

WALTHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Waltham, Massachusetts
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

MAY 20, 2026

The regular meeting of the Waltham School Committee convened at 5:35pm. Present were Ms. Wong-Bigelow, Ms. DeJoannis, Mrs. AlJammal, Mrs. Coleman, Mr. Tarallo, and Mr. Zanghi. Mayor McCarthy was not present. Mrs. Coleman presided.

RECESS

VOTED: On motion of Ms. Wong-Bigelow, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal, to move to Executive Session at 5:36pm 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, and the Required Special Education Cost Increase, to include Attorney Jonathan Atwater, Superintendent Dr. Mendonsa and HR Administrator Kate Peretz, and return to the regular meeting at 7:00 pm. All in favor.

RECONVENE

The School Committee reconvened at 7:05pm. Present were Mr. Tarallo, Mr. Zanghi, Mrs. Coleman, Mrs. AlJammal, Ms. DeJoannis, and Ms. Wong-Bigelow. Mayor McCarthy was not present. Mrs. Coleman presided.

The Vice Chair announced the meeting was being recorded by WCAC. One individual confirmed the meeting was being recorded by them.

The Committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC INPUT

There was no one who requested to address the Committee.

Mayor McCarthy arrived at 7:06pm.

STUDENT COUNCIL
STUDENT INPUT

Waltham High students Anabel Rutledge and John McCalla shared that athletic seniors nights are ongoing, the sophomore class held a pie-in-the-face fundraiser, the Track Team was competing in the DCL meet and senior events kick off for the Class of 2026 next week.

SCHOOL
COUNCIL/PTO/
SEPAC/BELPAC
INPUT

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

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. AlJammal, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to take item 5A out of order. All in favor.

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

COMMUNICATIONS

a) Waltham High School's National Honor Society Update

Waltham High's National Honor Society Class of 2026 Officers: Anabel Rutledge, Rachel McIntyre and Chloe Ho, shared information about the 6,000 hours the NHS members spent volunteering in the community during the year. The incoming Class of 2027's officers: Saisabari Ramesh, Suzara Khadka, Dylan Remage-Healey, Monette Padilla, and Leah France provided a brief plan for their roles in the society next year.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Mendonsa presented the following Consent Agenda items:

- Revised minutes from the Regular Meeting held on April 15, 2026;
- Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on May 6, 2026;

Retirement:

- Janet Rodriguez Weinberg, School Adjustment Counselor, Whittemore Elementary School - effective 06/30/2026

Resignation:

- Sushruta Kunnenkeri, Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 06/30/2026

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

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

COMMUNICATIONS

(cont.)

b) Special Education Needs Assessment Key Findings

Interim Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services Dr. Lisa Kingsley introduced Jessica Thompson from The Stepping Stones Group who shared the results of the Specialized Programs Needs Assessment conducted within the district. Ms. Thompson provided background information about the initial purpose of the assessment being for the TASC program but then shifted to an analysis of all special education programs. The deep dive revealed that specialized programs are often treated as distinct locations and that instructional change occurs following a placement change. The goal is to shift the instruction to apply student interventions within current settings instead of changing a student's location. Ms. Thompson reviewed the cascading risks of diffused governance and how they impact staff and other students.

Shifting the current district model into a cohesive instructional system that operates across the district, not just in certain geographical locations; providing more training and professional development for staff, and implementing additional supports should help keep students in current locations and build stronger teams. Additionally,

addressing the actual needs of each individual student should help reduce the strain on staff and the impact on others in these programs.

Dr. Kingsley advised Stepping Stones will continue working with the district through next year to help implement this shift.

A couple of questions were asked by members about program timeframes, caregiver involvement and additional supports and these were addressed by Ms. Thompson and Dr. Kingsley. It was confirmed that a new model is being piloted next year at Plympton.

SUPERINTENDENT'S UPDATE

a) Miscellaneous Personnel

New Hires:

- Susan O'Laughlin, Lunch Monitor, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 05/07/2026;
- Mackenzie Mercier, LTS High School History and Social Studies Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 05/20/2026;
- Patricia Glynn, LTS - Grade 5 Teacher, Whittemore Elementary School - effective 05/11/2026;
- Alexandra Viteri, Substitute Teacher, District-Wide - effective 05/14/2026;
- Ty Connolly, Substitute Teacher, District-Wide - effective 05/18/2026;
- Lauren Barwick, Early Childhood Director, District-Wide - effective 05/18/2026

Transfers and Promotions:

- Daniel Tortola, Elementary School Nurse, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Alexandra Jameson, Elementary School Nurse, Plympton Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026

b) Information

The Committee was informed that, based on a request from a prior meeting, a proposed transportation survey was included for their review.

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Ms. DeJoannis, to approve the survey to be sent out to WPS families. All in favor.

The superintendent shared some recent athletic and community highlights. Additionally, she informed the Committee that the 2026 March Attendance Data just released by DESE shows that across the district, attendance at all schools has improved from 2025 and the district is above the state average. Additionally, the majority of schools also saw a reduction in the number of students that are chronically absent 10% or more of the time.

Dr. Mendonsa briefly reviewed the WHS Principal finalist process and advised Dr. William Conard has agreed to enter into contract negotiations with the district for the position of Waltham High School principal.

K-12 Director Heather Metallides provided the members with an update from the PE, Health and Wellness Department. She indicated that there is strategic alignment of the standards and practices within the district to the 2023 MA Comprehensive Health and PE frameworks. Freshman learned about Narcan awareness and signs of opioid

overdose in health classes and hands only CPR and AED training took place in all PE and Health classes at Waltham High. Additionally, upper classmen are still able to select physical education classes based on their interests.

Mrs. Metallides advised the new high school field complex is fully operational for outdoor PE curriculum. The WHS Leadership classes have been running summits focused on leadership skills and these are important strengths that will help students in the real world. WHS staff are able to participate in early morning workouts. Kennedy's annual Health and Fitness Day was again a success this year and worked to promote physical literacy for middle schoolers. The director then shared the staffing levels across the district.

From the Special Education and Student Services department, Dr. Lisa Kingsley reminded the Committee about the upcoming A Special Day in Waltham event taking place on May 30, 2026 at Veterans Field.

Dr. Ray Porch informed the members of the four pillars of effective engagement: communication, building trusting relationships, partnership, and collaboration.

Multilingual Department Director Marianne Duffy updated the members on the district's partnership work with Belpac and Sepac this year and advised they will continue to work on building strong relationships.

Dr. Conley, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, shared a list of free summer opportunities for students at each school level. Per a request from Ms. Wong-Bigelow, Mrs. Duffy provided details about the Getting Ready for Kindergarten program that was piloted last year and will be expanded for this summer.

Dr. Mendonsa provided a quick update on the FY '27 budget and also the status of the Transportation Coordinator, Fiscal Coordinator and Food and Nutrition Services Director positions.

The district's HR Administrator Kate Peretz provided an update on the ongoing efforts to recruit, hire and retain staff. An HR goal is to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of faculty, staff and administrators to better reflect the student population across the district and she shared a recommendation from the recent district's Equity Audit.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

There was nothing new shared in Curriculum and Instruction at the meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- b) Dual Language School Model and

The final Equity Team meeting took place with The Leadership Academy last week and a presentation will be shared with the School Committee in either June or July.

The most recent 617 Committee meeting took place on Monday and the group is preparing a presentation for the School Committee with a list of proposed ideas for the building.

Reutilization of
617 Lexington
Street

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

Ms. Wong-Bigelow asked Dr. Conley about community experts visiting the Chapter 74 programs and the assistant superintendent confirmed she will provide information about this.

- d) Waltham High
School
Schedule

The WHS Schedule Committee met earlier this week and will continue working this summer and into the fall. The goal is to have a proposed 2027-2028 schedule by the end of this calendar year. Dr. Conard will take over spearheading this when he joins the staff.

- e) Valor High
School

Nothing new was discussed about Valor High School.

- f) Renaming of
Northeast
Elementary
School

Nothing new was discussed about this topic.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Vote on the
Required
Special
Education
Cost Increase

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal, to request funding from the City of Waltham in the amount of \$100,000. for the purpose of resolving a Special Education cost increase. All in favor.

FISCAL MATTERS

- a) Bills on
Warrant

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

**AGENDA ITEMS
FOR FUTURE
MEETINGS**

There was nothing new requested for future meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Ms. DeJoannis, to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:40pm. All in favor.

Marisa Mendonsa
Clerk