

WALTHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Waltham, Massachusetts
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

JULY 9, 2026

The regular meeting of the Waltham School Committee convened at 5:02pm. Present were Ms. DeJoannis, Mrs. AlJammal, Mrs. Coleman, and Mr. Zanghi. Ms. Wong-Bigelow, Mr. Tarallo and Mayor McCarthy were not present. Mrs. Coleman presided.

RECESS

VOTED: On motion of Ms. DeJoannis, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal, to move to Executive Session at 5:02pm to conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the WSSA and / or to conduct negotiations with the WSSA; to conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the WSAA and / or to conduct negotiations with the WSAA; to conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the Waltham School MIS Technicians and / or to conduct negotiations with the Waltham School MIS Technicians; to conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the Waltham School Department Food Service Workers and / or conduct negotiations with the Waltham School Department Food Service Workers; to conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the Waltham School Building Trades; in accordance with Mass. G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares - Waltham Educators Association/MTA and the Waltham School Committee, MUP-26-12065, and to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel and/or to conduct negotiations with nonunion personnel – Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, to include Attorney Jonathan Atwater, Superintendent Dr. Mendonsa and HR Administrator Kate Peretz, and return to the regular meeting at 6:00 pm. All in favor.

RECONVENE

The School Committee reconvened at 6:03pm. Present were Mr. Tarallo, Mr. Zanghi, Mrs. Coleman, Mrs. AlJammal, Ms. DeJoannis, Ms. Wong-Bigelow, and Mayor McCarthy. Mayor McCarthy presided.

The Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC INPUT

Recent Waltham High graduate, Sierra Nicholas, addressed the Committee to emphasize the importance of challenging high school students while they are in a comfortable and supportive environment as it will provide them with a stronger foundation in the future.

Waltham parent, Nicole Piche-Nicholas, voiced her concern with parents / caregivers not being included in the high school schedule development process until the end. Waltham parents, Jeff Korenstein, Jessica Powers, Maria Luiza Rodriguez, and Tom Haley, also advocated for parent involvement and participation earlier in the high school schedule process. Parent Tricia Hurley expressed her concern with the possible change from an eight period to a seven period schedule and the impact to students, especially those on IEPs and in CTE programs.

STUDENT COUNCIL
STUDENT INPUT

There were no students present at the meeting.

**SCHOOL
COUNCIL/PTO/
SEPAC/BELPAC
INPUT**

There was no one present from these groups who requested to speak to the Committee.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Mendonsa presented the following Consent Agenda items:

- Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on June 17, 2026;

Retirements:

- Laurie Kiley, Paraprofessional, Kennedy Middle School - effective 06/30/2026;
- Kathleen Sarkissian, Teacher, FitzGerald Elementary School - effective 06/30/2026;
- Sandra Curnick, Evaluation Team Leader, Waltham High School - effective 09/16/2026

Resignations:

- Tatyana Frederick, Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 06/22/2026;
- Sara Nino, Evaluation Team Leader, McDevitt Middle School - effective 06/22/2026;
- Michelle Torrez, Speech Therapist, Waltham High School - effective 06/22/2026;
- Kaitlyn Schneider, Teacher, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 6/22/2026;
- Kathleen Dowcett, Grants Manager, Central Office - effective 06/30/2026;
- Emily Melrose, Teacher, McDevitt Middle School - effective 06/22/2026;
- Devin Cummings, Transition Coordinator, Districtwide - effective 06/23/2026;

The superintendent shared that a \$1,000 donation was made by Watertown Savings Bank to Waltham High's Quiz Bowl Team.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. AlJammal, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to approve the Consent Agenda. All in favor.

COMMUNICATIONS

Nothing new was presented in this category at the meeting.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
UPDATE**

a) Miscellaneous
Personnel

New Hires:

- Maria Jimenez Escobar, Assistant Coordinator of Student Intake and Registration Services, Central Office - effective 06/15/2026;
- Alexandra Jameson, Elementary School Nurse, Plympton Elementary School - effective 02/22/2027;
- William Conard, Principal, Waltham High School - effective 07/01/2026

Transfers and Promotions:

- Joyce Quaranto, WHS Library Para, Waltham High School - effective 06/01/2026;
- KB Bickford, FT Building Based Music Teacher, Plympton Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Emma Ljunberg, Building Sub, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 04/27/2026;

- Shannon Williams, District-wide Evaluation Team Leader - effective 03/27/2026 - 06/22/2026;
- Carli Kusiolek, Evaluation Team Leader, Whittemore Elementary School - effective 03/27/2026 - 06/22/2026;
- Melissa Hagan-Alves, ESL Teacher, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026
- Gail Murray, Grade 2 Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026
- Heather Stone-Gaudet, Grade 2 Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Eric Wisneski, Grade 4 Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Ryan FitzGerald, Grade 3 Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026

b) Information

There was no additional information shared by the superintendent.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. DeJoannis, to hear from Dr. Shannon Conley on the next two agenda items. All in favor.

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. Coleman, to hear from off-committee members. All in favor.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

a) Waltham Public Schools 2026-2027 Valor High School Handbook

Dr. Conley reviewed the proposed changes to the Valor High School handbook for the upcoming school year. Changes included updating language, phrasing and formatting, and adding the competency determination requirements.

Ms. DeJoannis and Ms. Wong-Bigelow both suggested some additional minor updates.

VOTED: On motion of Ms. DeJoannis, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to approve the 2026-2027 Valor High School handbook with the specified changes. All in favor.

b) Curriculum Adoption Request from the History and Social Studies Department

VOTED: On motion of Ms. Wong-Bigelow, seconded by Mrs. Coleman, to approve the AP World Modern textbooks. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

District administrators met yesterday with The Leadership Academy to finalize the presentation of the district's equity plan which will be made to the School Committee at the August meeting.

- b) Dual Language School Model and Reutilization of 617 Lexington Street

As previously requested, Dr. Mendonsa provided the members with a list of available classroom space in stand-alone elementary schools across the district. Dual Language School was not included as it is in a shared building.

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. Coleman, to provide a copy of the Full Size Classroom Use document dated July 9, 2026 to the Waltham City Council for informational purposes. All in favor.

A conversation between Ms. DeJoannis and Dr. Mendonsa ensued about maintaining dedicated space for Fine and Performing Arts and science classes within our schools.

- c) Waltham High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department

The Committee received a list of the CTE Department's partnerships with local organizations and institutions, pursuant to a prior request.

Dr. Conley confirmed for Ms. DeJoannis that the intent is to continue to expand opportunities for students by increasing the number of partnerships.

Mrs. AlJammal asked if all CTE students have the ability to participate in co-ops. Dr. Conley advised freshman and sophomores do not as they are early on in programs, and opportunities for upper classmen in some of the newer programs are a work in progress.

- d) Waltham High School Schedule

The superintendent confirmed the WHS Schedule Committee will meet later in July to review the results of a recent staff survey and Dr. Conard will be taking over leading this group.

- e) Enrollment, Space and Data in the Waltham Public Schools

Ms. DeJoannis asked that an analysis of available classroom space at the middle school level be completed and information provided to the Committee, similar to that of the elementary schools.

- f) Superintendent's Evaluation

Mrs. Coleman provided a reminder of the superintendent's evaluation process, including important dates, to the members.

RECESS

VOTED: On motion of Ms. DeJoannis, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to take a recess at 6:49pm. All in favor.

RECONVENE

The Committee reconvened at 6:52pm with all members still present.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) District Growth Plan

Dr. Mendonsa shared the Waltham Public School's District Growth Plan for the upcoming 2026-2027 school year. She indicated the plan stemmed from a DESE requirement for Waltham High School but was designed to help support the growth of the entire district from preschool through high school. Three priority goals were shared: Equitable and Consistent Learning, Talent Development System and

Welcoming Environments, along with standards and indicators. Having clear leadership and governance structure that advances equitable student outcomes along with school leadership teams that monitor and improve teaching and learning quality will be a focus.

In Curriculum and Instruction, ensuring multi-language learners and students receiving disability services reach grade-level proficiency, improving literacy across content areas through standards-based, culturally sustaining instruction, and increasing proficiency in STEM-aligned content areas across the district will be the department's focus during the upcoming year.

The goals for Special Education and Student Services center around strengthening home-school capacity so fewer students are transferred to outside placements, to improve IEP quality, and establish sustainable quality infrastructure across the department. Additionally, there will be an emphasis on coherent and tiered support, including strengthening interventions, for students in all schools.

Increasing access, making schools feel safer and more welcoming for students, strengthening partnerships with Belpac and Sepac, and improving communication and trust are the goals within Family and Community Engagement.

Human Resources will focus on publishing a multiyear workforce diversity strategic plan, ensuring hiring and promotion practices are equitable and transparent, building internal licensure pathways for staff, and supporting all educators from onboarding through evaluation.

The goals of the Finance and Operations Department are to maintain a balanced budget, implement a data-driven, equitable resource allocation model, establish measurable operational efficiencies in facilities, transportation and procurement, and secure funding for infrastructure and technology modernization.

Dr. Mendonsa explained how progress will be measured across all areas. Members asked some clarifying questions of Dr. Conley and Dr. Porch.

FISCAL MATTERS

a) FY '27 School Department Budget

Mr. Tarallo, Ms. DeJoannis and Ms. Wong-Bigelow asked Mr. Mazza numerous questions relative to the updated information for the approved FY '27 school department budget. The members requested a digital version of the finalized book be provided to them and also be made available on the district's website.

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Ms. DeJoannis, to approve the FY '27 School Department budget as presented in the updated budget book. All in favor.

b) Bills on Warrant

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal, to pay the bills on the FY '26 warrant. All in favor.

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal, to pay the bills on the FY '27 warrant. All in favor.

**AGENDA ITEMS
FOR FUTURE
MEETINGS**

Mrs. AlJammal asked for an update on CTE enrollment, co-op enrollment and the plan to increase co-op opportunities. Ms. DeJoannis requested a curriculum update on the Bridges and OpenSciEd programs; an update on the Spanish translation of curriculum; an update on the Dual Language School; an iReady update; an update on the Seal of Biliteracy, specifically during transitional times; to discuss the draft AI policy previously presented at a meeting; a recap of summer school programming, and information about the district's communication process / policy.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED: On motion of Ms. DeJoannis, seconded by Mrs. Coleman, to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:55pm. All in favor.

Marisa Mendonsa
Clerk