

Revised

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, October 8, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the library Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello (arrived at 6:06 p.m.) and Dr. Darcy (remotely)

Board members absent: Mr. DeVecchio, Mr. Mennone and Mr. Stone

Administration present: Dr. Leggett, Superintendent of Schools

O&G Associates present: Mr. Sedensky and Mr. Hetzler

QA+M Associates present: Mr. Collier and Mr. Malik

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Presentation and Recognition**A. MTA Student Presentation**

Dr. Leggett welcomed Mrs. Winkler and students from Middlesex Transition Academy. The students presented their community partnerships and worksite responsibilities through their MTA program.

One student explained that students work in the community in different groups based on independence level. Coached groups have a coach that is more involved and shows students what to do, while supervised groups are more independent with a supervisor checking in with students. They spoke of specific tasks at Waters Edge nursing home, which consist of cleaning tables and setting up the recreation room. Students also work at Perk on Main, where some are now independent. Other students will be starting new jobs within the RSD13 schools where they will work and also potentially mentor other students. Another student discussed their work experience at Water's Edge, Market 32, and CVS. They also prepare books to go out for donations and help deliver them to a used bookstore. A third student discussed their independent work at Market 32 Bakery, which includes packaging rolls and other food items. They also work at Burlington Coat Factory, where they organize clothing by size and arrange hygiene products. Other students also work at Stonewall Farms, where they clean and garden. MTA students also spend time at Wesleyan, where they can work in the cafeteria or in landscape or maintenance. Students participate in events on campus, like sport games.

Students shared that they have an "outing" budget, and each week the group needs to decide the activity and budget for the price of the activity. Outings include activities like mini golf or the library, and they look forward to future outing possibilities like the movies or a museum. They shared that classmates are appreciative for the opportunities they can experience at Wesleyan and in Middletown.

Board members had discussions with the MTA students. Board members spoke of their recent visit at Strong, while Mrs. Winkler discussed the recent budget challenge students faced of buying groceries with only \$20.00. Students managed this budget by buying pancakes.

Dr. Leggett said she had the privilege of meeting with four MTA students recently and was appreciative of the time she spent with them. Dr. Leggett commended the students on their resilience and ability to move onto job opportunities as they find the ones that are the right fit for each student. Mrs. Winkler

discussed community outings, where every other month all the students enjoy a community activity together. Mrs. Winker identified these are the events that are highest rated by the students because they enjoy being together, helping each other, and connecting with other people.

Mr. Roraback asked students what job they liked best. One student said she enjoyed Water's Edge because she enjoys the people and playing games with them. Mr. Roraback agreed that taking care of people is an important job, and there's no greater joy than making people happy.

Another student agreed that she also liked Water's Edge best. Another student stated she enjoys Market 32 best because she's learned how to prepare the items and can work by herself.

The board members thanked the students for their presentation and Dr. Leggett thanked Mrs. Winkler and Mrs. Kean for the development of this program, as it is a gem in the school district.

B. Retirement Recognition

Dr. Leggett introduced Mr. Kimball, who wanted to recognize Ms. Kean's work in the district. Ms. Kean is retiring from Region 13 after 48 years of service. Mr. Kimball recalled meeting Ms. Kean, saying that their discussion focused on him as an individual rather than the job or the protocol. Ms. Kean relates to everyone with grace and dignity, from students to their parents, and is a beloved teacher and faculty member. Mr. Kimball said Ms. Kean is the embodiment of the district's mission, which is taking care of one another. On behalf of Strong school and the community, Mr. Kimball thanked Ms. Kean for all she has done in this program.

Ms. Kean was presented with a bouquet and gifts that students had made in her honor. Ms. Kean shared her pride for gifts students made her, like posters and bracelets, and was grateful to the teachers who wished her well in her retirement.

Ms. Kean recalled fond memories of knowing Mr. Roraback from his youth, and acknowledged that the one thing she will remember the most after 48 years is the students.

C. Update on Strong/Memorial Projects

Dr. Leggett invited Mr. Collier to provide an update on the building projects.

Mr. Collier identified there was a general design update presented prior to the 6:00 p.m. Board of Education meeting. The architects have submitted their (DD) design documentation set of drawings and are segueing into the development of construction document designs. They have had meetings with department heads and faculty members to do a secondary review from the first round of comments and feedback. So far, feedback has been very positive and they are close to completing the meetings.

Mr. Moore commended the architects on their presentation earlier with use of concept imagery and 3D pictures.

Mr. Malik identified that the process is going to move pretty quickly because the target is to start construction early next year. Over the next two to three months, they will have meetings with building officials, local officials, and attend planning and zoning meetings. Then they'll go to the state and get approval from them to go out to bid. There will be another phase that goes out earlier, which is going to be the house match and demolition phase. The next phase is the main building and site phase, in addition to playground equipment. The following phase is going to be furniture and equipment. And then the last phase would be plate ladder. At each phase, before we move to the state, we'll come before the Board of

Education and the Building Committee because there are forms that need to be signed and there's approvals that need to be given.

Mr. Sedensky from O&G introduced himself. Mr. Sedensky is the pre-construction manager and coordinates the estimating and bidding that goes to the state. Mr. Sedensky said Phase I is almost complete. They've received design development documents and run estimates. They're completing the estimate today. Mr. Sedensky is setting up meetings with the project team, QA+M, and a couple of people from the district to review the estimate and move forward.

Mr. Moore stated the only thing left in the swing space was the curtains in the gym. The Building Committee has reviewed this and Mr. Proia is going to review other available options with people at Strong, rather than a curtain divider that structurally would not work.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if the designers had the opportunity to talk to the teachers about the dividers that go from the floor up more than volleyball. Mr. Collier was not sure, but said he would follow up with the team and provide a status update at the next Building Committee.

Mrs. Dahlheimer recommended putting the slideshow on the website and Mr. Collier said he would send a pdf of the file.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Moore presented the agenda for approval.

Mrs. Dahlheimer, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, made a motion to approve the agenda, with the exception of item 3 as it already took place.

In favor of approving the agenda: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

A. Board of Education Retreat Minutes - September 6, 2025

Mr. Moore presented the Board of Education Retreat Minutes from September 6, 2025 for approval.

Mrs. Dahlheimer, seconded by Mr. Roraback, made a motion to approve the minutes from the Board of Education Retreat on September 6, 2025.

In favor of approving the minutes as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

Mrs. Cowan asked if the minutes could reflect that she left the retreat at 11:00 and board members stated this was already reflected in the minutes.

B. Board of Education Minutes – September 10, 2025

Mr. Moore presented the Board of Education Minutes from September 10, 2025 for approval.

Mr. Roraback requested a change in the minutes. Mr. Roraback was mistakenly marked as absent. Dr. Leggett reminded members that the district is working with a new transcriptionist and minutes taker, so there will be some things to adjust.

No motion was made; Mr. Moore took a vote to approve the amended minutes.

In favor of approving the September 10, 2025 Board of Education meeting minutes with a change, noting Mr. Roraback's presence at the meeting: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback and Dr. Darcy. Abstain: Mrs. Caramanella

Motion passed.

Superintendent's Report

Dr. Leggett presented the Superintendent's report, noting positive work in the district and new initiatives. Dr. Leggett expressed appreciation for the MTA students who opened the meeting and shared their work, noting how valuable it was to speak with students directly.

Dr. Leggett also addressed an opportunity for the district. A company from California has approached the district about hosting an AI Camp for students. The district would serve as the host site only; the company would rent the facility. Some district staff would be able to attend for free. The camp fee would be \$1,400 for two weeks (10 full days), which would be paid by participating families. The district and local charitable groups may explore grant funding to help students who cannot afford to attend. Discussions are ongoing and no decision has been made yet.

Dr. Leggett continued her presentation with the work on the Portrait of a Graduate. The district has begun its first meeting with the consultant to align the *Portrait of a Graduate* work with the Strategic Planning process. The goal is to streamline efforts and build upon previous work from earlier attempts. Work already consistent across prior drafts will carry forward; remaining pieces will be refined or added. The team discussed terminology, "portrait" vs. "vision" and "graduate" vs. "learner." A final recommendation will be presented to the board later.

Dr. Leggett discussed Strategic Planning, identifying that notices have gone out for focus groups. To simplify scheduling, the superintendent suggested dividing the board into two or three small groups for brief Zoom or in-person sessions. Board members may alternatively participate in community or parent sessions if they prefer.

Dr. Leggett reviewed the work that is being done on Restorative Practices. This month's focus is Responsibility. Students, teachers, and support staff are being recognized for demonstrating core ethical values, and celebratory photos are being shared from each school.

Dr. Leggett reviewed facilities and security protocol. The district is implementing tighter security protocols, particularly concerning public use of the track and field area during school hours. The track will be closed to the public while students are using it for classes.

A new walking path is being considered to provide public access outside of school operations. The district's goal is to enhance school safety, preventing unsupervised public access near student areas (e.g.,

by the library windows). The superintendent noted that most community members have been understanding of these changes given current safety priorities.

Mrs. Cowan questioned how the public would know if there was an activity taking place on the track. Dr. Leggett clarified the public can look online for the athletic schedule. If they went to the track in-person, they can use discretion to see if an activity is taking place or not.

Mrs. Cowan expressed if it was necessary for the public to be prohibited from using the track during practices, especially since it is used by many people. Mrs. Dahlheimer agreed that students, faculty, and community members use the track frequently, especially during the evenings, and would encourage the public to utilize the track as there aren't many safe, open spaces in the community to utilize. Mrs. Dahlheimer also recognized the expense of keeping the lights on when opening the track to the public at night.

Mrs. Cowan also identified if restricting the track access is a safety concern, would the adjacent basketball courts be closed as well. Dr. Leggett resolved she would take this back to the team to discuss restricting the public track use during school hours and games, but keeping it open during practices. Dr. Leggett also mentioned the expense of the use of lights, and that keeping the track open in the winter could be costly and present possible liabilities for the district.

Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested working with the park and rec on a walking event or choosing select days in the summer for the track to be open in the evening. In the fall and winter months, Mrs. Caramanello added that sunset should be the parameter for when the track would close.

Dr. Leggett is excited the district is moving forward with the Commissioning Agent and Owner's Project Manager (OPM) appointments, which will be a "game changer," particularly for Mrs. Neubig and Mr. Proia. Dr. Leggett announced that the district received the highest possible rating available for school districts for its Bond Anticipation Notes and loan.

Dr. Leggett praised Mrs. Neubig for her exceptional work on this achievement.

The superintendent and Mr. Moore participated in the call finalizing the district's first Bond Anticipation Notes, totaling \$20 million, to officially launch the project. The bidding process was competitive, with five banks submitting bids, which was considered an impressive turnout. The district ultimately selected the lowest bidder after a thorough and favorable process.

Prior to the budget process this year, Mrs. Neubig has scheduled a finance committee meeting on Wednesday, November 12 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. This will allow input from both towns before budgeting begins in order to ensure that the district takes this input into consideration from the onset.

Dr. Leggett announced that students at Coginchaug Regional High School will be organizing a candidates night for the school board candidates. This is a student-run event, with students developing the questions and interviewing the candidates. This will be Monday, October 27, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Dr. Leggett's last report item reviewed the livestream of the board meetings. Dr. Leggett revealed tonight will be the last night of using YouTube to livestream. The Owl camera "Hoot" is working well without delays, has better visibility, and better audio. Meetings will still be recorded and uploaded to YouTube the next day, but moving forward, those who will want to watch live will need to use the Zoom link to join the meeting. Dr. Leggett said there will be community announcements so people are aware of the change.

Chairman's Update

Mr. Moore reported on several updates and follow-ups from recent district activities. The district completed its Bond Anticipation Note sale earlier in the day for \$20 million at an interest rate of 2.58%. The bid from Truist Securities was selected as the lowest of five bidders, resulting in an estimated interest cost of approximately \$500,000. Truist Securities, based in North Carolina, has also recently handled local issuances for Middletown and the Middlefield Fire Departments. Mr. Moore noted that this was a successful and favorable issuance for the district.

A. Board Goals and Objectives Review

The board reviewed its four overarching goals—Student Achievement, Well-Being, Engagement, and Fiscal Oversight—which remain unchanged from the prior year. Mr. Moore distributed updated draft objectives derived from the board's recent retreat discussions and requested members review them and provide feedback before adoption at the November meeting. He emphasized that some of the items discussed at the retreat were removed from this draft.

Student Achievement Goal:

Primary objective is to advance the district's Strategic Plan, which focuses this year on academic growth at all grade levels. Dr. Leggett recommended modifying or removing Objective #3 (Pathways, Programs, and Applications) since the specific initiative it referenced is no longer active, though what was put into place is still happening. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested revising the language to reflect support for career pathways within the forthcoming Strategic Plan rather than deleting it entirely. Mr. Moore agreed to incorporate new wording.

Well-Being Goal:

The board will dissolve the Well-Being Committee, merging its work into the School Climate and Culture Committee for efficiency and alignment.

Engagement Goal:

The district will continue issuing a bi-annual community newsletter, which has been well-received by residents and community centers. Mr. Moore noted positive feedback from residents about reading the newsletter. Dr. Leggett agreed, stating that people at the Chamber of Commerce meeting she attended were also asking about the newsletter and postcard. Mr. Roraback was also pleased about the recent postcard mailing promoting the newsletter. Mr. Roraback said he would monitor the bin at the post office and keep the board updated.

Mr. Moore encouraged board members to participate in CABE conferences and professional development opportunities to strengthen governance skills. Mr. Moore also recommended purchasing additional CABE new member handbooks for distribution to board members, noting the minimal cost (approximately eight copies for \$75-as noted by Mrs. Dahlheimer). Mrs. Dahlheimer added that CABE is working on making webinars more available to board members. Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that there is a benefit of attending conferences in-person, but at least the webinars will make these opportunities more accessible.

Fiscal Oversight Goal:

Mr. Moore reviewed redeveloping the Five-Year capital plan that will align with the Strategic Plan. Mr. Moore discussed the importance of reviewing the long-term facilities schedule, particularly in light of the boiler replacement that recently exceeded its expected lifespan.

Additionally, Mr. Moore emphasized the need to revisit and update the capital plan to ensure that future building needs are coordinated with construction timelines and debt service obligations. Board members

were asked to review and provide comments on the draft goals and objectives. Mr. Moore intends to bring the finalized goals to the November meeting for adoption.

Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that through the board's consistent efforts and progress on communication, engagement, and training, the board is on track to receive a CABE Board Leadership Award this year.

Board Communications and Professional Development

A. Building Committee Membership

Mr. Moore announced that he received Nick Faiella's resignation from the Building Committee. The committee now has three citizen members from Middlefield and two from Durham. Mr. Moore suggested identifying a Durham resident to fill the vacancy to balance representation between the two towns. Members noted that the committee's work is highly technical, consisting of several engineers, and meetings may increase to twice per month due to construction activity.

Mrs. Cowan mentioned knowing a Middlefield engineer who might be interested if no Durham candidate is available. Dr. Leggett added that a Durham parent had expressed interest in becoming more involved, and she will include an open call for volunteers when community committee openings are announced.

B. Acceptance of Letter Regarding Potential Purchase of John Lyman School

Mr. Moore acknowledged receipt of a Letter of Interest from the Baptist Church expressing potential interest in the purchase of the John Lyman School property, a correspondence originally received last year. Mr. Moore stated that no immediate action is required other than to formally acknowledge receipt of the letter. Mr. Moore met with Bob Yamartino to discuss the process moving forward. Mr. Yamartino requested that the board send a formal letter to the Board of Selectmen, asking them to:

1. Determine whether the Town is interested in acquiring the property.
2. Review any planning and zoning restrictions, including wetlands or environmental considerations.
3. Assess consistency with the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development and any intended land-use restrictions.

This review will allow the Board of Selectmen to begin preliminary discussions.

Mr. Moore noted that similar property transfers, such as the Korn School, took several years, so initiating early dialogue would be beneficial. He plans to draft a letter to begin that process and Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested a possible joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen in the future.

Mr. Moore will send a similar letter to Brendan Rae in Durham regarding a separate property, which is expected to be more complex legally due to existing restrictions and past handling of the property. Mrs. Petrella discussed the need to obtain property valuations for district-owned buildings. Mr. Moore suggested reaching out to local realtors who previously worked with the Town on firehouse and municipal properties to obtain market value estimates.

Mrs. Petrella highlighted differences between land value and building value, noting that while the structure remains usable, it requires significant improvements. Early evaluation would help prevent buildings from sitting vacant for extended periods, which incurs substantial maintenance costs (estimated at \$65,000 per year) and may complicate future sale or demolition. Demolition costs for unused buildings were estimated at over \$1 million. Mrs. Dahlheimer reminded members they would have to go through the process with Middlefield first, as they are the first right of refusal.

Dr. Leggett iterated the only action for the board right now is to acknowledge receipt of the letter. Mr. Moore will reply that the board has acknowledged receipt of the letter.

New Business

A. Review 2026-2027 Budget Calendar

Mr. Moore stated the budget calendar was sent out for review. Mrs. Cowan suggested another budget session may need to be added; however, the November 12 meeting with the Finance Committees was not reflected on the calendar that was sent out. Mr. Roraback discussed involving both towns' Boards of Finance in upcoming budget-related meetings to maintain transparency and collaboration. While participation has varied in recent years, it was agreed that they should continue to be offered the opportunity to attend. Mr. Moore noted that they're always invited and Jim from Durham comes every time.

Mr. Moore discussed upcoming meetings, noting that November 12 is scheduled as the joint Finance Committee meeting where all boards will be invited. Mrs. Dahlheimer questioned possibly adding a December meeting to follow up while the November discussion is still fresh, though concerns were raised about scheduling and the limited availability of new data by then.

Mr. Moore shared that the November meeting typically focuses on town financial outlooks, including expected debt, grand list updates, and other fiscal pressures.

Durham and Middlefield's five-year rolling average minimizes year-to-year shifts in their cost shares. Mrs. Dahlheimer suggested sending talking points or data questions to towns in advance to prompt more productive discussions.

Board members briefly discussed the town bonding for the firehouse project, with some uncertainty about when debt service will begin (likely the following year).

Mrs. Petrella sought clarification on whether the bonding was already approved — consensus seemed to be yes; bonding was approved as part of the plan amendment approval.

B. Vote to approve High School Courses

1. Biomedical Exploration
2. Sociology
3. Unified Music in Our Lives

Mr. Moore presented the Biomedical Exploration, Sociology, and Unified Music in Our Lives High School courses for approval.

Mrs. Petrella identified all three course proposals included comprehensive curriculum maps, detailed scopes and sequences, evaluation criteria, and lesson outlines. Mrs. Petrella noted that the materials fully reflect what the committee had previously requested, providing clear guidance for any teacher who may need to implement the courses. Mrs. Dahlheimer and Mrs. Petrella commended the thorough, detailed curriculum that was presented. Mr. Moore expressed the sociology class was engaging and has future community education or program possibilities.

Mrs. Petrella reviewed Unified Music in Our Lives. This course is IEP-driven, designed to allow students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to participate in a modified music curriculum.

Mrs. Cowan questioned if the class would be led by a music therapist. Dr. Leggett explained instruction will be provided collaboratively by the music teacher, case managers, and related service providers as needed based on student IEPs.

Dr. Leggett remarked that a peer review component has been added, allowing teachers from different content areas to review each other's curricula. This collaboration was praised as a way to improve instruction across disciplines.

Mrs. Petrella made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Dahlheimer, to approve all three curricula—Biomedical Exploration, Sociology, and Unified Music in Our Lives—for implementation at the high school.

In favor of approving all three curricula—Biomedical Exploration, Sociology, and Unified Music in Our Lives—for implementation at the high school as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

C. Vote to award contract for RFQ/RFP 2025-005 Commissioning Agent to BVH Integrated Services

Mr. Moore presented the contract for RFQ/RFP 2025-005 Commissioning Agent to BVH Integrated Services for approval. The Building Committee presented recommendations for two key project contracts following completion of the RFP/RFQ review and selection process. The Building Committee reviewed five to six proposals and recommended BVH as the lowest qualified bidder. Mr. Moore explained that the commissioning agent ensures that all building systems and equipment (e.g., boilers, HVAC units, and other major components) perform according to specifications — verifying that the district receives exactly what was purchased and at the best available price.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to award the contract for RFQ/RFP 2025-005 Commissioning Agent to BVH Integrated Services.

In favor of awarding the contract for RFQ/RFP 2025-005 Commissioning Agent to BVH Integrated Services as presented: Mrs. Cowan; Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

D. Vote to award contract for RFQ/RFP 2025-006 OPM to STV Construction, Inc.

Mr. Moore presented the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) Contract (RFP 2025-006) for approval. Mr. Moore explained the OPM oversees day-to-day management of the project, ensuring contracts, documentation, and construction activities proceed accurately and efficiently. The position supports the administration and will work closely with Mrs. Neubig on all aspects of project coordination. Mrs. Dahlheimer remarked this role will also be the forward-facing contact for the community, providing monthly updates at board meetings.

Mr. Moore identified that the Building Committee narrowed the field to two finalists and conducted interviews with both, leading to STV Construction, Inc.'s selection.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, to award the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) Contract (RFP 2025-006) to STV Construction, Inc. as presented.

In favor of awarding the Owner's Project Manager (OPM) Contract (RFP 2025-006) to STV Construction, Inc. as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed.

E. Policy Review

1. Second read and possible vote on below policies
 - a. Repeal - Bullying and Safe School Climate Plan 5131.8
 - b. School Climate Policy 5131.911 - CAFE
 - c. Sex Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel) - Shipman
 - d. Live Animals in Schools 6163.33

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roraback, to adopt the School Climate Policy 5131.911 - CAFE, the Sex Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel) Shipman policy, and Live Animals in Schools 6163.33 policy, and repeal the Bullying and Safe School Climate Plan 5131.8 as presented.

In favor of adopting the School Climate Policy 5131.911 - CAFE, the Sex Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace (Personnel) Shipman policy, and Live Animals in Schools 6163.33 policy, and repealing the Bullying and Safe School Climate Plan 5131.8 as presented: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Motion passed

Mrs. Dahlheimer reiterated that it is mandated to repeal the bullying and safe school climate plan and the board must replace it with the state's version of the school climate plan.

Dr. Leggett informed the board that the leadership team is working on a safe school climate guideline and procedure document. Once completed, this policy will go to the school climate committee and eventually the board for review.

2. First read on below policies
 - a. Board of Education Code of Ethics 9271

Mr. Moore identified that the policy committee is recommending that one sentence on page two should be revised to read: "Defer complaints through the proper chain of command as outlined in the district resolution procedures, which are attached." The major update lies in the *Guiding Principles on Communication* and the accompanying regulation, which the board reviews but does not vote on. Policy and regulation were reviewed by Shipman and received extensive input from staff and the Policy Committee.

Mrs. Cowan suggested adding language that clarifies the superintendent and board chair as the primary spokespeople for the board and district and any email correspondence should be forwarded. Mrs. Cowan believed these updates would clearly identify protocol for board members, especially newly elected board members. Mr. Roraback noted that any communications that board members might have with constituents is not representative of the board. Members can certainly express their opinion to a constituent, but their opinion is not a board policy.

Dr. Leggett identified there was a problem where the full board was not receiving communications. So, a statement reminding board members that individual communications do not represent the full board and that emails concerning board business must be forwarded to all members is necessary.

Mrs. Cowan recommended the following amendments regarding email usage:

- Add a bullet noting that any electronic communication is subject to FOIA.
- Add prohibitive language: "Do not use email polling to craft public statements," referencing recent FOIA cases.

Mrs. Cowan recommended the following amendments regarding social media:

Under *Official District Social Media*, Mrs. Cowan suggested adding that social media accounts are subject to record retention and archive content as required.

Under *Board Members' Personal Social Media*, Dr Leggett and Mrs. Cowan revised a statement to include: "Board members shall not engage in online debates with other board members regarding district business."

Mrs. Cowan suggested revising the bullet on post-vote communication to: "*Once the board has voted, the adopted decision becomes the action of the board. Individual members may express their personal views and how they voted but should clearly distinguish those views from the official board decision.*" There was discussion about adding language about the need to respect board decisions, regardless of one's individual vote.

There was consensus to move forward to a second read incorporating these edits, rather than returning the regulation to committee, due to the importance of finalizing the document soon.

b. Committees 9130

- Committee Guidelines
- 2025-2026 Committee Assignments

Mr. Moore listed the active committees: Policy, Student Achievement, Climate, Finance, Safety, Building, and Human Resources.

Dr. Leggett said there was concern about renaming the Building Committee to Buildings and Grounds while construction is taking place. It was recommended that this should be deferred until after the construction project.

Mrs. Dahlheimer clarified that that Human Resources is technically a full board function, though subcommittees may be formed as needed.

Mrs. Cowan asked if there should be a reference to the ACES liaison. Dr. Leggett discussed it would be deferred until reorganization.

Dr. Leggett discussed the plan to recruit community members and students for committees via a Google form. Board members discussed an emphasis on a balance between Durham and Middlefield and clear explanation of committee expectations and confidentiality.

c. Community Member Committee Participation 9110

Mrs. Petrella asked about the clause "unless otherwise approved by the board" under *Roles and Responsibilities*. Mrs. Petrella stated that when members were first allowed to be part of committees, the board felt that members would not be allowed to vote. Some members suggested removing or clarifying the phrase. Dr. Leggett recommended keeping the clause for flexibility (e.g., future large projects that require more committee action regularly) but to clarify that currently, only the Building Committee has been authorized to vote due to the need to keep the construction project moving forward efficiently. Dr. Leggett also suggested that existing language should reference that committees are advisory and make recommendations to the board.

d. Restorative Practices - Shipman

The Shipman Restorative Practices policy is required by law.

e. Time Place and Notice of Meetings 9321

The policy committee recommends removing the specified meeting time (“7:00 p.m.”) to allow flexibility for meetings at different times.

Mr. Roraback discussed the possibility of rotating meeting locations among schools. Dr. Leggett agreed that meetings held in the different schools would help community engagement.

f. Use of Private Technology Devices by Students 5130

The policy committee removed outdated language (e.g., references to *CD players*). The policy has been updated to prohibit use of personal devices during instructional time.

An exception previously allowing limited instructional use has been deleted. And a new warning statement was added:

“Students are advised that the Board’s network administrators have the capability to identify users and monitor all privately owned technology devices while they are logged into the district network.”

Dr. Leggett said there will likely be continued questions about the policy, but overall, it has been going well in the high school.

Mrs. Cowan acknowledged the importance of balancing instructional integrity with accessibility needs for students with IEPs or executive functioning challenges, who may use phones to capture class information or reference materials. Dr. Leggett provided suggestions, which included ensuring alternative assistive tools, such as classroom iPads or other designated devices, are available for such students. Board members emphasized maintaining a consistent district-wide expectation on device use while still supporting equitable access.

Mr. Moore stated all amended policies—including Code of Ethics, Board Committees, Community Participation, Meeting Schedule, and Technology Devices—will advance to second reading at the November meeting.

Committee Reports

A. Building Committee Meeting – September 17, 2025

Mr. Moore presented the update from the Building Committee. They include the following:

- Swing Space Project: Final payment of \$340,409 made to Diversity (contractor).
- Payment to O&G: \$45,000 approved for work on swing space.
- Punch list: All items complete except the gym curtain, which remains pending.
- Permitting: Ongoing discussion with the Town of Middlefield regarding building permit fees estimated around \$300,000. Some portion may be reimbursable, though not all.
- Design Update: Drainage and sewage system concerns were reviewed at a separate meeting on October 1, and final plans were approved for state submission.
- Commissioning Agent: DVH recommended and approved as low bidder following RFP review.

- Track Project: Final payment of \$293,000 approved.
- The committee received an updated presentation from O&G; overall schedule remains on track.

B. Student Achievement Committee Meeting - September 24, 2025

1. SBAC Data Report

Mrs. Petrella presented the Student Achievement report, which included the following:

- Extended School Year: 70 special education students participated.
- Summer Academy (Grades K–3): 39 students attended for additional academic support.
- Kindergarten Academy: 64 of 87 registered students participated in the transition program.
- Graduation Requirements and curriculum policies reviewed; suggested edits forwarded to the Policy Committee.
- New course curricula were reviewed and approved; all backlog is now resolved.
- SBAC scores: Available to board members and the public.
- District saw slight improvements overall, consistent with other state districts.
- Mrs. Petrella noted that the math playlist implementation may temporarily affect scores.
- DERG comparison included and aligned with peer districts.
- Future meetings: Scheduled for November, February, and May, unless special meetings are required.
- Focus areas will include testing data, summer programming, and curriculum review.

C. ACES Liaison Report

Mrs. Dahlheimer presented the ACES report, identifying the following updates:

- Ongoing collaboration with ACES Executive Director Tom Dennehy and staff.
- Observations shared from 88 Bassett Road construction project—a \$65 million renovation uniting Village School and SAILS School.
- Mrs. Dahlheimer praised O&G’s work as well-organized and transparent.
- Head Start / Birth-to-Three program facing federal funding shortfalls; the state has provided some relief.
- District intends to increase outreach to families who may benefit from these services.
- Upcoming walkthrough of 88 Bassett Road is scheduled.
- Dr. Leggett discussed improving district communication and engagement, using the website for updates and exploring more interactive community dialogue.

Public Comment

Mr. Moore introduced public comments.

Amanda Betty (Durham) shared three points (attending virtually):

Ms. Betty requested the district review other towns’ practices before deciding to restrict public access to the track during events—citing that other districts (e.g., North Branford) successfully allow community walking during practices. Ms. Betty shared that she was recently in North Branford when a soccer team and football practice were happening concurrently as the public was allowed to utilize the track and there

were no issues. She requested the board look into a more flexible approach for the community to use the space.

Ms. Betty asked what accountability measures are in place if board members violate email communication policies, stressing that enforcement mechanisms should be clear. Ms. Betty shared from her experiences on the board that board members did share confidential emails with members of the public. Ms. Betty identified that accountability is necessary to make this policy protective rather than performative of public interest.

Ms. Betty questioned whether the Durham Ethics Committee investigation into a board member would prompt reconsideration of the board's prior indemnification decision, urging transparency and accountability.

Mrs. Dahlheimer made a clarification that the referenced district was not North Branford, but another nearby district with a new complex.

Adjournment

Mr. Moore called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mrs. Dahlheimer, seconded by Mrs. Petrella, seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

In favor of adjourning the meeting: Mrs. Cowan, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Mr. Moore, Mrs. Petrella, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Caramanello and Dr. Darcy. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Meghan Shortell-Fratantonio