East Haddam Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes
Municipal Office Complex, Meeting Room 1 & 2
February 11, 2026 7:00 PM

MINUTES-CORRECTED

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Keira Thompson, Chair
Jessica Hatfield, Secretary
Dr. Dan Flack
Jim Francese
Terri Garrity
Thea Jansky
Sean Morrissey
Stephen Trojan
Melissa Ziobron

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT:
Dr. DeBrito, Superintendent of Schools
Christine Bourne, Business Manager
Chris Eckert, High School Principal
Arthur Bell, High School Teacher
Sara Evans, High School Representative
Tim Cahill, Ray Board Vice-President

I. CALL TO ORDER

a. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited

b. Exit announcement was made

II. HIGH SCHOOL PRESENTATION: 9TH GRADE PHYSICAL SCIENCE – ARTHUR BELL

Dr. DeBrito introduced Mr. Arthur Bell, newly hired physics/physical science teacher at Nathan Hale-Ray High School, and noted that 9th grade science was restructured to incorporate more physical science and introductory physics concepts.

Mr. Bell provided an overview of the Integrated Physical Science course, which blends physics with traditional earth science to strengthen students' foundational understanding and better prepare them for upper-level coursework and the NGSS assessment. He outlined the major units and described how physics concepts are embedded throughout the curriculum.

He shared examples of hands-on lessons and labs designed to deepen students' understanding of scientific concepts and emphasize application of learning.

III. HIGH SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES

The High School student representative provided updates on recent activities and events, noting that Faith was unable to attend. The Symphonic Band and Choir were performing their Chamber Concert that evening. Student artwork was displayed at the Shoreline Visual Arts Show, and Delilah Herald received the Connecticut Schools Award for Visual Arts. Students in Architecture and Design created model homes using CAD software, and psychology classes participated in interactive lessons on brain processing. The week concluded with a Spirit Week and upcoming pep rally organized by Student Council.

IV. ENDOWMENTS PRESENTATION: TIM CAHILL

Mr. Tim Cahill presented an overview of district-related endowment funds and their purposes, distribution methods, and governance.

He explained the Ray Board structure and budget/grant process, including that the Ray Board pays approved expenses directly (including partial salary offsets and program needs) and retains unspent funds. Board members asked questions about oversight, which positions/areas are supported, transparency/meeting notices, long-term planning, and whether funds could flow more directly to the school budget for clearer accounting.

Mr. Cahill then reviewed the Purple Fund, noting its intent to supplement - not replace - municipal/state funding, the current-year contribution, and the need to reconstitute the committee and improve tracking of how funds are received and reflected in the district budget.

He also summarized the Sprecker (science scholarship and potential STEM support) and the Amos Shepard Arts Scholarship (renewable arts scholarship funded through an annual distribution based on trailing quarters). Mr. Cahill responded to Board questions, offered to provide trust documents (including for the Purple Fund), and offered additional information as needed.

V. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS - NONE

VI. REPORT OF THE BOARD CHAIR

The Chair reported on recent activities since the last meeting, including attendance at the Elementary School Dance and thanked the PTO and volunteers for a successful event.

She shared that she, the Superintendent, and Jessica Hatfield attended a governance workshop and highlighted the need to develop an annual Board calendar outlining major work and budget timelines. The Board also completed the second half of its retreat and discussed holding retreats more regularly to support strategic focus.

The Chair noted a recent working meeting with town officials regarding the delayed annual audit, which is anticipated to be completed in March, and asked for community patience. The Chair also

shared that she and the Superintendent met with Ms. Endorf and welcomed her back as a parent volunteer, and discussed the need to develop clearer procedures for handling disruption cases.

She addressed employee turnover, noting the district averages approximately 25 separations per year across all employee groups, including retirements.

The Chair read into the record a formal district statement regarding former employee Shawn Boardman, summarizing that prior investigations were conducted in accordance with applicable laws and policies, and encouraged anyone with information to contact the Superintendent. She noted that the Superintendent joined the district in 2024 and that the Board has been newly elected since 2021.

In closing, the Chair emphasized the importance of refocusing on student achievement, acknowledged the district's lean central office structure, and called for collaboration and accountability, particularly during budget season.

VII. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The Superintendent reported attending several recent events, including the Shoreline Art Show, Elementary Math Night, and the Elementary School Dance, and praised student creativity and strong family participation.

She noted that during the recent early release day, staff worked collaboratively on curriculum, and that the high school is preparing for the NEASC visit in April.

Looking ahead, she mentioned the upcoming long weekend and warmer weather. During next month's parent conferences, each school will provide an opportunity for families to contribute input toward the district's Vision of the Learner and review the developed belief statements.

VIII. ACTION ON THE MINUTES

MOTION: A motion to add 8B Special Meeting Minutes, January 28, 2026, was made by Mr. Morrissey and seconded by Mr. Trojan.

FAVOR: (8)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

A. MOTION TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 21, 2026

MOTION: A motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes on January 21, 2026 with the audience of citizens name changes and the chairman's report with the change the elementary total should be $701 not $71 was made by Ms. Hatfield and seconded by Ms. Jansky.

FAVOR: (5)
OPPOSED: (1)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(2)

B. MOTION TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES, JANUARY 28, 2026

MOTION: A motion to approve the Special Meeting Minutes on January 28, 2026, was made by Ms. Jansky and seconded by Mr. Francese.

FAVOR: (7)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(1)

IX. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Curriculum, Policy & Educational Programming Subcommittee Report – Mr. Francese reported a productive discussion focused on strengthening the curriculum review process and reaffirming the Board's role in curriculum approval. The committee voted to develop a universal curriculum template for all grades and subject areas and will begin meeting with teachers to move the process forward. The goal is to bring a proposed template to the Board for approval and formalize the process in policy. The committee also noted that upcoming policy updates will be needed to comply with recent changes in state law.

b. Business & Planning Subcommittee Report – Meeting scheduled for February 17th at 5:00pm.

c. Personnel & Negotiations Subcommittee Report – Met on February 3rd to begin stipend negotiations, with the next meeting scheduled for February 25. Bus contract quotes are under review as the current contract expires June 30, and preparation has begun for upcoming union contract negotiations.

d. East Haddam Schools Capital Improvements Committee Liaison Report - The Chair reported on the January 29 Capital Improvements meeting, noting continued progress on the HVAC project. Most work has been completed, with remaining summer work focused on removal of old heating units. She noted that the generator installation is now complete and that significant upgrades—including windows, doors, HVAC, and the generator—have strengthened the building infrastructure. Further updates will be provided at Business & Planning.

e. LEARN Liaison Report – Meeting on February 12th.

f. Ray Board Liaison Report – Meeting in March. Had the presentation tonight.

g. Long Range Capital Improvements Committee Liaison Report - Have not met

h. Safety and Security Committee Report – Have met.

X. 2026-2027 SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED BUDGET

The Superintendent presented her proposed 2026–2027 budget, aligned with the district's vision and recent student achievement gains, including Elementary School growth in ELA and math.

The proposed operating budget reflects a 2.98% increase. Administrators' building-level budgets remain largely intact, with additional reductions made at the central office level, including adjustments to legal services, salaries (with grant and Ray Board offsets), transportation, maintenance, and purchase services.

The Superintendent noted significant cost drivers, including salaries, transportation, and a $300,000 increase in special education. While Ray Board funding is reflected, other revenues (such as Purple Fund and certain town revenues) are not included in the expenditure proposal. Federal and state grants offset specific expenditures.

Board members asked clarifying questions regarding revenues, grant offsets, and state funding. Further discussion will occur at the upcoming budget workshop.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and possible action for 2027 Graduation Date

MOTION: A motion to accept the 2027 graduation date as Thursday, June 10, 2027, for Nathan Hale Ray High was made by Ms. Hatfield and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (8)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

b. Discussion and possible action on 2026-2027 Proposed School Calendar

MOTION: A motion to accept the 2026-2027 Proposed School Calendar was made by Mr. Francese and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (8)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

c. Acceptance of the consent agenda 1-3
   i. Discipline Report
   ii. Enrollment Report

iii. January 2026 Warrant

MOTION: A motion to approve the consent agenda items #1-3 the discipline report being changed to December 2025, the January Discipline Report having the elements be from four behaviors of defiance to disrespect, the enrollment as is and the warrant as is was made by Ms. Hatfield and seconded by Ms. Garrity.

FAVOR: (8)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

XII. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS – NONE

XIII. SUPERINTENDENT'S MID-YEAR REVIEW (EXECUTIVE SESSION)

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Jansky and seconded by Ms. Garrity at 10:59 pm.

FAVOR: (8)
OPPOSED: (0)
ABSENT: (0)
ABSTENTIONS:(0)

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Hatfield
Board of Education Secretary