

**South Kingstown School Committee
Executive Session, Business Meeting
and Annual Summer Workshop
Broad Rock Middle School Library
351 Broad Rock Road
Wakefield, RI 02879
Tuesday, July 28, 2026**

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

A. Call to Order

Ms. Vetter called the meeting to order at 8:34 AM.

B. Roll Call

Ms. Vetter led the roll call.

Members present: Carol Vetter, James Restivo, Paula Whitford, Stewart Lander

Members absent: Michelle Brousseau, Kate Macinanti

Others present: Michael Podraza, Superintendent; Daniel Seger, Assistant Superintendent

2. Executive Session

A. Ms. Vetter asked for a motion to convene into Executive Session for Discussion and/or Action regarding those items of business exempt from open meetings under RIGL 42-46-4 and:

B. Discussion/Action: Personnel - NEASK Non-Renewals (RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1));

C. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - Assistant Principal, South Kingstown High School (RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1));

D. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - (0.5) Preschool Coordinator (RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1));

E. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - Interim Principal, Broad Rock Middle School (RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1));

F. Discussion/Action: Personnel - Contract Renewal - Assistant Superintendent; Director of Student Services; Human Resources Coordinator; Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Committee (RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1)).

MSV(1) – Motion made to recess into Executive Session

Motion made by Paula Whitford

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 4-0

Michelle Brousseau arrives to Executive Session at 8:40 am.

MSV(2) – Motion made to adjourn Executive Session and Reconvene Open Session

Motion made by James Restivo

Motion seconded by Michelle Brousseau

Motion passes 5-0

3. Open Meeting/Roll Call

A. Roll Call

Ms. Vetter called the open session to order at 9:32 AM and led the roll call.

Members present: Carol Vetter, James Restivo, Michelle Brousseau, Paula Whitford, Stewart Lander

Members absent: Kate Macinanti

Others present: Michael Podraza, Superintendent; Daniel Seger, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Proctor, Chief Financial Officer; Joseph Adams, Director of Facilities and Operations; Charlene Longolucco, Human Resources Coordinator

B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Ms. Vetter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Executive Session Minutes - 6/23/2026

B. Approval of Open Session Minutes - 7/22/2026

C. Purchases Over \$10,350

D. Homeschool Requests (SY 2026-2027)

MSV(3) – Motion made to approve the Consent Agenda.

Motion made by James Restivo

Motion seconded by Paula Whitford

Motion passes 5-0

5. School Committee Business

A. Discussion/Action: Personnel - NEASK Non-Renewals

MSV(4) – Motion made to accept the Settlement of Appeal as presented in Executive Session.

Motion made by James Restivo

Motion seconded by Paula Whitford

Motion passes 5-0

B. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - Assistant Principal, South Kingstown High School

MSV(5) – Motion made to accept the Terms of Contract Negotiation for the Assistant Principal, South Kingstown High School

Motion made by Michelle Brousseau

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 5-0

Mr. Podraza congratulates and announces Brandon Pearce as the new Assistant Principal of South Kingstown High School.

C. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - Preschool Coordinator (0.5)

MSV(6) – Motion made to accept the Terms of Contract Negotiation for the Preschool Coordinator (0.5).

Motion made by Paula Whitford

Motion seconded by Michelle Brousseau

Motion passes 5-0

Mr. Podraza congratulates and announces Mary Surber as the new Preschool Coordinator for the district.

D. Discussion/Action: Terms of Contract Negotiation - Interim Principal, Broad Rock Middle School

MSV(7) – Motion made to accept the Terms of Contract Negotiation for the Interim Principal, Broad Rock Middle School

Motion made by Paula Whitford

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 5-0

Mr. Podraza congratulates and announces Gina Haberlin as the new Principal of Broad Rock Middle School.

E. Discussion/Action: Personnel - Contract Renewal - Assistant Superintendent; Director of Student Services; Human Resources Coordinator and Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Committee

MSV(8) – Motion made to approve Contract Renewal for the Assistant Superintendent, Director of Student Services, Human Resources Coordinator and the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and School Committee as discussed in Executive Session

Motion made by Michelle Brousseau

Motion seconded by Stewart Lander

Motion passes 5-0

Ms. Vetter congratulates and acknowledges the team members for their work.

F. Discussion/Action: SY 2026-2027 Food Service Contract – Chartwells

Mrs. Proctor provided an overview of the Food Service Contract awarded to Chartwells by the State of Rhode Island. Discussion regarding the State's role in providing free summer meals and previously offered free breakfasts. Mr. Podraza clarified that universal free meals had been funded through ESSER federal funds.

MSV(9) – Motion made to approve the SY 2026-2027 Food Service Contract – Chartwells

Motion made by Michelle Brousseau

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 5-0

G. Discussion/Action: Bid Award - #SK0028FAC - Mechanical Service Contracts 2026-2028

Mr. Adams provided an overview of the contract for mechanical services, a two-year contract with an option for a mutually agreed upon third year for the following services: Plumbing Services – Kazounis Plumbing and Heating; Electrical Services – Holland Electric and HVAC Services – Automated Temperature Control. This contract is partnered with the Town of South Kingstown.

MSV(10) – Motion made to accept the Mechanical Service Contracts 2026-2028 as presented.

Motion made by Paula Whitford

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 5-0

H. Discussion/Action: Bid Award - RFP #2473 - Snow Removal Services 2026-2028

Mr. Adams provided an overview of the Bid Award Request for snow removal services. Mr. Adams requested that the School Committee approve and award the bid to Key Corp, sharing their strong performance during the past winter, including during the blizzard, highlighting that the company has the necessary trucks, mechanical capacity and staff to respond promptly to district needs.

MSV(11) – Motion made to accept Bid Award – RFP#2473 – Snow Removal Services 2026-2028as presented.

Motion made by Michelle Brousseau

Motion seconded by James Restivo

Motion passes 5-0

6. Adjournment - Business Meeting

A. Adjourn

MSV(12) – Motion made to adjourn the Business Meeting.

Motion made by Stewart Lander

Motion seconded by Michelle Brousseau

Motion passes 5-0

Business meeting is adjourned at 9:48 AM.

7. Open Annual Summer Workshop/Roll Call

A. Roll Call

Ms. Vetter called the Annual Summer Workshop to order at 10:00 AM and led the roll call.

Members present: Carol Vetter, James Restivo, Michelle Brousseau, Paula Whitford, Kate Macinanti (*arrived at 10:14 AM*)
Stewart Lander

Members absent: None

Others present: Michael Podraza, Superintendent; Daniel Seger, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Proctor, Chief Financial Officer; Joseph Adams, Director of Facilities and Operations; Charlene Longolucco, Human Resources Coordinator

8. School Committee Annual Summer Workshop

A. Discussion: School Committee Professional Development - Collective Bargaining - Presentation by William E. O'Gara, Esquire

Mr. Podraza introduced William O'Gara, Esquire, who discussed the challenges of negotiating collective bargaining agreements in Rhode Island, emphasizing the impact of declining student enrollment on school budgets. Attorney O'Gara highlighted the significant increase in medical insurance costs, noting a \$13 million-dollar expenditure for all benefits. He explained the concept of "evergreen" contracts, which prevent unilateral changes, and stressed the need for detailed homework (looking at Union contracts of other districts) and determining realistic goals. The discussion also covered the importance of maintaining goodwill with unions and the potential for incentives to encourage senior staff to retire.

B. Discussion: Equity Audit - Latest Data Points and Upcoming Administration Actions

Mr. Podraza discussed the progress and future plans regarding the equity audit, emphasizing the review and revisions of handbooks, implementation of alternative consequences, and professional development for Administrators and Deans. He shared how current work is being directly aligned to the findings of the equity audit, with a focus on addressing identified gaps rather than simply tracking trends. He reviewed ongoing revisions to handbooks and procedures, the implementation of alternative consequences and restorative practices, and the use of the new SurveyWorks portal to monitor indicators such as school belonging, student-teacher relationships, and student perceptions of absenteeism. He noted an 8% increase in students' recognition that chronic absence harms academic performance. Mr. Podraza outlined upcoming professional development with the Liber Institute, where all building administrators will be trained in the Power Framework, to include empathy interviews, and student focus groups to better understand student experiences. This training will aid in the design of school-specific interventions, including Administrators shadowing students in other buildings. The discussion connected this work to the equity audit's call for professional development for all adults, noting a district-wide information professional development day on the September 9 Primary Election Day for all staff. During this day, staff will use a rubric to assess their practices along a continuum from trauma- inducing to trauma-informed and trauma-invested, with the expectation that harmful practices identified through this process will be addressed through the educator evaluation system. Committee members emphasized the need for this work to result in consistent classroom-level implementation, clearer communication to families about how these efforts will change school culture and safety for all student groups, and the use of Superintendent and Administrative goals, informed by SurveyWorks and other data, to ensure accountability and ongoing improvement.

C. Lunch Break

Lunch Break is taken at this time (12:15 PM to 12:45 PM).

D. Discussion: FY 2027-2028 Budget Planning and Preparation

Mr. Podraza reviewed major fiscal drivers, including the pending statewide CTE tuition recalculation and Warwick litigation; declining enrollment and rising coastal property values that shift the funding formula and increase the local share; as well as significant costs pressures in salaries and benefits, particularly double-digit health insurance increases. He noted that FY 2027 includes approximately \$1 million from fund balance and that the district likely ended in a surplus; though final figures depend on closing transportation and payroll encumbrances and receiving delayed Medicaid reimbursement. Discussion ensued regarding prioritizing remaining RIDE-approved capital projects (with a 35% reimbursement) before the current plan's December 2027 deadline. Discussion further ensued regarding the need to clarify the handling of state housing aid reimbursements in the Town-held school capital reserve fund. Committee members agreed that the recent budget cycle with the Town Council was problematic and committed to starting the FY 2028 budget process earlier. The Committee would like to host School Committee led budget work sessions beginning in September, holding multiple joint meetings with the Town Council before formal budget season, using current-year enrollment and financial data to inform projections, and strengthening transparency and community engagement throughout the process.

E. Discussion/Action: School Committee Self-Evaluation and Goal Setting

Mr. Restivo shared the recent results of the School Committee Self-Evaluation. This self-evaluation was conducted using an anonymous questionnaire completed by five of its members. Members generally rated the Committee positively on governance, policy work, professionalism, and internal climate, noting strong collaboration, respect, trust in administration for day-to-day operations, and effective policy development and updating. They identified areas for improvement in (1) community engagement and feedback (few community members regularly attend meetings; shared interest in reviving community workshops and better outreach), (2) use of data in decision-making (more regular use of achievement and performance data, clearer link to strategic plan monitoring, and more data-rich presentations), and (3) goal follow-through (Committee-set goals were not consistently kept "front and center" over the past year).

The Committee then reviewed last year's goals and agreed they had not been kept sufficiently visible or used to guide work, then set updated goals for the coming year. They agreed to: (1) improve meaningful community engagement by holding additional work sessions, possibly five over the academic year, and exploring ways for the public to comment on specific agenda items (2) redesign and start the FY 2028 budget process earlier, including a review of the last three years' budget timelines and scheduling multiple School Committee-hosted joint meetings with the Town Council beginning in September; (3) remove barriers to learning opportunities for both students and staff, with specific mention of improving access to CTE programs and professional development; and (4) strengthen the Committee's use of data in decision making, including at least two substantial data-focused presentations tied to student outcomes, program effectiveness, and strategic plan monitoring. Further discussion regarding making goals more "SMART" (specific and measurable) by attaching concrete indicators (e.g., number of workshops or Council meetings) and having goals regularly referenced at meetings so they remain central to the Committee's work.

No vote was taken on this item.

F. Discussion/Action: Update of School Committee Norms

The Committee reviewed its current meeting norms, with several members noting that the existing list had largely been created externally, was not deeply discussed when adopted, and is only partially aligned with how the current Committee actually operates. Members agreed that some concepts remain important—such as students first, coming to the meeting prepared, trusting the process, using data to inform decisions, and confronting difficult issues rather than avoiding them. Members questioned the need for others (e.g., separate "confidentiality" and "respect" norms that are already covered by ethics and law). Discussion ensued as to how norms could be used more actively to support community engagement (structuring agendas to allow public comment on business items) and how they could tie directly to their new goals. The Committee agreed to keep this item as a work in progress, with this conversation being a short draft set for now. The Committee would like administration to research example norms from other districts and will revisit and finalize norms after the upcoming election when the full seven-member Committee is seated, so that all members can participate in crafting and owning the final set.

No vote was taken on this item.

9. Adjournment

A. Adjourn

MSV(1) – Motion made to adjourn the Annual Summer Workshop

Motion made by Stewart Lander

Motion seconded by Michelle Brousseau

Motion passes 4-0 (Kate Macinanti absent at time of vote)

Workshop is adjourned at 3:06 PM.