

NORTH SMITHFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

March 17, 2026

North Smithfield Middle School

Members Present: T. Bartomioli, J. Meo, W. Connell, C. Simpkins, D. de la Cruz
Others Present: M. St. Jean, A. Stanley, C. Welch, J. Aromin, C. Arnold, A. Melvin, S. MacPherson,
E. Albino, T. Lafreniere, V. Fleury, A. Fasano

Meeting convened in Open Session via Zoom Virtual Meeting and in-person at North Smithfield Middle School cafeteria at 6:30 p.m.

1. Roll call was taken with all members noted as present except for William Connell.

2. School Committee Acknowledgement: Events of February 16, 2026:

This section of the meeting served as a vital moment for community healing and administrative reflection following the tragic events of February 16, 2026. The tragedy deeply affected the North Smithfield hockey community, students, and local families, prompting the Committee to reflect on the district's response and the safety of its members. Chair Bartomioli expressed profound gratitude for the administrators, staff, coaches, and parents who provided resources and compassion in the wake of the heartbreak. She emphasized a "stronger together" sentiment, commending the bravery of those who stepped in to protect families during the crisis.

Ms. Meo highlighted the strategic importance of the district's 80-page emergency response plan. She noted that the Committee had recently approved the document and observed that its successful activation during this tragedy demonstrated the plan's practical value and the district's readiness beyond mere documentation. The Committee evaluated the community's response as a testament to the district's resilience and collective strength. Following these reflections, the Chair transitioned the proceedings to the open forum for community input.

3. Public Comment: North Smithfield Athletic Association (NSAA) & Community Updates:

Public comment highlighted the strategic role of parent-led organizations, such as the North Smithfield Athletic Association (NSAA), in supplementing district resources. These private-public partnerships are essential for providing enhanced athletic programming and equipment that exceed traditional budgetary limits. Elizabeth Albino and Val Fleury provided an update on recent NSAA activities, reporting a healthy balance of approximately \$59,000 following successful fundraising efforts. The NSAA has contributed over \$25,000 in equipment and support this year, including:

- Safety Equipment: Guardian caps (\$3,700).
- High School Facilities: 30 new high-quality chairs (\$6,000).
- Athletic Gear: New cheer mats, golf bags, and protective screens for baseball and softball.
- Hockey Community Support: A TV and dehumidifier for the boys' hockey team, as well as "Stronger Together" shirts and direct donations for the family of the student-athlete affected by the February 16 tragedy. Furthermore, the NSAA announced its recent acquisition of "Pumpkin Fest," a long-standing community event that has generated over \$100,000 for local youth grants and scholarships over the last 60 years. The association also promoted the upcoming Northman 5K on May 3rd, featuring its first

youth 1K race. The association issued an explicit request for community volunteers to serve as photographers, water station staff, and children's race coordinators.

- A brief update by W. Connell was also provided regarding the John Lahar Scholarship 3-on-3 basketball tournament, held in memory of the former middle school principal. T
- C. Simpkins expressed deep appreciation for the NSAA's successful turnaround and continued contributions.

4. On motion by J. Meo, seconded by W. Connell, the Committee unanimously voted (motion carries 5-0) to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted with the exception of No. 7A and No. 13 which were pulled for further discussion.

Items Approved:

1. Approval of Regular Session Minutes: 2/10/26 SC Meeting
 2. Approval of Executive Session Minutes: 2/10/26 SC Meeting
 3. Disbursement Report: February 2026
 4. Cash Receipts Report: February 2026
 5. Homeschooling Requests:
 - A. A.S.
 - B. M.S.
 - C. L.L.
 - D. I.B.
 - E. I.B.
 6. 1st Reading New/Revised Policies/Protocols:
 - A. Code of Conduct for Procurement in Federally Funded Child Nutrition Programs
 7. 2nd Reading New/Revised Policies/Protocols:
 - ~~A. V.A.34. Student Cell Phone Policy~~
 - B. V.A.35. North Smithfield High School Work-Based Learning (WBL) Policy
 - C. II.D.4. Use of School Facilities by Non-School Based Organizations
 - D. IV.J. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy
 8. Overnight Field Trips:
 - A. We The People – National Finals in Washington, DC/Bethesda, MD (4/16-4/20/26)
 9. Approval of 2026-2027 School Calendar
 10. Approval of Alarm System Hardware Upgrade and Monitoring by Alarm New England
 11. Approval to increase the annual approved amount for servicing of boilers and water heaters through Advanced Comfort Systems
 12. Approval of NSHS Security Camera Additions; MPA #419
 - ~~13. Approval of NSHS Vape Detector Additions; MPA #419~~
 14. Approval of OSHEAN 3-year Internet Renewal; MPA #464
 15. Administrator's Reports
 16. Financial Report
5. Discussion regarding Item 7A: Student Cell Phone Policy:
- The Committee reviewed the updated policy mandated by new Rhode Island state law, which requires a "total ban" on cell phone use throughout the school day, including non-instructional periods. Administrators clarified that the district is already in compliance, as the "cubby" storage procedure has been standard practice for three years. The transition to the new state mandate is expected to be seamless.

6. Discussion regarding Item 13: Vape Detectors and Bathroom Access:

Mr. Simpkins agrees with having the detectors but spoke more to the bathroom issues concerning the e-hall pass system. Key points included:

- Instructional Loss: Students must repeatedly refresh screens to find available passes because the system lacks a "queuing" feature.
- Impact on Special Needs: Obtaining a pass is particularly distracting for students with ADHD or medical conditions.
- Facility Access: Locked bathrooms lead to location discrepancies on passes and overcrowding at the nurse's office. Superintendent St. Jean responded that the management system has brought "calm" to bathrooms previously plagued by disruption. He noted that bathrooms are occasionally closed due to plumbing issues caused by students flushing vapes. The Superintendent committed to reviewing system "thresholds" for student occupancy and investigating software queuing features.

7. On motion by J. Meo, seconded by C. Simpkins, the Committee voted (motion carries 5-0) to approve No. 7A and No. 13 of the consent agenda as submitted.

8. Superintendent's Report: Grants and Operational Innovation

Superintendent St. Jean reported on efforts to secure external funding and implement technological efficiencies.

Rural Health Transformation Grant

North Smithfield is one of 14 "rural" districts in Rhode Island qualifying for a portion of a \$156 million statewide grant. This five-year grant focuses on workforce development in "allied medical fields." The district intends to create "Pathways" or Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), and Phlebotomy. The Superintendent will meet with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) this coming Friday to finalize details.

Chair Bartomioli asked if a Pathway or CTE is more readily available. Pathways are less restricted. CTE's have more requirements. Ms. Bartomioli likes the idea of a pathway as it is more readily available to all students.

Facility Scheduling System

The Superintendent demonstrated new scheduling software designed to centralize facility booking. Key features include:

1. Centralized Booking: A one-stop shop for community and school groups.
2. Insurance Management: Digital storage of insurance certificates.
3. Public Transparency: A color-coded public calendar (green, gold, and blue).
4. Integration: Automatic synchronization with the Interscholastic League for sports scheduling.

7. The informational portion of the agenda was accepted and shared with the committee.

Informational (Discussion only):

1. Personnel Resignations/Retirements/Leaves of Absence/Appointments:

- A. Christopher Kertyzak, 1.0 Physics Teacher @ NSHS – Resignation

2. **Coaching Appointments – SPRING Season [2025-2026] school year only**:

A. Jason Fernandes	Middle School Softball Volunteer Coach
B. Shannon Reall	Boys Volleyball Assistant Coach
C. Alyssa Narodowy	Girls Lacrosse Head Coach
D. Aaron Rominyk	Girls Lacrosse Assistant Coach
E. Kyle Alves	Boys Volleyball Head Coach
F. Amy Gravel	Boys Volleyball Volunteer Coach
G. Jason Miranda	High School Softball Coach
H. Lorenza O'Donnell	Middle School Softball Volunteer Coach

9. **New Business:**

- **Approval to make updates to all policies which include changing names of administrators to position titles:** The Committee addressed the need for document longevity across 380 pages of district policy. To avoid the inconvenience of re-voting on policies every time a staff member leaves, the Committee moved to replace specific names (e.g., "Tim McGee") with position titles (e.g., "Title IX Coordinator").

On motion by J. Meo, seconded by C. Simpkins, the Committee unanimously voted (5-0) to move forward with updating all policies and removing names of specific employees and replace them with either their position and/or title.

- **North Smithfield School Department 403(b) Plan Document Update:** The Committee approved a rollover provision for the district's 403(b) retirement plan, administered by Omni. This update allows new employees to roll over existing accounts into the district plan. The Superintendent confirmed this update has zero fiscal impact on the district.

On motion by J. Meo, seconded by D. de la Cruz the Committee unanimously voted (5-0) to approve the updated 403(B) plan document update as provided to allow for rollover of other accounts.

10. **Old Business:**

1. There was nothing to report on the FY26 Operating/Capital Budgets.
2. FY27 Operation/Capital Budgets: Scheduled to present to the Town Budget Committee on 4/30/26 and waiting on March updates from RIDE.
3. Superintendent Search Committee – list of appointees was presented with the chosen community member presented for appointment.

On motion by J. Meo, seconded by C. Simpkins, the Committee unanimously voted (5-0) to move forward with the community member appointment as submitted.

11. On motion by J. Meo, seconded by W. Connell, the Committee unanimously voted on roll call vote (T. Bartomioli -yea; J. Meo-yea; D. de la Cruz-yea; C. Simpkins-yea: Motion carries 5-0) to move into Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a) regarding RIGL 42-46-5(a)(8)(ii): Reviewing matter relating to the privacy of a student.

12. Mr. Simpkins recused himself from the Executive Session.

13. The Committee reconvened in Open Session at 8:15 p.m.

14. On motion by W. Connell, seconded by D. de la Cruz, the Committee unanimously voted (Motion carries 4-0) to adjourn Executive Session.
15. On motion by W. Connell, seconded by J. Meo, the Committee unanimously voted to seal the minutes of Executive Session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(1); 42-46-4 & 42-46-5. (Motion carries 4-0)
16. Statement of notification to the public that there were no votes taken by the Committee during Executive Session.
17. On a motion by W. Connell, seconded by J. Meo, the Committee voted (5-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.