

WALTHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Waltham, Massachusetts
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 2, 2026

The regular meeting of the Waltham School Committee convened at 5:34pm. Present were Ms. DeJoannis, Mrs. AlJammal, Mrs. Coleman, Mr. Tarallo, and Mr. Zanghi. Ms. Wong-Bigelow and Mayor McCarthy were not present. Mrs. Coleman presided.

RECESS

VOTED: On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Mrs. AlJammal to move to Executive Session at 5:34pm 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 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 7:00 pm. All in favor.

Ms. Wong-Bigelow arrived at 5:39pm during the Executive Session.

Mayor McCarthy arrived at 5:58pm during the Executive Session.

RECONVENE

The School Committee reconvened at 7:11pm. 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.

Mayor McCarthy announced the meeting was being recorded by WCAC.

PUBLIC INPUT

Waltham resident Terry Marks expressed his disapproval of the district's schools being ranked in the bottom 10% in the state. He provided examples of his family's experience with the Waltham Public Schools over the years and urged the district to perform at a higher level as taxpayers are funding the schools through their high tax amounts.

Waltham parent Nicole Piche-Nicholas addressed the Committee requesting more concrete information about the high school schedule process. She stated that logistical updates do not equate to meaningful transparency for the high school community. She urged the Committee to have the superintendent publicly share all schedule options that are being considered along with the impacts to students.

WSAA members Val Alfeo, Robert Lyons, Mary Jo Rendon and Derek Vandegrift, along with WSSA president Krissy Scheufele all urged the Committee members to offer fair and equitable contracts to each of the unions currently working without

contracts. They emphasized that their service, dedication, loyalty, experience, and institutional knowledge are all assets to the district which should be valued. They expressed their frustration with the length of the negotiation process that, in their opinion, has not yielded positive results, and with the overall lack of compromise by the Committee.

**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 August 12, 2026;

Retirements:

- Karen Lyons, Central Office, Secretary to the Administrator of Facilities - effective 08/28/2026;
- Theresa Frazier, Stanley Elementary School, Paraprofessional - effective 08/02/2026

Resignations:

- Marilyn Martinez-Hernandez, Northeast Family Liaison - effective 08/21/2026;
- Emily Osborne, Plympton Elementary Teacher - effective 06/22/2026;
- Joyce Abraham, District-wide School Psychologist - effective 6/22/2026;
- Allison Burgoyne, District-Wide Evaluation Team Leader - effective 06/22/2026;
- Alyson Czeklusniak, Waltham High School SPED ETL - effective 08/26/2026;
- Cynthia Jackson, Kennedy Social Studies Teacher - effective 06/30/2026;
- Taryn Seidenspinner, Waltham Family School ESOL Teacher - effective 06/30/2026
- Shelby Hale Roper, Waltham High School Assistant Principal - effective 06/30/2026
- Amanda Rose, Kennedy SPED Teacher - effective 06/30/2026;
- Justin Fell, District-wide Art Teacher - effective 06/30/2026;
- Jennifer Marmion, Plympton Elementary Paraprofessional - effective 6/30/2026

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, to approve the Consent Agenda. All in favor.

COMMUNICATIONS

There was nothing new discussed in this area.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
UPDATE**

- a) Miscellaneous
Personnel

New Hires:

- Amy Corbett, Early Childhood - Para Educator, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;

- Kerry Peterson, LTS Occupational Therapist, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/26 - 11/13/26 approx.;
- Keila Rios, Special Education Paraprofessional, Northeast Elementary School - effective 8/31/2026;
- Jennifer Gal, Secretary, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Isabella DiPasquale, Elementary ESL Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Courtney Charon, Grade 3 Teacher, MacArthur Elementary School, - effective 08/31/2026;
- Alexis Salazar, Special Education Paraprofessional, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Danielle Carney, Special Education Paraprofessional, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Phillip Cacciatore, Security Monitor, Plympton Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kayla Dustin, Bridge Teacher, Plympton Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Danielle Johnson, Science Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kristin Corbett, Early Childhood - Para Educator, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kimberly Clemente, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Jenna Gelinas, Pre-K Integrated Classroom Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Khora Lane, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Shannon Souaibou, HS Biology Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Norah Shea, LTS Grade 2 Teacher, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026 - 12/01/2026 (approx.);
- Lior Yakovee, LTS Kindergarten Teacher, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026 - 12/01/2026 (approx.);
- Kristen Tracy, WHS Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Rachael Tobio, Lunch/Recess Monitor, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kristin Gentili, Director of Food and Nutrition Services, Central Office - effective 09/01/2026;
- Irene Yukash, LTS Physical Education Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/26 - 10/27/26 (approx.);
- Maryam DiMauro, Moderate Special Education Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Barry McNeil, Special Education Paraprofessional, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Theresa Hsueh-Ihara, Special Education Paraprofessional, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Sharon Donato, Door Security, Plympton Elementary School - effective 09/02/2026;
- Christina Bowers Smith, LTS Grade 5 Teacher, Whittemore Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026 - 06/30/2027;
- Julian Knight, LTS HS Biology/Anatomy and Psychology, Waltham High School - effective 09/08/2026 -12/18/2026 (approx.)

- Erin Soutar, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Emma Jo Anderson, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Todd Brunel, Music Therapist / General Music / Instrumental Teacher, District-wide - effective 08/31/2026;
- Justin Delorge, LTS 7th Grade Social Studies, McDevitt Middle School - effective 08/31/2026- 12/01/2026 (approx.);
- Richardson Watson, Elementary Art Educator, Fine and Performing Arts - effective 08/31/2026;
- Matthew Costa, ESL Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kurtis George, Carpenter, District-wide - effective 08/27/2026;
- Grace Haskell, Speech-Language Therapist, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Karla Von Lambsdorff, Family Liaison, Valor High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Camilla Buba, LTS School Counselor, McDevitt Middle School - effective 08/31/2026 - 10/26/2026;
- Aliosha Bautista, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Marc Butera, Ch 74 Electrical Instructor, Career & Technical Education - effective 08/31/2026;
- Ruth Abolofia, Lunch/Recess Monitor, Stanley Elementary School - effective 09/02/2026;
- Ari Herzog, LTS 8th Grade ELA, McDevitt Middle School - effective 08/31/2026 - 09/24/2026;
- Brendan Cawley, Theater Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Julie Poole, TASC Special Education Teacher - Severe License, Stanley Elementary School - effective - effective 08/31/2026;
- Anahid Keshishian, Occupational Therapist, District-Wide - effective 08/31/2026;
- Meagan Rooney, Special Education Paraprofessional, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Indigo Fox Tree-McGrath, Middle School Art Educator, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Edith Ortiz, Lunch and TASC Coverage, Stanley Elementary School - effective 09/02/2026;
- Ludian Herrera, Lunch Recess Monitor, Stanley Elementary School - effective 09/02/2026;
- Danielle Sorg, Substitute Nurse, District-Wide - effective 09/02/2026;
- Jocelyn Klofas, Transition Coordinator, District-Wide - effective 08/31/2026;
- Mark Sullivan, Bridge Teacher, Plympton Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Jorge Ponce Avila, SPED Paraprofessional, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Karen Meuse, LTS Grade 2 Classroom Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026 - mid October (approx.);
- Nicholas Perez, LTS Social Studies Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026 - 11/01/2026 (approx.)

Transfers and Promotions:

- Emma Ljunberg, LTS Grade 2 Classroom Teacher, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026 - 01/12/2027 (approx.);
- Ashley Marston, Kindergarten Teacher, Whittemore Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Erica Kelley, Elementary Instrumental Program - Band, District-wide - effective 08/31/2026;
- Brianna Fox, Kindergarten Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Ila Noel, Library Paraprofessional, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Jennifer Salazar, Secretary, Northeast Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Michaela O'Brien, Teacher, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kael Pelletier, DL Social Studies Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Danica Champion, ESL Teacher, McDevitt Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Lindsey Gonzalez, Grade 2 Teacher, FitzGerald Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- William Walthall, Social Studies Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kerri Beal, Technology Engineering Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Marianne Duffy, Executive Director of Language Acquisition, Central Office - effective 07/01/2026;
- Dillon Longmoore, Secretary to the Director of Food Service, 617 Lexington Street - effective 08/31/2026;
- Felicia McCarthy, Early Childhood Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Deanna Ventura, Paraprofessional, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Sarah Wysocki-Donovan, Evaluation Team Leader, District-wide - effective 08/31/2026

b) Information

Dr. Mendonsa confirmed it was a successful first day of school for students across the district in grades one through twelve.

Information was shared about the district's new Administrator of Student Engagement and Discipline, Liz Murray; the Director of Counseling, Carolyn Imperato, and Kristin Gentili, the new Food Service Director.

The superintendent thanked Cradles to Crayons for donating over 100 backpacks full of supplies for our elementary students.

Dr. Mendonsa updated the Committee on the improvement in student attendance between the 2025 and 2026 school years. All schools saw an increase in student attendance and the majority also saw a sharp decline in the rate of chronically absent (10% or more) students last year as well. Additionally, the rate of chronically absent (20% or more) remained the same or decreased in half of the district.

- c) Monthly District Enrollment

The 2026-2027 school year started with 5,511 students enrolled in Waltham Public Schools. The amount is lower than the original projection but is expected to increase over the next month.

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

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Shannon Conley reviewed the proposed changes to the Waltham High School student handbook for this year. The changes include the updating of language, processes and procedures, the addition of new policies and statutes, and the removal of outdated language or practices no longer utilized. The introduction section, staff names, contact information, and list of clubs and activities were also updated.

Mrs. Coleman left the meeting at 7:52pm and returned at 7:56pm.

A discussion between Ms. Wong-Bigelow and Dr. Conley ensued about specific terminology that Ms. Wong-Bigelow requested change. Dr. Conley indicated any language stemming from a state law or School Committee policy cannot be changed within the handbook.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. AlJammal, seconded by Mrs. Coleman, to approve the 2026-2027 Waltham High School student handbook. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The superintendent reminded the group that the district's proposed three year Equity Plan was presented at the last meeting. She highlighted key points of the three year process including the priorities, recommendations and plans for action. Ms. DeJoannis referenced Mrs. AlJammal's prior request that a definition of "equity" be determined and asked that a definition for "high expectation" also be set forth.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to approve the Waltham Public Schools 3 year Equity Plan. All in favor.

- b) Dual Language School Model and Reutilization of 617 Lexington Street
c) Waltham High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department

Dr. Mendonsa advised she plans to review the proposed plans for the 617 Lexington Street building previously provided by the architect.

Ms. DeJoannis asked that a more cohesive proposal for 617 be presented to the members for consideration. Mayor McCarthy added that the type of structure of the building needs to be determined with Dual Language and Valor being priorities, as well as Early Childhood Education.

Nothing new was shared in this category.

- d) Waltham High School Schedule Dr. Conard will convene the WHS Schedule Team later this month to continue analyzing schedule options.
- Mrs. Coleman added that while this is a standing agenda item, it does not mean that a new, detailed update will be provided at each meeting. She acknowledged that some of the Schedule Committee members did not work over the summer but as this is an ongoing project, updates will be provided when available. Mayor McCarthy received confirmation that a timeline and feedback sessions will be communicated by Dr. Conard.
- e) Enrollment, Space and Data in the Waltham Public Schools It was noted that minutes of city department meetings are available online relative to city decisions about new residential property requests.
- f) Superintendent's Evaluation Mrs. Coleman reviewed the evaluation process for the superintendent and confirmed she received individual written evaluations from all members. The evaluation is divided into multiple steps, performance goals and standards and the Vice-Chair reviewed the ratings within each area. She quoted some of the feedback received and advised the full evaluation, complete with Dr. Mendonsa's written goals, will be posted on the WPS district website.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Ratification of Memorandum of Agreement with Waltham Public Schools Building Trades Mrs. AlJammal highlighted the changes in the new 2025-2028 contract with the Building Trades union including an increase in vacation time, an annual salary increase, and the addition of new steps.
- VOTED:** On motion of Mrs. AlJammal, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to ratify the Memorandum of Agreement with the Waltham Public Schools Building Trades union. All in favor.

The members executed the Memorandum of Agreement.

- b) Naming of the 617 Lexington Street building Mr. Tarallo shared his thoughts about naming the 617 Lexington Street building after former WPS superintendent Jack Daddona.
- VOTED:** On motion of Mr. Tarallo, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, to request the Waltham City Council consider the School Committee's recommendation of naming the 617 Lexington Street building "The John J. 'Jack' Daddona Education Center". All in favor.

A short discussion followed about whether the existing schools and programs within the building would retain their current names and identities and it was confirmed they should.

- c) Protect Act Dr. Mendonsa advised the Committee that on August 5, 2026 Governor Maura Healey signed into law the PROTECT Act which provides some community

protection for immigrants. She shared Know Your Rights guides for families and staff that will be distributed to the WPS community, along with a proposed model policy that is being recommended for approval.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, to approve the PROTECT Act Model Policy. All in favor.

FISCAL MATTERS

a) Bills on
Warrant

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

AGENDA ITEMS
FOR FUTURE
MEETINGS

Mrs. AlJammal requested the new administrators come to a future meeting so they can meet the School Committee members.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 8:46pm. All in favor.

Marisa Mendonsa
Clerk