MEETING MINUTES
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Wednesday, October 7, 2026
LMS Room D#132
7:00 – Hybrid

School Committee
Laura Brzozoski, Chair
Anthony Sculimbrene, Vice Chair
Mandy Gilman, Secretary
Jean Russell, Member
Emily Young, Member

Superintendent
Dr. Jodi Fortuna

Recording Secretary
Gina Gonsalves

Guests
Kimberly Sarfide – Director of Teaching & Learning; Richard Mathieu – Candidate for Director of Finance and Operations

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The meeting was recorded and broadcast live through Lunenburg Public Access and its Facebook page, with posting to the Lunenburg Access YouTube channel to follow. Remote participation was available through Zoom.

1. Call to Order by Chair Brzozoski

Chair Brzozoski called the meeting to order. She announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast through Lunenburg Public Access, with remote participation available through Zoom.

Vice Chair Sculimbrene joined the meeting remotely during the discussion of line item transfers. His presence was acknowledged, and subsequent votes were conducted by roll call. Dr. Fortuna participated remotely.

2. Pledge of Allegiance led by Chair Brzozoski

Chair Brzozoski led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Public Comment for prior Issues

The chairperson of PACSEL introduced herself and encouraged families of students receiving special services, including those with IEPs, Section 504 plans, English language services, or Title I services, to participate. She explained that PACSEL meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m., alternating between formal meetings with agendas and informal support group meetings. The next meeting would be a formal meeting.

There was no further public comment.

4. Chair's Report

Chair Brzozoski acknowledged ongoing problems with the sound quality of the Public Access broadcasts and

recordings. She stated that Public Access and the district were working to address the issue. She reminded members that the microphones were directional and should be pointed toward the speaker.

5. Student Representative's Report

The student representative reported that schools would be closed districtwide on October 12. The high school homecoming rally was scheduled for October 16, followed by homecoming on October 17.

October 20 would be a half day for the middle and high schools for parent/teacher conferences. High school conferences would begin at 12:30 p.m., and middle school conferences would begin at noon. Both schools would also hold conferences on October 22 beginning at 5:00 p.m.

The middle school's Monty Tech tour was scheduled for October 26, and its Halloween dance was scheduled for October 30.

6. Review & Approve Minutes

a. Regular Session Minutes 9/16/26

No action was taken on the September 16, 2026 regular session minutes.

7. Review & Approve Line Item Transfers, Warrants and Donations

a. Line Item Transfers

The interim Director of Finance explained that the proposed transfers applied to FY27 and were intended to address negative balances and provide additional funding to accounts with identified needs. He noted that additional invoices were still being processed and that the goal was to bring accounts to zero or positive balances for the next budget report.

Ms. Gilman requested confirmation that the transfers applied to the current fiscal year. The interim Director confirmed that they did and thanked the business office and school staff for their assistance in preparing the information.

Ms. Gilman moved to approve line item transfers in the amounts of $18,703.94 and $22,856.12**. Chair Brzozoski called a roll call vote and declared that the motion passed unanimously.**

b. Donations

The Committee did not approve any donations. The Chair indicated that the matter would be addressed in two weeks.

c. Warrants 9/15/26 to 10/5/26 $315,036.56

Chair Brzozoski reported warrants totaling **$315,036.56** for the period September 15 through October 5, 2026.

8. Superintendent's Report

The Superintendent's Report was taken earlier in the meeting, following the Chair's Report. Chair Brzozoski thanked Dr. Fortuna for securing a professional development opportunity for the district.

9. New Business

Action

a. In Person Interview Richard Mathieu, Director of Finance and Operations

The Committee interviewed Richard Mathieu for the Director of Finance and Operations position. Chair Brzozoski explained that she and Ms. Russell had participated in the first round of interviews.
Mr. Mathieu reviewed his municipal and school finance experience, beginning with his work as a town accountant in Douglas in 2002 and his move to school finance at Dover-Sherborn in 2005. He described experience in both regional and municipal school districts, municipal accounting software, accounts payable, and financial systems. He also discussed his leadership and legislative committee involvement in professional finance organizations.

Mr. Mathieu stated that he was serving as Assistant Business Manager for Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District. He explained that he had taken that position after working in Dudley-Charlton during the pandemic and was ready to return to a leadership role. He described Lunenburg as a community that valued its schools, hard work, and resourcefulness.

Members questioned Mr. Mathieu about accounting, working within limited resources, changing established procedures, internal controls, communication, and grant administration. He emphasized listening and understanding existing practices before making changes, obtaining staff support, and implementing improvements incrementally.

In discussing cash receipts, Mr. Mathieu stressed the importance of sound internal controls and accountability, including numbered tickets to verify sales. He noted that proposed changes should account for both operational needs and community acceptance. He also emphasized open communication and shared goals when working with the Superintendent, employees, and bargaining units.

Mr. Mathieu described his experience with grant accounting and DESE's grants management system. When asked how he would address an unfamiliar issue, he stated that he would acknowledge the need for additional information, research the question, and consult colleagues with relevant experience.

A motion was made and seconded to hire Richard Mathieu as Director of Finance and Operations, pending successful contract negotiations. Chair Brzozoski called a roll call vote and declared that the motion passed unanimously.

b. Removal of Surplus Material

Dr. Sarfide presented a request to declare outdated and damaged instructional materials surplus. She explained that storage areas at the Primary School and Turkey Hill contained materials associated with balanced literacy and three-cueing practices that were no longer aligned with the district's instructional approach. Other materials were torn, mold-contaminated, or otherwise unsuitable for use.

Dr. Sarfide explained that usable books would be retained where appropriate. Volunteers from the Senior Center had assisted in organizing some books into topic-based bins at Turkey Hill, and she hoped to undertake similar work at the Primary School.

A motion was made to declare the identified inventory of noncompliant literacy materials, three-cueing resources, legacy core programs, including HMH Into Reading Version 2, and non-aligned intervention materials, including LLI, together with physically damaged or mold-contaminated

textbooks and teacher resources, surplus property no longer usable for school purposes, and to authorize appropriate disposal or recycling.

Chair Brzozoski called a roll call vote and declared that the motion passed unanimously.

c. Beginning of Year Data Presentation

Dr. Sarfide presented the spring 2026 MCAS results and fall 2026 beginning-of-year DIBELS assessment results. The presentation addressed English language arts, mathematics, science, grade eight civics, and early literacy screening.

Dr. Sarfide described the requirements of the Right to Read Act, including evidence-based curricula and screening for reading difficulties in kindergarten through grade three. She reported that the district already screened students three times annually and that a recent favorable review of its current HMH Into Reading curriculum placed the district in a strong position. She did not anticipate a curriculum replacement at that time, subject to further state guidance.

Members discussed how evidence-based curricula are evaluated, the role of DESE, possible options for locally developed curricula, and the financial implications of implementation. Dr. Sarfide explained that grant opportunities were available and that the state was developing a curriculum option for districts.

Dr. Sarfide reported that the district had received a PRISM grant to support implementation of the Boston Public Schools Focus on Pre-K curriculum and professional development for preschool teachers. A consultant was scheduled to visit on October 21 to assess current practices and assist with implementation planning.

Dr. Sarfide emphasized that DIBELS is a screening tool that identifies risk for reading difficulties and does not measure proficiency or diagnose a disability. Approximately 70% of kindergarten students were below benchmark at the beginning of the year. The percentages presenting as at risk were approximately 45% in grade one, 45% in grade two, 46% in grade three, 37% in grade four, and 41% in grade five.

She noted encouraging results among students performing above benchmark, including approximately 30% of grade three students. Members discussed the contributions of instructional materials and Ignite tutoring. Dr. Sarfide stated that information about how families would receive screening results would be included in her LiteracyLink newsletter.

On the grade eight civics assessment, 52% of students demonstrated proficiency, exceeding the state average by 12 percentage points. Science proficiency was reported at 45% in grade five and 46% in grade eight. Both grades exceeded the state average, with grade eight performing seven percentage points above it.

Dr. Sarfide identified a goal of 85% proficiency in English language arts, mathematics, and science. She reported that 39% of students in grades three through eight demonstrated proficiency in English language arts. Grade three proficiency was 45%. Members expressed particular concern about the spring grade five results, which showed 21% meeting or exceeding expectations, compared with 38% statewide. Those students were now in grade six.

The Committee discussed the importance of early intervention and the increasing difficulty of addressing reading gaps as students progress through school. Dr. Sarfide described efforts to use high-quality

instructional materials consistently, align instruction with grade-level standards, and support students at the elementary and middle school levels.

In mathematics, Dr. Sarfide identified grades four and five as areas of relative strength, with proficiency rates of 51% and 53%, respectively. She described work to focus instruction on priority mathematical concepts and strengthen conceptual understanding in addition to procedures and algorithms.

Dr. Sarfide also discussed reviewing supplemental resources for research support, working with the New Teacher Center in kindergarten through grade eight, using DESE observation guidance, and increasing administrators' classroom presence.

Ms. Young requested information about students taking the MCAS Alternate Assessment and their progress toward standards. Dr. Sarfide indicated that she would consult with the appropriate administrator about obtaining that information.

Chair Brzozoski emphasized that the MCAS results reflected testing from the previous spring and did not measure the effects of the current year's budget reductions. She expressed concern about reduced curriculum staffing and the district's capacity to achieve its goals with fewer resources. Members thanked Dr. Sarfide and teachers for their work and requested further discussion of targeted support for the current sixth-grade class.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the report on the spring 2026 MCAS and fall 2026 DIBELS data. A roll call vote was conducted, after which the Committee proceeded to the next item.

d. COTA Position Change to .5 OT

The Committee considered changing the previously approved full-time Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant position to a .5 Occupational Therapist position.

Members discussed adapting staffing arrangements to meet student service needs. Chair Brzozoski explained that the district had initially budgeted for a full-time COTA, but that arrangement was not working and an alternative was needed to provide required services.

A motion was made and seconded to change the previously approved COTA position to a .5 OT position**. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

e. Brooks House Redevelopment Proposal

The Committee reviewed the Brooks House redevelopment summary and considered whether the School Department had a use for the building.

Chair Brzozoski noted that the building had previously housed district offices but was not accessible and had not met the district's needs. She stated that substantial work and expense would be necessary to make it usable.

A motion was made stating that the School Department had no need for the Town to transfer the Brooks House to the department. A roll call vote was conducted, with affirmative votes recorded from the members attending in person.

The Committee then considered whether a future purchaser of the Brooks House property should be permitted to use the high school driveway for access. Members expressed concerns about student safety, security, and connecting outside traffic to the school driveway. Chair Brzozoski also noted the property's existing connection to the library driveway.

Following discussion of the wording, a motion was seconded to maintain the safety and security of the school driveway. The Chair clarified that the motion opposed connecting the Brooks House property to the high school driveway. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

f. Amendment of School Calendar – Parent/Teacher Conferences

The Committee discussed updating the 2026–2027 school calendar to reflect parent/teacher conference dates that had been approved at an earlier meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to update the 2026–2027 school calendar to include the previously approved parent/teacher conference dates. **The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.**

g. Fall Athletics Report

The athletics representative presented updated fall participation information. Overall participation was described as generally consistent with the previous year. High school participation had declined, with the loss of the golf program, which previously had 15 participants, identified as a contributing factor. Middle school participation had increased by seven students.

The representative reported strong seasons for girls soccer and field hockey. Girls soccer was ranked tenth in the latest power rankings, and field hockey was ranked within the top twenty.

The cross-country team held its home meet and senior recognition that day. Boys soccer senior recognition had taken place the previous day, and field hockey senior recognition had taken place before the Committee meeting. Girls soccer senior recognition was scheduled for October 22, with cheerleading and football recognition during homecoming on October 17.

The unified basketball team won its first game at Marlborough, 79–76.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the fall 2026 athletics participation report. **A roll call vote was conducted, after which the Committee proceeded to the next item.**

h. Vote on Funding Request for the Special Education Reserve Fund – November 2026 Town Meeting

The Committee discussed a funding request for the special education reserve fund for consideration at the November 2026 Town Meeting. Members noted that the fund had been established but had not yet been funded.

Discussion addressed the unpredictability and cost of out-of-district placements, the timing of Circuit Breaker reimbursements, and the need for a reserve to help address unexpected expenses. Members expressed concern that limited staffing and resources within the district could contribute to an increased need for out-of-district services.

The Committee considered amounts of $250,000 and $300,000, the relationship to unspent prior-year school funds, applicable funding limits, and whether free cash would be certified in time for the November Town Meeting. Members discussed the possibility of addressing funding at a later Town Meeting if certification was not completed.

Using an illustrative average of $150,000 per placement, members noted that 15 placements could cost approximately $2.25 million. They emphasized that a $300,000 reserve would cover only a limited portion of potential costs and that the district was obligated to provide required services.

Members also identified special education funding and reimbursement timing as topics to raise with legislators during an upcoming visit.

A motion was made and seconded to request $300,000 in free cash, contingent upon certification for the November Town Meeting, as part of the warrant article previously voted by the Committee. **Chair Brzozoski called a roll call vote and declared that the motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion

i. Discussion of Track & Field (Turf) Future Costs

The Committee discussed future track and field costs, including drainage, retaining walls, and turf replacement. Members expressed concern about the condition of the facilities and the ability to obtain timely funding through the Town's capital planning process.

Members cited previous delays involving the Primary School driveway, an accessible playground, and other school facility needs. They expressed concern that a large athletic facility project could absorb available capital funding and delay other necessary school projects.

A member described an understanding from the existing report that drainage and wall repairs could cost approximately $1 million before addressing turf replacement. Members requested a clearer explanation of the project's sequence, prerequisites, and anticipated timeline.

The Committee requested that Mr. Stevens provide an overview, preferably including a concise written timeline, to support discussion at the next meeting. Members also encouraged the public to observe the condition of the walls and drainage at the athletic facilities.

No vote was taken.

10. Old Business

Action

a. Revised Paraprofessional Salary Schedule

The Committee considered revised terms of the paraprofessional contract. Chair Brzozoski thanked the

paraprofessionals for their cooperation in resolving the matter and thanked Dr. Fortuna for the relationships and communication that supported the resolution.
Chair Brzozoski explained that she had participated in the negotiations, which involved a one-year agreement followed by a three-year agreement. She stated that efforts had been made to identify what had gone wrong and expressed confidence that the issue would not recur.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the new terms of the paraprofessional contract. Chair Brzozoski called a roll call vote and declared that the motion passed unanimously.

The revised agreement was circulated for signatures. The previously approved custodian contract was also circulated for signatures; no additional vote was taken on that agreement.

11. ***Public Comment for Issues Discussed Tonight***

There was no public comment from those attending in person or remotely.

12. Reports of Sub-Committees

Ms. Young reported that she had attended the PACSEL support group meeting that evening. The next PACSEL meeting was scheduled for November 4 at 6:00 p.m. in the high school project room at Lunenburg Middle-High School.

Chair Brzozoski reported on the Municipal Building Design Committee's review of Town Hall space needs, accessibility, and facility modernization. She explained that the Select Board's charge called for bringing town offices under one roof.

The options under discussion included using Ritter for town offices and the meeting house for Select Board chambers and other meeting rooms, with Public Access upstairs. The committee had also discussed an RFP to better define space requirements and improve cost estimates. Members discussed the need to address accessibility while questioning the necessity of consolidating all offices in one building.

Chair Brzozoski also noted her participation, outside her School Committee role, in planning for the Town's 300th anniversary in 2028.

The Policy Subcommittee expected to bring items forward at a later meeting.

13. Topics for Future Discussion

Upcoming topics included a facilities report, further discussion of track and field improvements, MCAS Alternate Assessment information, and targeted instructional support for the current sixth-grade class following the spring grade five assessment results.

Members emphasized the importance of addressing reading difficulties as early as possible.

14. Executive Session – pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A §21(a)(1) for the following purpose: To discuss complaints brought against a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual (OML complaint – T. Loughlin)

Chair Brzozoski announced that the Committee would enter executive session pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 30A, §21(a)(1), to discuss complaints brought against a public officer, employee, staff member, or individual concerning the Open Meeting Law complaint identified on the agenda as T. Loughlin.

An additional executive session purpose concerning strategy sessions was read. Chair Brzozoski stated that the Committee would not return to open session and would adjourn following executive session.

A motion was made and seconded to enter executive session and adjourn afterward. A roll call vote was conducted, and Chair Brzozoski declared that the motion passed.

15. Adjournment

The Committee entered executive session with the stated intention of adjourning afterward without returning to open session.

Respectfully submitted,

Gina Gonsalves

Documents Used at the Meeting

- October 7, 2026 meeting agenda.
- FY27 line item transfer requests for $18,703.94 and $22,856.12.
- Warrants for September 15–October 5, 2026, totaling $315,036.56.
- Richard Mathieu’s résumé.
- Declaration of Surplus/Excess Materials, dated October 7, 2026.
- Beginning-of-year data presentation: spring 2026 MCAS results and fall 2026 DIBELS results.
- Brooks House redevelopment summary.
- 2026–2027 school calendar.
- Fall 2026 athletics participation report.
- Track and field facilities report addressing drainage, walls, and turf.
- Revised paraprofessional contract and salary schedule.
- Previously approved custodian contract, circulated for signatures.