

Westerly School Committee Meeting
July 15, 2026
Westerly Town Hall
Regular Session

School Committee Members:

Leslie Dunn, Chair
Michael Ober, Vice Chair
Timothy Killam, Clerk
Angela Goethals
Seth Logan
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, Seth Logan, Angela Goethals, Peter Nero, and Lori Wycall.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
M. Ober led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Westerly Public Schools Mission
L. Dunn read: "To create an inspiring, challenging and supportive environment where students are encouraged and assisted in reaching their highest potential."
4. Presentation
 - a. Senior Project
Mark Garceau gave an overview of senior project presentations. WHS Teacher and Senior Project Coordinator Melissa Tallardy outlined the presentation process and shared highlights from several student projects. Recent WHS graduate Axel Anderson presented on his senior project: constructing a DIY greenhouse. Anderson detailed his building process and outlined his plans to donate the vegetables grown in the greenhouse to the local community. Discussion ensued
5. Solicitor's Report
Attorney Nardone provided an update on recent legal developments regarding transgender student-athlete eligibility. He reviewed a recent Supreme Court decision addressing athletic eligibility based on biological sex under Title IX and the Fourteenth Amendment. Attorney Nardone noted that the Court ruled schools may determine athletic eligibility based on biological sex, citing concerns regarding student safety and competitive fairness. He advised that while the ruling does not mandate policy changes, aligning district policy with the Supreme Court's decision is the best course of action to ensure legal compliance and protect the district from liability. He closed by noting that the Supreme Court is not last because it is right, but rather right because it is last, meaning the district must comply with its authority to remain protected. Discussion ensued regarding the practical implementation of such a policy, including methods for verifying biological sex, enforcement, and parent notification procedures. Superintendent Garceau and Attorney Nardone will review and resurrect prior policy language to draft a legally compliant policy for School Committee consideration, with the primary goal of protecting and supporting all students.

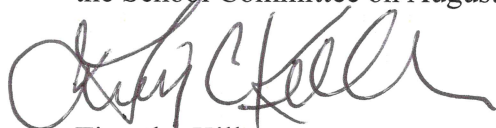
6. Open Forum: Comments shall be limited to School Committee agenda items only.
 - Robert Chiaradio spoke about the recent Supreme Court decision on transgender student-athletes and his support of restricting athletic participation based on biological sex, arguing that allowing biological males to compete in girls' sports violates Title IX. He stated that obeying the law will protect the district and students. He understands that all students must be treated with respect and protected from bullying but feels the rights of female athletes must be preserved. He noted that other districts are already beginning this policy process and requested that a Title IX-compliant policy be placed on the next agenda.
 - Gail Barrington shared her professional background in labor and delivery. She explained that biological sex determination is not always clear-cut at birth and noted that genetic testing is sometimes required. She urged the Committee to proceed carefully when drafting policies involving biological sex, advising them to closely evaluate how biological sex is defined to ensure accuracy and inclusivity of clinical complexities.
 - a. Committee Members' Response
Speakers were thanked for sharing their knowledge and providing valuable clarity on these complex issues.
7. Assistant Superintendent's Report: District Curriculum and Instructional Updates
Unable to attend.
8. Superintendent's Report: District Priorities, Staff and Student Recognition
Mark Garceau recognized Standing Ovation Winners, Mark McKinnon, Central Office; Tia Emard, Westerly Middle School; and Bill Goins, Pat Falcone, Nate Green, David Rubert, Westerly High School. He presented an update on the progress of various summer construction projects, commending the outstanding work being completed across the district. He shared the proposed traffic pattern plans for State Street School and outlined updates to the field trip policy. A discussion ensued regarding glass issues at State Street School and the corrective measures currently being taken to resolve them.
9. Financial Report: Discussion/Action/Potential Vote
No report.
10. Consent Agenda: Action/Vote
 - a. Approval of Minutes (06/17/26)
 - b. Home School ApprovalsLeslie Dunn entertained a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. T. Killam so moved, seconded by M. Ober. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.
11. Old Business: Discussion/Action/Potential Vote
 - a. First Reading: Field Trip-Student Travel Policy 6170 Revision
Discussion ensued. Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to waive additional readings of the Field Trip-Student Travel Policy 6170 Revision. P. Nero so moved, seconded by A. Goethals. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to approve the Field Trip-Student Travel Policy 6170 Revision. P. Nero so moved, seconded by L. Wycall. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

12. Correspondence
 - Tim Killam shared that he has had ongoing correspondence with Groton Schools concerning their farm-to-table initiative.
13. Committee/Liaison Reports
 - No reports
14. Future Agenda Items
 - Transgender Policy (Dunn)
 - Westerly Middle School Traffic Patterns (Goethals)
 - Westerly Middle and High School Schedule (Goethals)
 - Website Contact Information (Goethals)
15. Open Forum: Non-agenda item comments allowed.
 - No one came forward.
 - a. Committee Members' Response
16. Adjournment

Leslie Dunn entertained a motion to adjourn at 6:41 p.m. M. Ober so moved, seconded by A. Goethals. 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 August 19, 2026.



Timothy Killam
Clerk

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

