The minutes presented within this document summarize the discussion of the Regular Board of Education meeting. To view the meeting in its entirety and hear full reports please click the following link:4/1/26-Regular Board of Education Meeting

Bristol Board of Education
Bristol, Connecticut
Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.
Regular Meeting Minutes

The Bristol Board of Education regular meeting was held on Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the Bristol Board of Education Auditorium located at 129 Church Street and via Zoom Meeting Platform.

Present: Chair Shelby Pons, Commissioners: Jill Fitzsimons-Bula,Kristen Giantonio,Kara Ledger ,Lorianne Osenkowski, Robert Parenti, Maria Simmons, Barbara Tedesco, and Jennifer Van Gorder (7:02pm)

Absent: Deputy Superintendent Mary Hawk

Also, Present: Superintendent Iris White, Liaison Peter Kelley, Jodi Bond, Director of Finance, Carly Fortin, Chief Academic Officer, Laura Lanza Secondary Stem Supervisor, Lesek Ward Secondary Humanities Supervisor, Dr. Amy Martino, Director of Pupil Services and Joseph Grabowski, Chief Talent Officer

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence:
Chair Pons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and asked the audience to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Pons recognized and provided a moment of silence to honor Carol Kallenback - Bristol Central High School English/Spanish Teacher from 1957-1998 and Mileena Burnham Matthews, a former Bristol Public Schools student

Staff and Student Recognition

Superintendent White recognized Jean Zendel of Bristol Eastern High School for being named the 1st Congressional District winner in U.S. Senator Chris Murphy's Martin Luther King Jr. Essay Contest, which celebrated its 10-year anniversary and received over 1,000 submissions statewide. Mrs. Katy Reddick was also recognized for her dedication in supporting and encouraging student participation.

Superintendent White recognized the BAIMS Drone Team for hosting the RECF Aerial Drone Competition on March 7, 2026, with 14 participating teams. BAIMS teams earned both the Teamwork Mission Championship (Team 2026A Iron Falcons) and the Communications Mission

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Championship (Team 2026C Kings of the Sky), with the Iron Falcons also receiving the Middle School All-Around Champion Award.

Superintendent White recognized CHMS 8th grade students, under the direction of Mrs. Danielle Federowicz, for their participation in the MyAmerica Project in recognition of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Students designed fabric patches to be assembled into a large U.S. flag to be displayed on the Boston Common.

The Bristol Eastern Robotics Club, Team 11464, was recognized for competing in FIRST Robotics Competition events in Waterbury and Hartford, earning the Rookie All-Star Award at the Hartford event.

Students from Bristol Central and Bristol Eastern High Schools were recognized for participating in a Unified Sports game during halftime of the Division II Girls Basketball State Championship at Mohegan Sun on March 21, 2026.

The Bristol Central High School Girls Basketball Team was recognized for winning the Division II State Championship, defeating Rocky Hill 58–52 in overtime.

Superintendent White noted that Bristol Public Schools will observe Autism Awareness Day on April 2, 2026, through the "Light It Up Blue" initiative to promote awareness and inclusion.

As part of staff recognitions, the Board acknowledged April observances, including Paraprofessional Appreciation Day, National School Librarian Day, National Assistant Principals Week, Afterschool Professionals Week, Administrative Professionals Day, and School Bus Driver Appreciation Day. Superintendent White expressed appreciation to all staff for their continued dedication and service.

Approval of Minutes

February 3, 2026 - Budget Workshop #2 Meeting Minutes

The Board of Education voted to approve the February 3, 2026 - Budget Workshop #2 Meeting Minutes with amendments to the dates of the fiscal budget year representing 26-27 sy.

Motion made by Jennifer Van Gorder and second by Kristen Giantonio. The motion passed unanimously.

March 4, 2026 - Regular Meeting Minutes

The Board of Education voted to approve the March 4, 2026 - Regular Meeting Minutes as written.

Motion made by Kara Ledger and second by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula. The motion passed 7-1, with one abstention from Commissioner Van Gorder.

March 18, 2026 - Special Meeting Minutes

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The Board of Education voted to approve the March 18, 2026 - Special Meeting Minutes – as written.

Motion made by Jennifer VanGoorder and second by Kara Ledger. The motion passed 7-2, with one abstention from Commissioner Giantonio & Osenkowski.

Committee Reports

Student Achievement & Outcome Committee – Commissioner Ledger had no report to provide due to no meeting in March.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships – Commissioner Tedesco reported no meeting was held in March. The next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2026.

Policy Committee –Secretary Fitzsimons-Bula reported that the committee did not meet in March and the next meeting is next week, April 8, 2026.

School Safety Committee – No report provided.

Finance and Operations Committee – Vice-Chair Simmons reported that the committee met on March 11, 2026. During the meeting, the committee reviewed the financial reports from General Funds & Pupil Services. The next Finance & Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2026.

Student Representatives Report

Bristol Central

No report provided by Amelia Brown.

Bristol Eastern

Student Representative Paige Ansah provided an update on recent and upcoming events at Bristol Eastern High School.

Ms. Ansah reported that the National Honor Society held its induction ceremony on March 23, welcoming new members. Inductees met the organization's four pillars of Scholarship, Service, Leadership, and Character. Congratulations were extended to the newly inducted students.

On March 27, Science National Honor Society students participated in a field trip to Boston, visiting the Museum of Science and the New England Aquarium, where they engaged with interactive exhibits and live demonstrations. The organization is also hosting an E-Waste Drive and Car Wash on April 4 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Upcoming prom events were announced, with Junior Prom scheduled for May 16 at the DoubleTree (theme: Great Gatsby) and Senior Prom scheduled for May 23 at the Aqua Turf

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(theme: Red Carpet). Students appealing prom eligibility due to attendance concerns must maintain perfect attendance for 45 days for their appeals to be considered.

The United Way Senior Citizen Prom will be held on April 7 at the Bristol Senior Center, featuring a Red Carpet/Hollywood theme.

Culture Day will take place on April 10 in the small gym, beginning with a school-wide parade and concluding with a cultural showcase featuring student-created tri-fold presentations. Students and staff are encouraged to participate by wearing cultural attire and/or bringing flags.

Student Council will host its Earth Day Extravaganza, featuring presentations with live animals, an interactive campus tour by Sessions Woods, environmental awareness tables during lunch waves, and campus clean-up activities. Participation in presentations will require prior class sign-up due to limited space.

The report concluded with appreciation for the opportunity to share updates.

Chair Report

Chair Shelby Pons reported that earlier in the evening, Commissioners Piro, Simmons, Ledger, and Chair Pons addressed the Board of Finance during its budget meeting public comment period.

Chair Pons provided clarification regarding the budget development and approval process, noting that the Superintendent and administrative team first determine the actual cost required to operate the school district. The Board of Education then reviews the proposed budget and, following deliberation, voted to advance it.

Chair Pons stated that the Board of Education fully supports the budget that was submitted and emphasized that final budget authority rests with the Board of Finance, which is responsible for reviewing all City budgets and making final determinations. She further noted that any reductions made at that level fall under the Board of Finance's responsibility.

Chair Pons referenced the previous year's budget process, stating that the Board of Education reduced its request by approximately $6 million in good faith, followed by an additional $4 million reduction by the Board of Finance, totaling approximately $10 million in cuts. She indicated that this pattern has resulted in recurring funding gaps that impact staffing and programming, particularly in special education.

Chair Pons also noted that while education funding has been reduced through this process, centralized costs for City employee insurance and related expenses have increased by approximately $10 million, which she stated has contributed to additional pressure on the school budget.

She expressed concern regarding the impact of the current proposed $10.5 million in additional reductions, stating that such cuts could result in significant staffing reductions, program eliminations, and operational changes, including but not limited to layoffs, school closures,

reduced kindergarten schedules, elimination of athletics and transportation services, increased class sizes, and reduced student supports.

Chair Pons emphasized that these impacts represent long-term changes to educational programming and student services.

She further stated that, based on her review of publicly available financial data, the Board of Education's share of the overall municipal budget has decreased over the past four years while other areas have increased. Chair Pons noted that the Board of Education does not have authority over taxation or revenue generation and must operate within the budget allocated.

She concluded by reiterating that the Board of Education is required by state and federal law to provide a free and appropriate public education to all students and stated that adequate funding is necessary to meet those obligations. Chair Pons encouraged continued review of financial data and stated that the issue reflects a structural imbalance that must be addressed by the Board of Finance.

Superintendent Report

The Superintendent began her report with an update on her 2025–2026 priorities. She shared that the inaugural "Superintendent Time with the Bristol Edition" aired last Wednesday. This monthly 30-minute program will be structured into three segments: 10 minutes highlighting key district activities from the past month, 10 minutes addressing pressing issues, and 10 minutes responding to viewer-submitted questions. The public is encouraged to submit topics and questions in advance for future episodes.

An update on mental health supports was provided, during which Superintendent White expressed appreciation to Prudence Crandall for nominating her as part of the First 100 Plus Class of 2026, recognizing leaders in Connecticut working to improve the lives of domestic violence survivors and their families. She noted her anticipation of the 15th Annual First 100 Plus Breakfast and Awards Ceremony, scheduled for Friday, May 15th from 7:30–9:30 a.m. at the Hartford Marriott Downtown.

Superintendent White also thanked the Bristol Diversity Council for hosting a meaningful and thought-provoking event aligned with the District Equity Leadership Team's priority mission that all students feel connected, supported, and engaged, emphasizing the importance of "words matter."

An update on legislative advocacy efforts was provided. Superintendent White noted that the Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents (CAUS), of which Bristol is a member, has been working with Baldwin Media to elevate the voices of urban districts, particularly regarding ECS funding changes and their impact. Efforts have included radio interviews and local news coverage. She also shared that she has continued to submit testimony on various education-related bills and remains in ongoing communication with the district's legislative delegation.

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Superintendent White further reported that she continues to meet with the Mayor and respond to questions from the Board of Finance regarding the proposed 2026–2027 budget request.

This concluded the Superintendent's Report.

Consent Agenda
Chair Pons called for a motion to approve the Consent agenda, which include items from 8.1.a to 8.1.d & 8.2a.

Motion made by Maria Simmons and second by Kara Ledger. Motion passed unanimously.

8.1 Personnel
8.1.a Teacher Hires
Zagorski, Ashley – CW - School Psychologist effective March 2, 2026

8.1.b Teacher Resignations
David, Elizabeth – BCHS – Special Education Teacher effective June 30, 2026

8.1.c Teacher Retirement
Galske, Lisa – SSS – Physical Education Teacher effective June 30, 2026
Rubbo, Nicolo – BCHS – Special Education Teacher effective June 30, 2026

8.1.d Teacher Leave of Absence Request
Bazarewsky, Olivia – ID – TESOL Teacher – return date amended from August 24, 2026 to April 1, 2026
Rossiter, Leah – EDGE PREK – Speech and Language Teacher return date amended from August 24, 2026 to June 15, 2026
Santiago, Megan – SS – Social Worker – effective March 25, 2026 returning June 1, 2026
8.2 GRANTS
8.2a Post Secondary Readiness Assessment Grant

Public Comments
During Public Comment, Cynthia Circosta and Caroline Spinnanger addressed the Board for Bus Driver Appreciation Day. Michael Reynolds addressed the board in regards to the proposed 26-27 Superintendent Budget.

In response, Commissioners expressed gratitude to Ms. Circosta and Ms. Spinnanger for speaking in regards to the Bus Appreciation Day and Mr. Reynolds in regards to the budget.

Deliberated Items/District Leadership Team Reports
10.1 Pupil Personnel Services Report
Dr. Amy Martino presented the monthly Pupil Personnel Services Report as of March 1 1, 2026. The identification rate of Bristol Public School students requiring special education

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programming as of March 1, 2026 was 1796 of 7859 of the BPS students, which reflects 22.9%. As of February 1st, 127 students with disabilities required out-of-district placements at private special education school programs. There were 86 students requiring special education programming services at other public out-of-district schools, including magnet schools.

During the month of February 2026, 54% (13 of 24) of newly enrolled students to BPS were receiving special education services; 1 of our newly registered students attended an out-district-placement at the time of enrollment. During the month of February, there were (19) 211 calls and (9) 911 calls.

As of March 1, 2026, all represented budget lines are trending as expected with the exception of the public placed tuition and professional services line which are trending higher than expected this month. The State placed tuition subline within the Public Placed Tuition line is 3 times higher than the budgeted amount with a large increase this fiscal year.

We have not received the anticipated excess cost reimbursement, Medicaid payments, or tuition revenue. Dr. Martino reported we do anticipate being over budget if all encumbrances remain through the end of the fiscal year.

Questions and discussion regarding the students that have DCF Placement and require services in and out placements.

10.2 High School Winter Sports Presentation

Cera Galluzzo, Director of Athletics, introduced the Presidents and Vice Presidents of the Student-Athlete Leadership Councils from Bristol Central and Bristol Eastern High Schools.

At Bristol Central High School, Leadership Council President Caitlyn Carone provided an overview of the winter sports season, followed by Vice President Christopher Mika, who highlighted individual and team accomplishments from the winter athletic programs.

At Bristol Eastern High School, Leadership Council President Leslie Arthur Adzo presented an overview of the winter sports season, followed by Vice President Kater Patterson, who also highlighted individual and team accomplishments from the winter athletic programs.

Cera Galluzzo, thanked the Seniors who participated on the Leadership Council and welcomed the new representatives. Chair Pons thanked the Student Athletes for their presentation.

New Business

11.1 High School Graduation Date and End of Year Closing Date

Chair Pons invited Joseph Grabowski and Carly Fortin to address the proposed High School graduation date and the end-of-year closing schedule. Mr. Grabowski reported that, due to seven school closures and four delayed openings, the last day of school will be Thursday, June 25, 2026. He further noted that elementary and middle school promotional exercises will be held on the morning of the final school day.

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Mr. Grabowski then invited Mrs. Fortin to present information regarding the proposed change to the High School graduation date to June 17, 2026. Mrs. Fortin provided an overview of Connecticut General Statute 10-19l, which allows local or regional boards of education to establish a firm graduation date for grade 12 students no earlier than the 180th instructional day of the school calendar adopted for that year. She noted that the district's original 181st school day was June 16, 2026.

Mrs. Fortin also summarized discussions from surveys,and joint meetings held to review instructional concerns, including ensuring curriculum coverage, meeting academic standards and goals across all courses, and addressing the needs of multi-level classroom settings.

Questions and discussion ensued regarding GradNite, confirmation that graduation requirements are being met, event planning considerations, legal concerns of having an early graduation date and ensuring students receive all required instructional content in a timely manner, particularly in ECE and Advanced Placement courses. Mrs. Fortin addressed all questions and provided a breakdown of instructional timeline and final exams for Seniors and multi-level classrooms.

Motion made by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula and seconded by Kristen Giantonio . Motion passed unanimously.

11.2 Sidewalk Deferment Request - 894 Middle St.

Chair Pons inviting Peter Fusco, Director of Facilities and Operations to speak on the matter of Sidewalk Deferment Request - 894 Middle St. At the Operations Committee, the review of the sidewalk deferral request at 894 Middle St. was approved and forwarded to the Board of Education for action. This is in an area that has no existing sidewalks and is a no school zone. The committee requested that the Board of Education approve or deny the sidewalk deferral request for 894 Middle St. and forward it back to the city council.

Question and discussion in regards to the deferment request and school zone.

Motion made by Jill Fitzsimons-Bula and seconded by Kristen Giantonio . Motion passed unanimously.

12. Information/Liaison Reports

Commissioner Barbara Tedesco provided a liaison report for Hubbell and Stafford Elementary Schools, briefly highlighting events held throughout the month of March. Secretary Fitzsimons-Bula shared a liaison report for West Bristol K-8 School, also summarizing March activities.

Vice-Chair Maria Simmons shared information about an upcoming Salvation Army event scheduled for May 14, 2026, at Luna's, which will support funding for emergency services such as housing assistance, food pantries, and camperships.

Commissioner Kristen Giantonio provided an update regarding her and Commissioner Jennifer VanGorder's attendance at the Legislative Office Building for a public hearing on proposed bills.

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Commissioner Giantonio thanked Superintendent White for her support and encouraged parents in the community to stay informed and engaged, noting the potential impact of the legislation on families.

16. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Board, the Regular Board of Education Meeting should adjourn. (8:37 p.m.)

Respectfully Submitted,

Sydney Molina
Recording Secretary
Bristol Board of Education

APPROVED