

Board of Education Minutes

December 10, 2025

A Regular Meeting of the Board of Education was held in hybrid format on December 10, 2025, beginning at 6:30 PM. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mrs. Main, Mr. Stefanowicz, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mr. Burdick, Mrs. Main, Mr. Austin, and Mrs. Friend. Also, in attendance were Mr. Hopkins, Superintendent of Schools, Kathy Trammell, Business Manager, as well as Student Ambassadors James Noyes and Anna Zeeman.

Summary:

The Board of Education meeting opened at 6:30 PM and began with public comments centered on athletic field conditions and statements from community members regarding the open Board vacancy as well as other concerns. The board addressed audio difficulties to ensure all speakers were heard.

The board voted to appoint Laura Mello to fill the BOE vacancy, following discussion of her qualifications and community input. Superintendent Troy Hopkins provided updates on school closure guidelines, NEASC accreditation progress, technology infrastructure planning, and district-wide workflow improvements. Student Ambassadors highlighted academic programming, recent debate team achievements, winter sports, and increased student participation in music and arts events.

Financial reports covered Cub Club operations, cyber incident expenditures, and year-to-date budget projections. The board discussed the anticipated insurance reimbursement, strategies to use non-lapsing funds to offset unexpected costs and reestablished the Finance Committee to support budget planning. The board approved three required policies, tabled the visitor policy for further review, and received updates on sustainability initiatives including expanded recycling and the use of real silverware in cafeterias.

The meeting also included a review of communication practices, adjustments to the presentation schedule, and the first read of the 2026–2027 school calendar. The board approved the consent agenda and identified future topics such as goal-setting and improving community communication.

1. Call to Order

- Mrs. Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comment

Please be advised that our meeting structure does not allow for two-way dialogue during public Comment, but the Board uses this information to guide their decision-making. Depending on the topic, they may ask the Superintendent or another District employee to follow up with you. Likewise, public comments might lead to a topic being added to a future meeting agenda.

- Wayne Coates raised concerns regarding the athletic fields.
- Toula Balestracci, (DTC), commented on the process for filling the BOE vacancy as well as spoke to endorse Laura Mello to fill said position.
- Laura Mello introduced herself as a candidate for the BOE vacancy.
- Heath Dugas introduced himself as a candidate for the BOE vacancy.

4. Correspondence

- Correspondence was received from Bryan Rathburn in support of Heath Dugas.
- Correspondence was received from Amy French in support of Heath Dugas.

5. BOE Vacancy

Motion to appoint Laura Mello to the North Stonington Board of Education vacancy. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carried by split decision.

Yea: 5, (Mr. Stefanowicz, Mr. Burdick, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mrs.

Wagner, Mr. Austin), Nay: 0, Abstain: 2, (Mrs. Main, Mrs. Friend)

Absent: 0

6. Reports

a. Superintendent Report

- Shared draft guidelines for school cancellations/early dismissals.
- Reviewed parent roles during a lockdown forum organized by State Representative Greg Howard
- NEASC draft report in progress; reflects district initiatives; full accreditation expected in two years.

- Technology infrastructure: multi-year plan; revised committee will include teacher and IT representatives.
- Google tracking system created for state reporting, HR, insurance deadlines, etc.
- NEASC report will not be publicly released until it has been completed however the BOE may review the draft.
- Elementary school has developed a "Vision of a Learner" that is aligned with Wheeler's Vision of a Graduate.

b. Chair Report

- Non-lapsing fund discussion related to cyber incident. Importance of minimizing future appropriations.

7. Student Ambassador Report

a. High School

- Pathways career programming expanding; strong student appreciation.
- Alumni panel: 10 graduates shared post-HS experiences with soon to be graduates.
- Assessments next month.
- Winter sports underway.
- Debate Team: third consecutive winning year; 1-2-3 sweep in speaker awards; intend to host a debate in March.

b. Elementary & Middle School

- Standards-based report cards sent home.
- 4th annual talent show was a success featuring a wide variety of acts.
- Food-scrap sustainability program expanding.
- Bring-an-Adult-to-School Day in discussion.
- Increased participation in music programs; positive feedback from board members.

8. Financials

a. Cub Club – Year to Date

- Currently operating with a small positive balance through November.

- Discussion regarding Arly payment system alternatives.
- Discussion regarding summer program expansion or potential partnership with the Recreation Department.
- Mrs. Wagner requested central office track labor hours attributable to Cub Club.

9. Cyber Incident Expenditure Report

- Expenses exceed \$200,000; itemized list included in packet.
- Retainer clarified as an upfront payment required to begin vendor work.
- Total estimated cost has since been reduced due to a LEARN grant and negotiated services.

10. BOE Budget - Year to Date

- Cyber insurance claim submitted Monday, 12/8/2025 (deadline March).
- Discussion on shifting appropriate expenses to non-lapsing funds (e.g., sports transportation, Tyler Tech).
- Audit near completion and will clarify allowable items.

a. Non-lapsing Report

Motion to move the financial reports to the Board of Finance.

Motion made by Mrs. Main and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz.

This motion carried by unanimous decision.

Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

11. Policy:

- 5144.2**
- 6172.1**
- 6141.52**

Motion to move approve the policies as written (5144.2, 6172.1, 6141.52). Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carried by split decision.

Yea: 6 (Mrs. Wagner, Mrs. Main, Mr. Stefanowicz, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mr. Burdick, Mrs. Main, Mr. Austin), Nay: 1 (Mrs. Friend), Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

d. 1250

- The board chose to table this policy until the next meeting.

12. New Business

a. Lunch and Recycling

- Large recycling bins purchased; expanded paper/cardboard initiatives.
- Use of real silverware in both schools.
- Jamie requested update on meal quality and sourcing; will be added to Old Business next meeting.

b. Chair Communication and Expectations

- The board discussed potential improvements to communication.

c. Discussion of Presentation Calendar

- The board discussed reducing and or changing the format of BOE presentations in an effort to end meetings by 8:00 PM.

d. District School Calendar, 2026-2027

- The board discussed changes to the first draft of the 2026-2027 district calendar including the Wednesday before Thanksgiving as well as moving graduation to a Friday.

13. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of minutes

a. 11.10.2025

b. Financials to Board of Finance

- Financials to the BOF previously approved during this meeting.

Motion to approve the consent agenda including the BOE meeting minutes for 11.10.2025. Motion made by Mrs. Main and seconded by Mr. Stefanowicz.

This motion carried by unanimous decision.

Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

14. BOE Comments on Future Agenda Items

- BOE workshop tentative date: February 7, 9:00 AM.
- Review public communication practice.
- BOE calendar corrections.

15. Public Comment

- No public comment

16. Executive Session

a. BOE Member Vacancy

- No executive session necessary

17. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 8:12 PM

Motion to adjourn. Motion made by Mrs. Main and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carried by unanimous decision.

Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0