wants vs needs. We did meet with athletics people, we do want to let everyone know, that yes, next year athletics are on the table for cuts, everything is on the table.
- 13. Topics for Future Discussion** football helmets,
- 14. Adjournment** Mr. Sculimbrene makes a motion to adjourn at 925, Ms. Gilman seconds the motion all approve.

Submitted Respectfully,

Courtney Fuller