

Westerly School Committee Meeting  
December 17, 2025  
Westerly Town Hall  
Regular Session

School Committee Members:

Leslie Dunn, Chair  
Michael Ober, Vice Chair  
Timothy Killam, Clerk  
Angela Goethals  
Joseph Jackson  
Peter Nero  
Lori Wycall

Also in Attendance:

Mark Garceau, Superintendent  
William Nardone, Esquire  
Rose Falcone, Recording Secretary

1. Leslie Dunn called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.  
Roll Call: Leslie Dunn, Michael Ober, Timothy Killam, Angela Goethals, Joseph Jackson, Peter Nero and Lori Wycall.
  2. Pledge of Allegiance  
T. Killam led the Pledge of Allegiance. A moment of silence followed in honor of Brown University and the recent tragic events.
  3. Westerly Public Schools Mission  
M. Ober read: "To create an inspiring, challenging and supportive environment where students are encouraged and assisted in reaching their highest potential."
  4. Student's Report  
Student Brady Casady shared that the WHS StageDog production received multiple Ocean State Star Awards, and gave an overview of winter sports, dance team performances, and student clubs.
  5. Recognitions
    - a. RI Coaches Association 2025 Coach of the Year: Volleyball Coach Laurel Auth
    - b. RI Coaches Association 2025 Coach of the Year: Football Coach Ron Sposato
    - c. RI Interscholastic League 2024-2025 Girls Tennis Coach of the Year: Coach Terrence McAndrewResolutions in honor of each coach were read and formally presented to the respective coaches.
- L. Dunn entertained a motion to move item 11c First Reading: Athletic Eligibility Policy to next on the agenda. P. Nero so moved, seconded by A. Goethals. The motion passed 5-2 (J. Jackson/L. Wycall opposed).

11c. First Reading: Athletic Eligibility Policy XXXX

Discussion ensued regarding potential changes to policy language, birth record changes, whether the issue constitutes an adult matter rather than a student matter, concerns that the policy may be illegal due to discrimination against student-athletes based on gender identity, the possible creation of a waiver to be signed by parents or students over the age of 18, compliance with Title IX, safety considerations, students' opportunities to participate and the potential legal risk to the school district. Attorney Nardone advised the School Committee not to approve the proposed policy, citing a recent Rhode Island Superior Court decision interpreting the definition of sex to include

gender identity and expression. He cautioned that the adoption of the policy could expose the district to legal risk and recommended that the Committee take no action on the policy.

L. Dunn entertained a motion to reject the Athletic Eligibility Policy as presented. A. Goethals so moved, seconded by T. Killam. Discussion ensued. The motion passed 6-1 (L. Wycall opposed).

6. Open Forum: Comments shall be limited to School Committee agenda items only.
    - Frederick Davis spoke about the athletic eligibility policy, risks of genetically stronger athletes playing against each other, setting up female athletics for injuries, and keeping students' safety in mind.
    - Robert Chiaradio stated he feels the policy would have protected girls and spoke about creating co-ed teams so everyone can participate, being equitable, and keeping students safe.
    - Rose Van Dover stated she feels that someone will get hurt and asked that the Committee work together and protect children.
    - Diane Goldsmith thanked School Committee members for the vote, and spoke about safety, minimal number of transgender students playing and her hope that the mean-spirited conversation will end.
    - Alex Healy encouraged focusing on student support such as nutritional access and hygiene resources.
    - Maurice Devine spoke about Title IX compliance, development of a policy not in violation of Title IX, protecting athletes, and working together.
    - Eryc Constantikes spoke about safety and facility concerns, discussed family experiences and suggested alternative accommodations.
    - Anya (no last name given) expressed concerns regarding transgender participation in athletics and the long-term impacts on students.
    - a. Committee Members' Response  
Discussion ensued.
  7. Assistant Superintendent's Report: District Curriculum and Instructional Updates  
No report.
  8. Superintendent's Report: District Priorities, Staff and Student Recognition  
Mark Garceau recognized Westerly High School Teacher Denise Filippone for receiving the URI Concurrent Enrollment Instructor of the Year Award, citing her instructional excellence and leadership.
- L. Wycall left the meeting at 7:09 p.m.
9. Financial Report: Discussion/Action/Potential Vote  
Cindy Kirchhoff gave an overview of the November 30, 2025 financial report. Discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of universal free meals and the need for further analysis.
  10. Consent Agenda: Action/Vote
    - a. Approval of Minutes (12/03/25)
    - b. Home School Approvals  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. T. Killam so moved, seconded by A. Goethals. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

11. New Business: Discussion/Action/Potential Vote
  - a. First Reading: Electronic Communication Devices Policy 7500 Update  
Discussion ensued regarding concerns at the high school and the open campus, and the disciplinary process.  
  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to waive additional readings. P. Nero so moved, seconded by M. Ober. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.  
  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to approve the Electronic Communication Devices Policy 7500 Update. T. Killam so moved, seconded by A. Goethals. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.
  - b. First Reading: Use of Facilities Rental Policy 9010 Update  
Administrative updates were reviewed.  
  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to waive additional readings. J. Jackson so moved, seconded by M. Ober. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.  
  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to approve the Use of Facilities Rental Policy 9010 Update. A. Goethals so moved, seconded by T. Killam. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.
  - c. First Reading: Athletic Eligibility Policy XXXX  
Done above.
12. Old Business: Discussion/Action/Potential Vote
  - a. Ratify/Confirm WHS Program of Studies Vote  
Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to ratify/confirm the WHS Program of Studies vote. T. Killam so moved, seconded by M. Ober. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.
13. Correspondence
  - Correspondence was received both supporting and opposing adoption of the athletic eligibility policy.
14. Committee/Liaison Reports
  - A Finance Subcommittee Meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2026 (5:30 p.m.)
15. Future Agenda Items
  - Free Meal Program Feasibility (Jackson)
  - School Committee Correspondence but not Superintendent Correspondence included in agenda backup (Killam)
  - Invite the Director of Pupil Personnel to present on student mental health initiatives and give an overview of disciplinary procedures involving students with IEPs or 504 plans (Goethals)
16. Open Forum: Non-agenda item comments allowed.
  - Diane Goldsmith encouraged recognition of educators and academic leadership alongside athletics.
  - a. Committee Members' Response  
Discussion ensued.

17. Adjournment

Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to adjourn at 7:31 p.m. A. Goethals so moved, seconded by M. Ober. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

These are the minutes of the School Committee meeting identified above as approved and adopted by the School Committee on January 7, 2026.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy Killam', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Timothy Killam  
Clerk

Details of the aforesaid proceedings are available on the website video.