

North Stonington Schools
Board of Education Minutes
September 23, 2026

A regular meeting of the Board of Education was held in hybrid format on September 23, 2026, beginning at 6:30 PM. Present were Mrs. Wagner, Mrs. Main, Mrs. Mello, Dr. Towle-Weicksel, Mr. Stefanowicz, and Mr. Burdick. Dr. Jeanine Rose, Superintendent of Schools was also in attendance.

Summary:

The Board discussed the resignation of Christine Wagner from the Board and the resulting vacancy and leadership transition. Sean Ryan was appointed to fill a Board vacancy, and the Board discussed plans for an organizational meeting to elect Board officers at the October 14 meeting. The Board also received public comment regarding recent Board actions and appreciation for Mrs. Wagner's service. Presentations and updates included student activities, school climate survey results, student behavior and engagement, school improvement initiatives, special education, and the opening of the school year. The Superintendent provided updates on staffing, school safety, therapy dogs, legislative updates, and district operations. The Board reviewed and approved capital expenditure priorities, a Non-Disclosure Agreement related to the stage lighting RFP, Child Nutrition Program signatories, the therapy dog program, and up to \$7,000 from the non-lapsing fund for musical instruments. The Board also discussed committee assignments, the School Business Manager position, safety, policy matters, and future agenda items before entering executive session.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Board Vacancy

- Christine Wagner submitted her resignation as Board Chair and from her position on the North Stonington Board of Education.

Motion to nominate Sean Ryan on behalf of the RTC to fill Patrick Austin's vacancy . Motion made by Mrs. Main and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 5, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

- Sean Ryan was sworn in as a member of the North Stonington Board of Education.
- The Board discussed the resulting vacancy and the process for filling the vacancy.

4. 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.

- Members of the public commented regarding recent Board actions and the resignation of Christine Wagner.
- Several members of the public expressed appreciation for Mrs. Wagner's service to the district and Board of Education.
- Comments also addressed concerns regarding Board leadership, Board dynamics, and recent actions involving Board members.

5. Correspondence

Communications to the Superintendent or Board of Education that are intended for inclusion on a meeting agenda or to be read publicly as correspondence should clearly indicate that intent in writing at the time of submission.

- There was no correspondence.

6. Presentations

a. Student Ambassadors

- Building administrators reported on the following
 - Student Ambassador updates included upcoming student activities and initiatives.
 - The Board received updates regarding the Sandy Hook Promise “Start With Hello” program.
 - Students are preparing a basket for emergency first responders in support of the community following an earlier traumatic incident.
 - An NHS blood drive is scheduled for the following week.
 - Updates were provided regarding athletics and upcoming senior activities.
 - The O'Grady Family Scholarship Fund fundraiser was discussed.
 - Updates were provided regarding the fall production of Grease, including student involvement in the production.
 - Grade 6 collaboration between the middle and high school was discussed.
 - Music students from the middle school are participating in visits and collaborative activities with the high school.
- The Board discussed changes to the school schedule and reported improvements.
- Student Ambassadors are expected to participate in a future Board meeting.

Motion to add to new business, under 9.b. Therapy Dogs, 9.c. Financial Report 9.d. Nonlapsing Fund, 9.e. Establishment of Committees. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

b. School Climate Survey Presentation

- The Board received a presentation on the district's school climate survey results, including feedback from staff, students, and parents/caregivers.
 - The Board discussed school climate data, student behavior and engagement, restorative practices, and the importance of consistent expectations and communication.
 - Opportunities to strengthen student support and engagement, including activities, mentorship, leadership opportunities, and grade-level partnerships, were discussed.
 - Special education survey results, communication, IEP/PPT processes, and student supports were reviewed.
 - The Board acknowledged the ongoing work of administrators and staff and the district's continued efforts to improve school climate and student support.

7. Reports

a. Board Chair Report

- There was no report.

b. Superintendent Report

- Dr. Rose provided an update regarding the opening of the school year and recognized the work of the administrative team and staff.
 - The Superintendent discussed the district's response to a recent bus incident and the support provided by the school community.
 - An update was provided regarding the proposed certified therapy dog program, including potential partnerships, handlers, policy and insurance requirements, and the need for Board approval.
 - The Superintendent provided a staffing update, including a reduction of one paraeducator position due to changes in student placements.

- Legislative and compliance updates were discussed, along with updates regarding central office restructuring and administrative capacity.
- The Superintendent provided an update on the district's ongoing safety audit and collaboration with neighboring districts and local law enforcement.
- Capital expenditure requests were reviewed.
- The Board congratulated Wheeler High School Athletics on receiving the CIAC Fred Balsamo Award for Sportsmanship.

8. Old Business

a. Business Manager Update

- The Board continued discussion regarding the School Business Manager position.
- The Board discussed central office structure and options for addressing the district's business management needs.
- The Superintendent will continue reviewing options and provide additional information to the Board.

b. Safety Audit

- The Board continued discussion regarding the district's safety audit.
- The importance of continued collaboration, coordination, and review of safety procedures was discussed.
- The district will continue working with neighboring districts and local police and state troopers.

c. Capital Expense Request

- The Board reviewed proposed capital expenditure requests.
 - A special services transportation vehicle was discussed as a priority need.
 - The Board discussed whether leasing or purchasing would be the most appropriate option and the need to further clarify the vehicle's specifications, accessibility, scope, and expected useful life.

- The Board discussed other capital items, including baseball/softball field improvements, a gator cart, lawnmower, and district maintenance vehicle.
- The Board amended the capital items list to place the special services transportation vehicle as the first priority.
- The Board approved moving the amended capital items list forward to the Board of Selectmen.

Motion to move capital items list as amended, (1st. Special Services Transport Vehicle, 2. Gator Cart, 3. Lawn Mower, 4. Baseball/Softball Regrading, 5. District Maintenance Van) to the board of selectman.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

d. Stage Lighting RFP - Non Disclosure Agreement

- The Board discussed a proposed Non-Disclosure Agreement with Michael Westgate related to the district's stage lighting RFP.
- The Board discussed the revised RFP and vendor information.

Motion to approve the nondisclosure agreement with Mike Westgate.
This motion was made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

Motion to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to execute the Non-Disclosure Agreement with Michael Westgate, as presented, in connection with the District's stage lighting RFP, subject to final approval by the Board's legal counsel. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

9. New Business

a. Child Nutrition Programs

Motion to authorize the following individuals to serve as designated signatories for the Connecticut State Department of Education Child Nutrition Programs, effective upon Board approval, the Superintendent of Schools, Business Official, and Board Secretary. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

b. Policy

- The Board discussed the district's policy audit history.
- The most recent formal policy audit was completed in April 2017.
- Additional policy review and deletion of redundant policies occurred during the 2022–2023 school year.
- The Board discussed the potential cost and benefits of conducting another formal policy audit through CAFE.
- The possibility of conducting portions of the policy review internally was also discussed.
- The Superintendent will investigate the process and cost of a CAFE policy audit and report back to the Board.
- The Board discussed establishing a policy subcommittee to actively review and update Board policies.
- CAFE quarterly policy updates, particularly updates addressing changes in legislation, were discussed as a resource for ongoing policy review.

c. Therapy Dogs

Motion to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to execute an agreement with Marci Gray for the provision of a puppy to North Stonington Public Schools for the purpose of training and

development as a facility dog for Wheeler Middle High School by a designated district staff member in partnership with Light the Way, contingent upon the Board's adoption of a Therapy Dog Policy and confirmation that the district has appropriate insurance coverage for the program and the facility dog, and subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement and any required legal or administrative review. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

Motion to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to execute an agreement with Puppies Behind Bars (PBB) for the provision of a trained facility/therapy dog to support the educational, social-emotional, and school climate needs of students and staff at North Stonington Elementary School, contingent upon the Board's adoption of a Therapy Dog Policy and confirmation that the district has appropriate insurance coverage for the program and the facility dog, and subject to the terms and conditions of the agreement and any required legal or administrative review. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.

Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

d. Financial Report / Non-Lapsing Fund

- The Board reviewed financial information, including teacher salaries, Cub Club salaries, health insurance expenditures, tuition for outplaced students, and new equipment expenditures.
- The Board discussed increased health insurance enrollment and related budget implications.
- The Board discussed the use of the non-lapsing fund.
- The Board discussed a need for additional musical instruments for the middle school band program.

Motion made to approve up to \$7,000 from non-lapsing to fund musical instruments. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mrs. Mello.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

e. Establishment of Committees

- Finance Committee
 - Mr. Stefanowicz
 - Mr. Ryan
 - Mrs. Mello
 - Mrs. Main
- Facilities
 - Mrs. Main
- Policies
 - Mr. Stefanowicz
 - Mr. Burdick
 - Open Seat
- Curriculum
 - Dr. Towle-Weicksel
 - Open Seat

9. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of Minutes

i. August 26, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes from 08/26/2026. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

10. BOE Comments for Future Agenda Items

Motion to hold an organization meeting at the beginning of the next scheduled BOE meeting, October 14, 2026, to run elections for all Board officers. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent:0

11. Public Comment

- There was public comment regarding Mrs. Wagner's resignation.

12. Executive Session

Motion to enter executive session. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Ryan.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent:0

a. Admin Contract

b. Superintendent 90-Day Review

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn. Motion made by Mr. Stefanowicz and seconded by Mr. Burdick.

This motion carries by unanimous decision.
Yea: 6, Nay: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 0

- Meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.