

WALTHAM SCHOOL COMMITTEE
Waltham, Massachusetts
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 16, 2026

The regular meeting of the Waltham School Committee convened at 5:33pm. Present were Ms. Wong-Bigelow, Mrs. AlJammal, Mrs. Coleman, and Mayor McCarthy. Ms. DeJoannis, Mr. Tarallo and Mr. Zanghi were not present. Mayor McCarthy presided.

Mr. Zanghi arrived at 5:34pm.

RECESS

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, 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; 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 conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the Waltham Building Maintenance Workers Association and/or to conduct negotiations with the Waltham Building Maintenance Workers Association, and 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 School Secretaries Association and the Waltham Public Schools MUP-26-12223, to include Attorney Jonathan Atwater and Superintendent Dr. Mendonsa, and return to the regular meeting at 7:00 pm. All in favor.

RECONVENE

The School Committee reconvened at 7:53pm. 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.

Mr. Tarallo apologized for the delayed start but lengthy discussions about union negotiations were taking place during the Committee's Executive Session.

PUBLIC INPUT

Waltham High School parent Nicole Piche-Nicholas again addressed the Committee about the WHS schedule process and emphasized the importance of full transparency, meaningful updates, an analysis of the pros and cons of each schedule option, community forums, and feedback opportunities. She reviewed the previously communicated timeline and asked that information be shared about upcoming forums and feedback opportunities.

**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.

**SUPERINTENDENT'S
UPDATE**

a) Miscellaneous
Personnel

New Hires:

- Diane Campbell, Bridge Paraprofessional, Plympton Elementary School - effective 09/02/2026;
- Sarah Daniel, LTS ESL Teacher, FitzGerald Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Amy Lyons, Moderate Special Education Teacher, Waltham High School - effective 8/31/2026;
- Dominique Didino, TASC Special Education Paraprofessional, Stanley Elementary School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Angelica Llavata-Gascon, Middle School Italian Teacher, Kennedy Middle School - effective 08/31/2026;
- Kerri James, Lunch/Recess Monitor, Stanley Elementary School - 09/02/2026;
- Michael O'Toole, SPED Teacher - Moderate License, McDevitt Middle School - effective 09/01/2026;
- JoAnn Kilpatrick, Waltham High School, Assistant Principal of Teaching and Learning Waltham High School - effective 09/23/2026;
- Daniel Cashmore, Lunch Monitor, Plympton Elementary School - effective 09/08/2026;
- Angela O'Toole, Building Sub, Plympton Elementary School - effective 09/08/2026; Lilian Chase, Elementary Strings & General Music LTS, District-wide - effective 09/14/2026;
- Maria Frenna, Building Sub, MacArthur Elementary School - effective 09/14/2026

Transfers and Promotions:

- Stephanie Panzera, Central Office, Secretary to the Director of Facilities - effective 09/14/2026

b) Information

Dr. Mendonsa introduced the district's new Director of Food Service, Kristin Gentili, as well as the new Director of Counseling and Social and Emotional Learning, Carolyn Imperato.

A hiring update confirmed that during the summer, over 100 new hires joined the district in all different capacities. Vacancies in Special Education, CTE and Dual Language continue to be challenging to fill.

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

Dr. Lisa Kingsley updated the Committee about the work completed this summer with partner, The Stepping Stone Group, to build a WPS Safety and Risk Assessment

protocol, to revise the district's manual, to compile a Behavioral and Safety Response Playbook, to build a Readiness Workbook for each school, and to develop standardized forms for response, documentation and review. Additionally, the district increased the number of internal CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) instructors and, to date, over 50 staff members have been trained on this important de-escalation process. The goal is to triple this number by November. Plympton Elementary will be the primary focus of this work this year.

A request to receive progress updates from Plympton Elementary and about CPI training of staff was made.

Dr. Shannon Conley advised that some of the district's librarians were present to share the Library Strategic Plan. Director of Ed Tech and Library Sandy Malec explained that the purpose of the library strategic plan is to align the programs and curriculum across all school libraries for grades K-12.

Librarians Reba Tierney (WHS), Jen Ostayan (Northeast), Mary Kurspahic (McDevitt), Liza Halley (Plympton), and Kristie Hanley (Whittemore) provided background information, the why, the what, and the how of the strategic plan. The librarians emphasized the change in the district's demographics along with declining literacy rates as the driving forces behind this initiative. The goals are: to continue to instill and promote a love of reading, align with the curriculum and instruction, and expand collaboration with partners to better support student learning. Data was shared about each school, including the number of books in circulation, the average age of each school's circulation, and the average number of available items per student.

Ms. Tierney advised that Massachusetts passed the Freedom to Read law in August of 2026 and it provides protections for librarians and booksellers and also requires districts to have written policies for collection development and review.

Some of the members engaged the presenters in a conversation about classroom libraries, available online reading apps for students, and community partnerships.

CONSENT AGENDA

Dr. Mendonsa presented the following Consent Agenda items:

- Minutes from the Regular Meeting held on September 2, 2026;

Retirements:

- Kevin Gildea, Kennedy Middle School, Principal - effective 11/28/2026;
- Denise Gauvin, MacArthur Elementary School, Paraprofessional - effective 6/30/2026

Resignations:

- Maria Malec, Central Office, Door Security - effective 6/30/2026;
- Deborah Adler, Waltham High School, BCBA - effective 09/17/2026;
- Amy Lyons, Waltham High School, Moderate Special Education Teacher - effective 9/2/2026

A 2015 Nissan Altima was donated to the WHS CTE Department's automotive programs by WHS staff member Holly McGovern.

Mayor McCarthy asked that the Regular Meeting minutes from September 2, 2026 be amended to include the times that both she and Ms. Wong-Bigelow arrived during the Executive Session.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to approve the amendment to the September 2, 2026 minutes. All in favor.

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.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

There was nothing new discussed in this area.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a) Anti-Racism, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Dr. Mendonsa advised she had her close-out meeting with The Leadership Academy this week.
- b) Dual Language School Model and Reutilization of 617 Lexington Street The superintendent and Lorraine Finnegan from SMMA will meet soon to discuss the prior plans drawn up for the 617 Lexington Street building.
- c) Waltham High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Department Waltham High School's CTE Department is looking for an additional HVAC teacher.
- d) Waltham High School Schedule Dr. Conard and Dr. Mendonsa are meeting tomorrow and will discuss the status of the schedule process.
- e) Enrollment, Space and Data in the Waltham Public Schools The middle school principals have been asked to provide building capacity and classroom availability information. This will be shared with the Committee at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- a) School
Committee
Subcommittee
Meetings

Dr. Mendonsa suggested the Committee entertain adding two new subcommittees, one for Finance and one for Curriculum and Instruction. Currently, the policy subcommittee is the only existing one. The superintendent believes that much could be accomplished between the three subcommittees and then information and proposals could be shared with the whole committee at Regular Meetings.

Mayor McCarthy added that city-wide PTO meetings should be reinstated so Committee members have a chance to hear from more people in the community about school specific matters and larger issues. A discussion with all of the members and the superintendent followed and it was requested that a plan for each of the subcommittees be brought to the next meeting.

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, to add this matter to the October 7, 2026 agenda. All in favor.

FISCAL MATTERS

- a) FY '27 Budget
Transfer
Request

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to table this matter until the next meeting. All in favor.

- b) Bills on
Warrant

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Ms. Wong-Bigelow, to pay the bills on the warrant. All in favor.

**AGENDA ITEMS
FOR FUTURE
MEETINGS**

Dr. Mendonsa indicated that starting at the next meeting and running through November, each of the school principals will be presenting their school improvement plans to the Committee.

Ms. DeJoannis asked for a more detailed enrollment report for the middle schools which includes specific class enrollment.

Additionally, Ms. DeJoannis requested a breakdown of course enrollment at Waltham High. She also requested information on the number of classes being co-taught and the amount of professional development. It was confirmed that this information will be shared by Dr. Conard during his school improvement plan presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED: On motion of Mrs. Coleman, seconded by Mr. Tarallo, to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 9:20pm. All in favor.

Marisa Mendonsa
Clerk