

SMITHFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
SMITHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2026
6:30 PM
MINUTES

Members present: Mr. Richard Iannitelli Chair, Mrs. Jessica Sala, Vice-Chair, Mrs. Amanda Fafard, Secretary, Mr. Jeffrey LeBlanc and Dr. Ashley Hogan. Also present: Lisa Odom-Villella, Interim Superintendent, Wendy Amelotte, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Eileen Crudele, Director of Special Education, John Ward, Interim Finance Director, and Student Representatives Kaya Gaffney and Logan Boucher.

1. Meeting called to order. Mr. Iannitelli called the meeting order at 6:30 pm.
2. Salute to the Flag. Mr. Iannitelli conducted a Salute to the Flag.
3. Emergency Evacuation and Health Notification. Mr. Iannitelli read the Emergency Evacuation and Health Notification and notified the public regarding the public comment sign up sheet as well as notification to the public to speak at the podium when addressing the committee.
4. Consent Agenda Items:
Mrs. Sala moved to approve Consent Agenda Item:
4.1 Minutes:
A) Open Minutes of the February 5, 2026 School Committee Meeting
4.2 Bills:
A) Regular bills totaling \$411,972.52
B) Direct checks from January 30, 2026 – February 24, 2026 totaling \$163,348.60
C) Lunch bills totaling \$99,513.91
4.3 Homeschooling: (as presented)
4.4 Non-Renewal: (as presented)

Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

5. High School Representatives Report.
Kaya reported:
 - After an unexpected extended February Vacation, students returned to school Feb. 26th ready for a fresh start to finish out the second semester.
 - On February 27th, the Smithfield High School Men's Hockey team will be celebrating this year's senior night. The ceremony will begin at 7:50 pm, honoring 6 seniors, and their game against La Salle Academy will begin at 8pm.
 - On March 4th, the Future Business Leaders of America club at the high school will be attending a career exploration field trip at Bryant University. There, a group of juniors and seniors will have the opportunity to take a specialized tour of the campus, tailored to their desired area of study. They'll also meet with faculty and students in small groups to learn more about not only the college, but their professional field as well.
Logan reported:
 - The Science Olympiad team had their first competition of the year on February 14th at the Brown University Invitational Division C competition. The Smithfield High School team scored 24th out of 54 teams that competed from around the country, which is a significant achievement. The team is now preparing for their next competition at RI College on April 11th.

6. Discuss Review and Approve donation from PVES PTO for a new sound system at PVES. Mrs. Sala moved to approve donation from PVES PTO for a new sound system at PVES. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. Alycia Casazza, PVES PTO President was present to any questions. The donation is for a new sound system for Pleasant View Elementary School totaling \$2,998.97. The sound system is a portable system.
7. Special Education Data Presentation. SPS Special Education Director Mrs. Crudele did a presentation on Special Education Data for the 2025-2026 school year reporting on graduation rates, assessment participation data on statewide testing, and suspension for students with disabilities as per the RIDE indicators. Mrs. Crudele gave an overview of the indicators which in summary included the district is not identified as having a significant difference in suspension/expulsion rates with disabilities for a period of more than 10 days compared to students without disabilities, nor is there a significant discrepancy for students with disabilities among racial or ethnic groups. For LRE (Least restrictive environments, Smithfield has 96% of students inside the regular class for 80% or more of the day; 1% inside the regular class less than 40% of the day and 3% in separate schools or residential facilities or homebound/hospitalized. For the regular early childhood programs Smithfield has 58%, indicating the classroom consists of 51% of students without disabilities, 0% in a separate special education class or school and 0% receive special education services in the home. The report included Child Outcome Summaries as it relates to skills for Smithfield vs. the State. Mrs. Crudele reported on family engagement SurveyWorks data for 2025 noting about 108 families responded to the Survey Works. Smithfield is not disproportionate in categories of disproportionality in Special Education or disproportionally in Specific Disabilities. The report showed Smithfield is 100% compliant with evaluating students within the 60 day timeline. The report also covered early intervention transition percentages as well, with Smithfield having 100% of children referred prior to age 3 who were found eligible and who have had their IEP developed and implemented by their 3rd birthdays and 100% of students who are over 14 have an IEP that includes postsecondary goals. Post Secondary Outcomes survey responses were 100% for Smithfield, with 79% who are meaningfully engaged. Statistics were covered in the report for Child Outreach Screening for Smithfield as shown below.

	Smithfield	State
K-3 (3 years before entering kindergarten)	33%	14%
K-2 (2 years before entering kindergarten)	72%	41%
K-1 (1 year before entering kindergarten)	76%	55%
Overall Population	60%	37%

Committee members asked questions that were addressed by Mrs. Crudele.

8. Discuss Review and Approve RFQ for architectural services for Capital Projects. Mrs. Sala moved to approve the RFQ for architectural services for Capital Projects. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. This is a request for qualifications, not a request for quotes. The Smithfield School Department is soliciting qualifications from Architectural firms to provide professional services consistent with RIDE's Necessity of Construction Guidelines. The RFQ will go to the town council for approval. The contract period will begin approximately May 7, 2026. Mr. Mencucci was present to answer questions.
9. Presentation on FY26 audited financial statements. David Hansen, Audit Manager from Clifton Larnson Allen LLP was present and Mr. Hansen provided a narrative overview of the school department's annual financial report for fiscal year 2025 reviewing the scope of the engagement, reporting results, and financial highlights.
In summary, the financial highlights included:

Financial Highlights:

As of June 30, 2025, the School Department's governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of \$3,211,115, an increase of \$302,795 from the prior year.

As of June 30, 2025, the School's committed fund balance was \$2,856,542, or 6.06% of the total budgeted 2025 expenditures \$47,129,170. This amount is committed to be spent on education expenditures.

The report included pension and OPEB (other post-employment benefits). Mr. Hansen answered questions the committee members had. No instances of noncompliance were found. Rachel Toppi from the town council asked the reason why the salaries in the audit report were under budget. Mr. Iannitelli answered there could be a number of factors contributing to that. Mrs. Fafard added it could be that in the steps of hiring, whereas ie. A step 3 teacher was hired and a step 6 teacher was budgeted.

10. Discuss Review and Approve FY27 Final Budget. Mrs. Sala moved to approve FY27 Final Budget with a 4 percent increase and 4.13 percent capital request as stated. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. Mrs. Odom-Villella reviewed curriculum adoptions in the schools with the committee. She gave an overview of the revised staffing summary to include additions and decreases with a summary of current and projected salaries. Revisions in the athletics budget were discussed to include postponement of volleyball for another year and coach stipend increases for the boys and girls lacrosse coaches as in fairness to other comparable coaches, as the lacrosse coach stipends were low. Budgetary increases consisting of medical, dental, transportation, contractual increases were also highlighted. Mrs. Odom-Villella briefing reviewed the Capital Improvement summary for 2026-2027. In summary, the reductions needed for a balanced budget include technology (student and teacher devices); curriculum materials; the volleyball proposal; and the elimination of additional positions consisting of STEM coordinator, 2 Math Interventionists and the education of a new ALP/ISS position. Due to the blizzard, the due date of the budget to the town was moved from March 1st to a new due date of March 9th. Mandated spendings are estimated to be 99% of the budget request of a 4% increase to the town, these are non avoidable increases. Discretionary spending is a small percentage of the 4% requested to the town. Public comment: Jane Ramos, GMS teacher and long time resident in town, comments on the disappointment on the happenings in town and the sacrifices continually going on in the schools. As we are doing more with less for years now. 4% meets the maximum of what we can do; it keeps a lot of what we want in tact.
11. Consider, discuss, and vote on appointment of members to the Superintendent Search Committee. Mrs. Sala moved to approve the appointment of members to the Superintendent Search Committee. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. An advertisement for the Supt. position will be going out very shortly.
12. Discuss Review and Approve resolution in support of proposed legislation relating to school employees. Mrs. Fafard moved to approve resolution H7356 in support of proposed legislation relating to school employees. Mrs. Fafard moved to amend the motion to approve and support legislation H7356 relating to educators. Mrs. Sala seconded the amended motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. The legislation provides additional protection for the district to ensure that we are not replacing educators from other districts that are not a fit. It allows for district awareness of educators resigning from one district and moving on to the next district. The bill supports unqualified individuals not being allowed to be passed to each district.
13. School Building Committee Update. Mr. Iannitelli said at the next meeting of the building committee will be to pay a few bills, and to get a report from the architect on the cost for a 10 year plan for work in the school buildings.

14. Communications:

- a) A copy of resignations/retirements/new hires in the district
- b) A copy of FY26 Budget Transfers

15. Interim Superintendent's Report. Mrs. Odom-Villella reported:

Pawtucket Ice Rink Incident

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of this tragic event that took place last week. Smithfield has had support available for students, staff members or families in need of assistance. Thank you to the SPD for maintaining a visible presence in our schools and school events to support our community, staff, and students.

Interim Assistant Superintendent

Mrs. Odom-Villella introduced Dr. Wendy Amelotte as SPS Interim Assistant Superintendent. Wendy Amelotte officially started full time this week and has been a tremendous help already. She met today with our new teachers that are part of the Induction Program to support their professional growth as new teachers. She is very excited to be here.

The Blizzard of '26

Mrs. Odom-Villella thanked our Director of Facilities, Angelo Mencucci and his entire custodial and maintenance team. They did an amazing job clearing sidewalks, walkways, and parking areas, along with our plowing contractors and Smithfield's DPW. They continue to make improvements by moving snow piles. The Smithfield DPW continues to widen roadways and clean up intersections. Smithfield and Burrillville were the only two school districts that resumed in-person learning today. Virtual learning is my last resort option. She stated in person learning, in her opinion, should always be our default delivery model. As mentioned when our virtual learning plan was approved, ideally it will be used when we have excessive inclement weather days or for emergencies. We have certainly had a lot of snow this year! Right now, we are at 4 snow days with more snow in the forecast. Mrs. Odom-Villella is hopeful that 2 of those days will be waived by the state due to the travel ban. Starting tomorrow, students will be reminded to bring their chromebooks back and forth to school daily. This will allow the district to transition to a virtual learning day for any future inclement weather or emergency days. Principals will be sharing the virtual learning expectations and schedules for their school with families.

16. Public Forum: Rachel Toppi - SPS schools and the town working together to make sure bus stops are clear for the kids. Mr. Mencucci provides confirmation that we do have a list to prioritize depot stops with the town.
17. Consider Items to Add to Future Agendas: Mr. Iannitelli - A policy subcommittee will be on the next agenda. Upcoming policies to be changed or updated: Cell phone policy and attendance policy; AI policy and handbook policy. In addition, how much time kids have for screen time will be upcoming. In person versus virtual days conversation will be had in the future. Next meeting a subcommittee proposal will be on the agenda. Dr. Hogan is working on the framework for a liaison to the town council that will be on the next agenda for approval.
18. Consider and Vote on Motion to Adjourn. Motion to adjourn made by Mrs. Sala; Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Petrone
Secretary