

CITY OF HOLYOKE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 12, 2025
TIME: 6:00PM

PRESENT: Mayor Joshua Garcia (ZOOM), Receiver Anthony Soto, Dr. Yadilette Rivera-Colón (ZOOM), Devin Sheehan, Rosalee Tensley- Williams, Orlando Isaza, William Collamore, Ellie Wilson, Sean Magano (Financial Director), Jackie Glasheen (Assistant Superintendent/ Current EdSEL), Jenny Malave (Executive Director of Technology), Rebecca Thompson (Executive Director of Academics), Marianne Currier (Chief of People Services), Beth Gage (Chief of Human Resources), and Stephen Mogul (Executive Director of DEI), Student Representative: Nicholas Rodriguez

CALL TO ORDER – ROLL CALL – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

School Committee At-Large Mr. Sheehan called the meeting to order at **6:00 p.m.** and announced that pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, s. 20, attendees are hereby informed that a video and audio recording is being made of the meeting and the meeting is being live-streamed on Zoom.

Roll call: Mayor Garcia-present (zoom), Dr. Rivera-Colón-present (zoom), Mr. Sheehan-present, Ms. Lefebvre-**absent**, Ms. Lebron-Martinez-**absent**, Ms. Tensley-Williams-present, Mr. Isaza-present, Mr. Whelihan – **absent**, Mr. Collamore – present, Mrs. Wilson – present

- Mr. Sheehan explained in the absence of a Vice-Chair this evening, a Vice-Chair Pro Tem needs to be elected. Each member present will state their choice.

Roll Call: Mr. Isaza-Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Collamore – Mr. Sheehan, Mrs. Wilson – Mr. Sheehan, Mayor Garcia-Mr. Sheehan, Dr. Rivera-Colón-Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Sheehan-Mr. Sheehan, Ms. Tensley-Williams-Mr. Sheehan

Mayor Garcia left meeting at 6:20pm and returned at 7:30pm

Mr. Whelihan and Ms. Lefebvre arrived at 6:35pm

1. STUDENT SHOWCASE - Kelly School

- Mr. Moore shared his 5th graders from Kelly School musical talent. They are rehearsing for their Step Up day. The choir started last year and have been rehearsing since February.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT- None

4. COMMUNICATION AND REPORTS

A. Student Reports

- HHS North
 - Mr. Rodriguez stated that 150 students in the AP classes had their exams this week. Students in the Holyoke High and Dean who have earned a seal of biliteracy, will be honored at a ceremony at UMASS. A team of 7 staff and 2 students went to Tuscan, Arizona to observe the innovative educational practices of Sunnyside School district learning focused on student agency, and the team is excited to bring back their findings to the North campus. Steven Santiago, a member of our wrestling team, was honored by the surprise squad and Western mass news. He earned 100 match wins this season, and he was honored by the whole school at our student versus staff volleyball game. Sophomores in the Engineering and Life Sciences Academy took part in Holyoke Medical Center's interactive stroke awareness and education event. Students learned how to identify and respond to signs of a stroke and learned about medical careers from a group of 1st responders and medical professionals. Global studies students toward Holyoke's green infrastructure as part of an urban ecology field trip in partnership with the Holyoke Department of Conservation and sustainability. Seniors will be presenting their capstone presentations as part of our annual capstone competition. This will be the 1st year. Students from all 3 high school academies participate.
- HHS Dean Campus-None

B. Superintendent's Report

- [FY26 Balanced Budget Presentation](#)
 - Receiver/ Superintendent Soto reviewed the presentation on slide 8, strategic investments. There are no layoffs that we're looking at, or severe cuts to programming. We were really intentional on how ESSER funds were used. Intentional about how to accelerate the priorities that are identified in our Student Opportunity Act, and the district has one more year of Student Opportunity Act increases before it starts seeing more relatively flat revenues. Earmarked some funds for the new collective bargaining agreement that is currently engaged with teachers and we've funded the increase to therapists based on the collective bargaining agreement. Principals are able to predict what their teaching allocations are going to be based on their enrollment, and staying within classroom sizes. Able to fund art, music, PE across the district. Principal discretionary funds increased it by 5.5%, so that principals are able to think about how they're going to use that relative to their own school. Continue to fund high quality tier 1, 2, and 3

programming. To make sure we're meeting student needs, both academically, behaviorally, and socially, emotionally. Continue to invest in making sure there is a strong math and english coaching at every school. A new program that would be under the Opportunity Academy umbrella to support some 9th and 10th graders in the upcoming school year, and that program is intended for it being located at Metcalf. Have restorative justice practices and conflict resolution that Peer led by students, want this to extend that to the middle schools. Added a 3rd Resource Officer who is on site and available to the schools. 100% of our new teachers have an assigned mentor, and they meet with that mentor, or have met with that mentor throughout the year once a week. Didn't touch the Special Education inclusion teacher as well as English Language Development Teacher. Each school has a Family Engagement Coordinator.

- Mr. Mangano touched on the highlights of the presentation. Transportation costs increased with the routes and this we knew but have been making projections to reduce. Proposing for Fy 26, using \$2 million. And this is based on our most current projections of where we're going to end this current fiscal year, and what we would have to roll over of the \$3 million. Most of the new money in this budget is going into salaries to maintain collective bargaining agreements, or for anticipated collective bargaining agreements. Out of district tuition is going up about \$687,000. This is lower than when we last presented. Transportation costs continue to go up, projected about 10.3%. This is funded by the city. 8 vans going to a couple different out of district schools that were located very close together and converted those to a few mini buses, and that saved somewhere between 150,000-200,000. Hired a consultant to look at the transportation system and recommend best practices, and look and see if there's any efficiencies that we are not seeing every month. Creating a Transportation Task force to help with conversations about transportation. This will consist of school committees, teachers, principals, city councilors, and others to make informed decisions. The district wide behavior supports positions that sort of float between schools and throughout the district. These were funded on a grant. So we're proposing to eliminate those positions. Those folks would go into the schools, into their teaching positions or other professional staff positions in the schools. No longer have to fund a receivership contract and can fund a salaried superintendent position which is less expensive. In pupil services, proposing the elimination of an occupational therapy assistant which is currently vacant and the demand for the position is not there. Smaller scale of technology as a lot of the computers have been replaced. The baseline increase that was being proposed was a 3% increase to non bargaining staff. The superintendent capped that at 1.5% for cabinet leaders and directors,

which total \$339,000. The district is still reviewing moving to electric school bus via a grant. Could potentially see those electric buses in January of 2026 and that would be 19 electric school buses that would come in to support our fleet and replace Diesel buses.

- Funded Out-Net School Spending and that the majority of the budget is funded by the State, 88% and then 11.5% is funded locally by local taxes. In academics the \$311,000 increase from fy25 to fy26, that is related to the turnaround funding, going away and bringing over curriculum materials and some softwares and subscriptions into the general fund, because they're needed expenditures. Pupil services going up \$976,000. The biggest piece here, about \$700,000 is the increase is out of district tuition. Going up the 5% roughly rate increases for out of district schools and having less carryover funding for next year, increase the general fund share.
- Mr. Sheehan asked about the Athletic Trainer and if the position has been filled. No trainer has been hired since Aug 2024. Mr. Sheehan asked for a follow up of how much outside vendors are getting paid and how many hours they are being utilized.
- Mr. Sheehan spoke with Dr. Rivera Colón, and she will have a letter from the Commissioner indicating that the school committee can vote on the budget and approve the budget prior to July 1st. This will be referred to the Finance Subcommittee, where they make recommendations to the full school committee.

Motion: Mr. Isaza made the motion to refer the FY26 Budget to the Finance and Operations Subcommittee to review and bring back to the full School Committee. 2nd by Mr. Collamore

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

- [Q3 Update on Progress towards Benchmarks/ Goals](#)
 - Receiver/ Superintendent Soto included a lot of information. He understands that the School Committee will be providing input on the superintendent's evaluation process, which is due to the Commissioner by July 1st.
 - Mr. Sheehan passed out the [Modified Superintendent Evaluation](#) form, which was approved by DESE. Evaluation has 4 standards that the superintendent would be evaluated on with goals and meeting goals. Commissioner is in charge of evaluating the Receiver on the district improvement goals and the benchmarks that the Receiver set forward. The school committee will be focused on the goals which have been established. There were 6 goals, a professional practice goal, a student learning goal and

4 district improvement goals, which had been approved. On page 2 of the document received are listed out all of the Receivers goals. So from all of the information that the Receiver provided to the School Committee. It's our job to go through and rate him on the goals. The preference is to get this done electronically because the Leadership, Accountability Subcommittee has a very quick turnaround to get this turned around back to the full school committee for our June 9th meeting. All evaluations will need to be completed by May 20th. All evaluations are public records and will be presented to the full School Committee.

C. Vice Chair Report

- Ratification of the interim superintendent contract
 - [A. Soto Contract 5.6.2025](#)

Motion: Ms. Wilson made the motion to ratify the Interim Superintendent contract. 2nd by Ms. Tensley-Williams

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. Out of State Field Trips package

Motion: Ms. Wilson made a motion to take the out-of-state field trips as a package and approve the field trips for **High Meadows, Granby, Connecticut on June 6, 2025, Quassy Amusement and Water Park, Middlebury, Connecticut on June 10, 2025, High Meadows, Grandy, Connecticut on June 2, 2025, Liberty Bank Pavilion, Hartford, Connecticut on May 29, 2025, and Connecticut Science Museum, Hartford, Connecticut on May 23, 2025.** 2nd by Mr. Collamore

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes,

Vote passed unanimously

Motion: Ms. Wilson made the motion to refer the [Budget Transfer Approval 5.6.25](#) to the Finance and Operations Subcommittee. 2nd by Mr. Collamore

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

B. Orders

Motion: Mr. Collamore made the motion to refer the order to the Joint City Council/ School Committee meeting, introduced by Mr. Whelihan to have the Superintendent and Police Department discuss School Resource Officers for the new Peck Middle School. 2nd by Mr. Isaza

- Mr. Whelihan explained that his order came about as the new Police Chief discussed the lack of officers recently in the Finance Committee and not having enough to support the schools. Mr. Whelihan would like to have this discussion before Peck comes on line.

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

Motion: Mr. Collamore made the motion to refer the order filed by Mr. Whelihan, that the School Committee send a letter of recognition to the Athletic Director Melanie Martin and a letter of recognition to the Pioneer Valley of Excellence Teacher Awardees. 2nd by Mr. Isaza

- Mr. Whelihan thanked Ms. Martin for her efforts and knowledge.

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

C. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion: Ms. Wilson made the motion to approve the meeting minutes of [2.27.25 Finance and Operations Meeting Minutes](#). 2nd by Ms. Tensley-Williams

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

D. Updates of Committees

- Policy and Governance Subcommittee
 - No report
- Finance and Operations Subcommittee
 - Committee meeting on May 22nd at 5:30pm
- Joint City Council/School Committee
 - Met with City Council Jourdain and will be setting a meeting in June.
- Local Control Subcommittee

- o No report
- Leadership, Accountability and Measurement Subcommittee
 - o Meeting will be May 28th at 4pm

6. ONGOING BUSINESS

- Legal Counsel RFP update Appointment
 - o Receiver/ Superintendent Soto The legal services request for proposals was emailed to all attorneys that are members of the Massachusetts Council of School Attorneys except for ones that were departments of municipalities. Proposals are due by May 22, 2025 and will be reviewed by the School Committee or an appointed review committee. The reviewers will select which attorneys they recommend for interviews which are tentatively scheduled for June 9, 2025. The School Committee will then make a final selection. Dr. Rivera-Colón has appointed Mr. Sheehan and Mr. Isaza, Mr. Mangano, and Ms. Gage.

Motion: Dr. Rivera-Colón made the motion to appoint to the AdHoc Committee Devin Sheehan, Orlando Isaza, Beth Gage, and Sean Mangano. 2nd by Ms. Wilson

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

- o The plan is to have the interviews on June 9th at 5pm. This will start the process.
- Receiver Evaluation feedback tool
 - o <https://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/resources/evaluation/>

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Here are the Spring Sports Senior Nights:
 - o Volleyball - 5/7 at 5:00 PM
 - o Tennis - 5/12 at 4:00 PM
 - o Track - 5/13 at 4:00 PM
 - o Baseball - 5/14 at 6:00 PM
 - o Softball - 5/15 at 6:00 PM
- May 15th, “ROCKET INTO READING” from 5pm-7pm at Holyoke Library
- May 29th, Dean Graduation at 5:30pm, Dean Gym, [2025 Dean Senior Activities](#)
- May 30th, Holyoke High Graduation at 6pm, Robert’s Field, [2025 HHS Senior Activities](#)

- Reminder is the City address/ budget hearing.
- Memorial Day ceremony at Holyoke War Memorial May 26th at 10 am.

Motion: Mr. Isaza made a motion to enter executive session for the purposes of collective bargaining with the Teachers Association, because an open meeting will cause a detrimental effect to our bargaining position, and not to return to open session. 2nd by Ms. Wilson

Mr. Isaza-yes, Mr. Whelihan – yes, Mr. Collamore – yes, Mrs. Wilson –yes, Mayor Garcia-yes, Dr. Rivera-Colón-yes, Mr. Sheehan-yes, Ms. Lefebvre-yes, Ms. Tensley-Williams - yes

Vote passed unanimously

Meeting adjourned 8:19pm