



# MEETING OF THE NORTHAMPTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

January 8, 2026 ~ 6:30 pm - 9:42 pm

Hybrid Meeting

JFK Middle School Community Room and by Videoconference



## MINUTES

Approved: March 12, 2026

Attending: Mayor Sciarra, Member Bartoli, Member Weisenfreund, Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, Member Stein, Member Martyn, Member Mahoney, Member Reiss, Member Jewell, Member Saner Sullivan

Also Attending: Superintendent Bonner, Business Administrator Jones, Principal Taglieri, Student Representative Ohm

### Documents Reviewed

School Committee Calendar

Rules of Procedure

School Committee Norms

Alternating Day Courses - One-Page Overview

School Committee Calendar of Annual Events and Agenda Topics

Donation - \$1100 - Edwards Church to NPS

- I. **Announcement** that Meeting is Being Videorecorded - [Recording](#)
- II. **Roll Call** - The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm and the roll was called.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Present
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Present
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Present
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Present
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Present
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Present
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Present
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Present
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Present
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Present
<b>QUORUM</b>	Present

Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra	Member Tiffany Jewell	Member Robbie Saner Sullivan	Member Alenda Bartoli
Member Anat Weisenfreund	Member Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Member Michael Stein	Member Amy Martyn
	Member Cindy Mahoney	Member Valerie Reiss	

**III. Student Representative Report** - Ana-Lucia Ohm provided the Committee with a description of the Student Union's structure and described it as a bridge between administration and students. She reviewed past Union activities. She provided an update on the bathroom situation at NHS. Since returning from the holiday break, there have been closings every day. Member Stein expressed concern that bathrooms were not on tonight's agenda. Superintendent Bonner said that the administration plans to pilot a new pass system in which students must sign out and there is a limit on the number of students that can sign out at one time. She said that the school is obtaining additional monitors and is reminding staff to be mindful of student bathroom use and the length of their visits.

**IV. Public Comment Period**

Bill Scher, Northampton - Apologized for his part in a confrontation between Member Stein and him at a grocery store which he described. He said that he has posted apologies on social media. He apologized to the School Committee. He said his shame and regret should be a cautionary tale to others and he promised not to repeat the mistake.

Lisa Modenos, Northampton - Described the grocery store incident referenced above. She asked how Mr. Scher would have responded to school-related violations against his loved ones. She said that hate continues. She said that when families expressed their concerns in articles, letters, and DESE complaints, they were gaslit by the Mayor. She said that they were deemed uncivil because they advocated for children. She asked the Committee to not buy the collaborative or civility decorum argument put forward by the Mayor and to fully fund the schools.

Margaret Riddle, Leeds - Welcomed new School Committee members and expressed her appreciation for their willingness to serve. She encouraged the Committee to remember that only 42% of registered voters did vote and many of those did not place a vote for School Committee members. She asked members to study each issue with curiosity using correct facts.

Melissa Maciborski, Northampton - Welcomed new School Committee members. She said that real apologies come from actions, not words.

Angela Wack, Northampton - Offered congratulations to School Committee members and encouraged them to learn more about structural literacy, which is an approach to teaching reading based in cognitive science. She said that 95 percent of students taught using this approach successfully learn to read. She said that there is a literacy crisis in our schools and that the Committee has the power to change this.

Jo Ella Tarbutton-Springfield, Northampton - Asked the School Committee to focus on shared goals and common ground while respecting our differences. She said that people who live in public housing have children in the schools. She said that the Committee's goal should be unity.

Guarav Jashnani, Northampton - Welcomed new members and asked them to consider a mid-year appropriation. He said that, last year, the School Committee concurred that a

level service budget would prolong the crisis in the schools. He said that black, brown, disabled, and immigrant students would continue to be adversely affected. The School Committee voted for the strong budget which the Mayor rejected. He said that, ultimately, there was a huge surplus and \$13M was allocated to green energy initiatives. He said that the current budget represents violence against our children, especially at Bridge Street School whose demographics he described. He asked that the Committee make an immediate appropriation to provide interventionists, staff monitors, multi-lingual teachers, full-time clerical staff, and other basic needs to support all children. He asked the Mayor to apologize to Member Stein.

Quaverly Rothenberg, Northampton - Said that she has never seen a functioning vice-chair and that, tonight, the Committee has an opportunity to have an institution that can speak out. She said that it is ignorant to think that you can rely on the Mayor, who is the third mayor in a dynasty that has intentionally removed people from participation in democracy, to push the right button. She encouraged members to vote for Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, Member Stein, or Member Weisenfreund for Committee co-chair as they have experience working with the Mayor. Drawing parallels with Minneapolis, she described incidents of police aggression in Northampton.

Debra Thompson, Florence - Thanked Principal Taglieri for making a proposal for a revised high school schedule. She encouraged Committee members to listen carefully to him and to talk to students that might be affected by this change.

**V. Organizational Votes**

- A. Adoption of Rules of Procedure - Member Stein made a motion to accept the Rules of Procedure as written and to dedicate a retreat which should happen shortly to revising both them and the norms. Member Weisenfreund seconded the motion. Mayor Sciarra offered the following amendments to the Rules:

Page	Section	Change
1	1.3	Add ELPAC liaison
3	6.1	Align language with the Charter 4-6
3	6.2.2	Change “citizens” to “residents”
6	14.2	Change “citizens” to “members of the public”
6	14.2	Change to “90 minutes will be allowed for the public to address the Committee”
6	14.5	Change “recess” to “adjournment”
7	15.4	Change to, “The order of business shall be according to the agenda unless reordered by the Chair with no objection from any Committee member”

- 8            15.9      The word “interrupted” is missing
- 8            15.9      Remove “Or to call the previous question”

Mayor Sciarra said she wants to reinstate time allotments for agenda items and the practice of setting a timer. She said she plans to adhere to Roberts’ Rules of Order more strictly and will limit discussion to people speaking twice to keep the agenda moving. Member Stein made a recommendation that the change to Section 14.5 be addressed at the retreat. Member Stein made a motion, seconded by Member Weisenfreund, to amend the motion on the floor to include the suggestions made by the Mayor for Sections 1.3, 6.1, 6.2.2, 14.2, 15.4, and 15.9. In response to a question from Member Martyn, the Mayor clarified that members can be interrupted if a point of order or information is made. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Aye
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Aye
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Aye
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Aye
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Aye
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Aye
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Aye
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 10

Member Bartoli made a motion to put the Rules of Procedure on the floor for discussion to include amendments from other members and to amend the motion by removing the reference to the retreat and address that in another motion. Member Martyn said she was uncomfortable making a vote without knowing then the retreat will be held. Member Stein said he doesn’t want to defer this discussion to a quarter of the way through the term. The Mayor spoke in favor of addressing Committee goals with the new superintendent in the summer. A suggestion was made to have the timekeeper role rotate. Member Reiss asked whether agenda items could be shortened to five minutes. The Mayor said that would need to be written into the rules. Member Montgomery-Tamakloe and Stein spoke against the proposed five-minute rule. Member Mahoney made a motion, seconded by Member Bartoli, to change meeting end times until 9:30 pm. Mayor Sciarra explained the implications of an earlier ending time, e.g., votes to suspend the rules and a second meeting within one week should a meeting extension not be approved. There was consensus that a rules-related retreat be held soon and a goal-setting retreat be held over the summer. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Nay
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Nay
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Nay
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Aye
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Aye
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Aye
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Abstain 1
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 6 Nay 3 Abstain 1

Member Saner Sullivan inquired about ad hoc committees. Superintendent Bonner responded that there is one existing ad hoc committee, i.e., the cell phone policy committee, and it is expected to finish its work at its next meeting. Member Stein said the Committee should be more clear about timelines when ad hoc committees are chartered. The motion was restated: To put the Rules of Procedure on the floor for discussion; to hold a retreat to discuss changes to the Rules and Norms; to incorporate changes requested by the Chair, and to change the meeting end time from 11:00 pm to 9:30 pm. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Aye
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Aye
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Aye
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Aye
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Aye
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Aye
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Aye
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 10

B. Election of Vice-Chair - Mayor Sciarra described the duties of the Vice-Chair and the nomination process. Member Weisenfreund nominated Member Montgomery-Tamakloe. Member Mahoney nominated Member Bartoli. Both Members Montgomery-Tamakloe and Bartoli made statements. Member Stein made a motion, seconded by Member Mahoney, that the vote for vice-chair be taken by roll call and that members will state the name of their choice. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Member Bartoli
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Member Bartoli
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Member Montgomery-Tamakloe

<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Member Montgomery-Tamakloe
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Member Montgomery-Tamakloe
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Member Bartoli
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Member Bartoli
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Member Bartoli
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Abstain
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Member Bartoli
<b>VOTE</b>	Member Bartoli 6 Member Montgomery-Tamakloe 3 Abstain 1

- B. Adoption of Committee Norms - Mayor Sciarra provided background on the norms and the practice of speaking to them at School Committee meetings. Member Saner Sullivan made a motion to approve the norms. The motion was not seconded. There will be no norms unless they are taken up in the future.
- D. Election by Roll Call of Warrant Officer - The Mayor reviewed the role and responsibilities of the Warrant Officer. Business Administrator Jones described the process. Member Mahoney nominated Member Stein who did not accept the nomination. Member Saner Sullivan nominated herself to be Warrant Officer. The vote by acclamation was nine ayes and one nay.
- E. Set Annual Meeting Schedule - Mayor Sciarra presented a draft calendar of 2026 School Committee meetings. Member Martyn made a motion, seconded by Member Mahoney, to approve the 2026 calendar. Member Jewell said it was not possible to vote because subcommittee assignments are not yet known. Member Jewell made a motion, seconded by Member Bartoli, to amend the motion to remove subcommittee meetings from and add a retreat to the calendar. It was agreed that the retreat will be held on March 2, 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Nay
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Abstain
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Nay
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Nay
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Abstain
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Abstain
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Aye
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 4 Nay 3 Abstain 3

- F. School Committee Calendar of Annual Events and Agenda Topics - Mayor Sciarra said that she attended a workshop at the recent MASC/MASS Conference

about how to make school committee meetings shorter. A strategy used by Pioneer Valley Regional was to create an annual calendar that serves as a roadmap for agendas. Member Saner Sullivan suggested adding Day on the Hill. Member Stein suggested capital improvement projects saying that the Committee has been cut out of that process. He said that child care, mid-year appropriations, and bathrooms were not on the list and the more the Committee’s ability to discuss items is constrained, the less responsive it will be to District needs.

**VI. New Business**

- A. Open Meeting Law & Conflict of Interest - Deferred in light of Attorney Taylor’s absence.
  
- B. 2026-2027 Program of Study - Principal Ben Taglieri said that next year’s Program of Study, which must be approved at the February meeting, will include language related to introducing every other day or alternating day courses. The current schedule is a 4x4 block schedule with four daily 76-minute semester-long courses allowing students to take a total of eight courses per year. The proposed schedule enables students to take additional courses by having one period in which not all of the classes that period would run on alternating days, but some of them would. It is called an A-B day schedule. He provided an example. He said the driving force behind this change is the ability to offer an every-other-day learning strategies class as opposed to a daily class which may not be needed by every student. Another option is the Learning Lab which meets for 30 minutes once or twice a week. Member Stein expressed frustration that this change had not been discussed by the Curriculum Subcommittee and that the CASE report on secondary education is not being factored into it. He asked how these changes relate to minimum instructional hours, to students who do not have an opportunity to take electives, and class size. Principal Taglieri confirmed class size is an issue and said that the new model would offer all students more choices. He described some of the challenges in scheduling. In response to a question from Member Saner Sullivan, Principal Taglieri said that the courses, which are not grade-level dependent, were decided by each department. Member Mahoney said that the secondary level CASE report will be presented at the February 9 SEPAC report. In response to a question from Member Weisenfreund, Principal Taglieri said that, while he has discussed this change with Student Union representatives, student education on the change is necessary. Principal Taglieri was asked to share student feedback at a future meeting.

Member Bartoli made a motion, seconded by Member Mahoney, to suspend the rules and extend the meeting until 9:45 pm. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Aye
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery-Tamakloe	Nay

<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Nay
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Aye
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Aye
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Aye
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Nay
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 7 Nay 3

C. Donation - \$1100 - Edwards Church to NPS - Member Martyn made a motion, seconded by Member Saner Sullivan, to accept the donation. The motion passed unanimously by acclamation.

D. Superintendent Search Update - Mayor Sciarra reported that many letters of interest in serving on the Search Committee have been received. Member Martyn said that student applications are needed.

**VII. Adjourn** - Member Saner Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Member Montgomery-Tamakloe, to adjourn. The roll call vote follows.

<b>Mayor</b> Gina-Louise Sciarra	Aye
<b>W1</b> Alena Bartoli	Aye
<b>W2</b> Anat Weisenfreund	Aye
<b>W3</b> Renika Montgomery Tamakloe	Aye
<b>W4</b> Michael Stein	Aye
<b>W5</b> Amy Martyn	Aye
<b>W6</b> Cindy Mahoney	Aye
<b>W7</b> Valerie Reiss	Aye
<b>AL</b> Tiffany Jewell	Aye
<b>AL</b> Robbie Saner Sullivan	Aye
<b>VOTE</b>	Aye 10

The meeting was adjourned at 9:42 pm.