SMITHFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
SMITHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 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 Sean Clough, Esq., School Committee/School Department Attorney.

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 26, 2026 School Committee Meeting

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

5. High School Representatives Report. A student representative was not present at the meeting.

6. Discuss Review and Approve NEIT contract. Mrs. Sala moved to approve the contract between the Smithfield Public Schools and New England Institute of Technology with the amendment that the district will investigate the opportunity to prorate the tuition costs based on enrollment status. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. Kristin Ward, SHS Principal was present and delivered a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the dual enrollment program offerings available through the New England Institute of Technology (NEIT). She provided an overview of the program offerings and outlined the benefits available to students through NEIT. Mrs. Ward also explained the differences between the NEIT program and the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) Running Start Program, emphasizing that the NEIT program would complement, not replace, the CCRI program.
   The NEIT program is being proposed as a two-year pilot program. During the presentation, Mrs. Ward reviewed the costs associated with both programs. The cost to the district for participation in the CCRI program is $2,784 per student, while the NEIT program would cost $1,067 per student, in addition to the cost of books.
   Lora DiMuccio was present to answer questions and reviewed student enrollment interest among SHS students. Lisa Odom-Villella reiterated that Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) regulations require school districts to provide dual enrollment opportunities. However, these programs do involve costs to the district.
   Discussion also included the transferability of credits. Credits earned through CCRI are generally transferable to other colleges and universities, while credits earned through NEIT are not typically transferable.

Currently, the contract with NEIT is a one-year commitment, though it may be extended if there is sufficient interest among SHS students. The district will be mindful when selecting students to participate in the program. In order for the district to endorse students for either program, SHS will require students to maintain a minimum GPA and good attendance.
Additional discussion included district budgeting factors and cost implications, as well as the expectation that students demonstrate reliability when participating in programs that involve a financial commitment. It was suggested that the district establish a cap on enrollments for the NEIT program in order to manage budget constraints. Attorney Clough will investigate whether the district has the ability to to prorate tuition based on student status.

7. First reading of handbook policy CHCA revision. The committee did a first reading of the district's handbook policy revisions. Revisions include final approval of all school handbooks by the school committee with an approval date by August 1st of each school year as well as the content to include district policies such as the district's bullying policy, teen dating violence policy and inclusion of the district's athletic director to be responsive for the development and annual review of the student-athlete and coaches handbooks. Revisions to the policy were discussed and the policy will be brought back for a second reading and approval at the next meeting.

8. First reading of subcommittee policy BGBA. The committee did a first reading of the district's subcommittee policy. This is a new policy and the purpose of the Policy Subcommittee will be to review school committee policies on a continuing basis; to recommend new policies or revisions to existing policies; to review and recommend approval of district handbooks; and to provide notice to the school committee during a public meeting when a significant policy development or revision is underway. Membership of the subcommittee will be appointed annually by the school committee and will include two members of the school committee and the Superintendent. Additional non-voting advisory participants may be included as needed. The subcommittee policy will be brought back for a second reading and approval at the next meeting. The subcommittee meetings will be open meetings and will be posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. The subcommittee meeting schedule is anticipated to meet once or twice a month, but is dependent upon how many policies will be reviewed or updated.

9. Report on Student Activities Fund. John Ward, Interim Finance Director gave a report of the student activity funds. The Student Activities Operations Manual provides that a report to the school committee of the fund balances and audit results be done annually. Mr. Ward presented the report, informing the committee of the school's student activity processes. He reviewed the fund balances by school and reported each elementary school's details by group/grades. The middle and high school reports included details by group. Fund sources for the money derived in the student activity funds at the elementary level will be reported out to the school committee in an upcoming communication.

10. Discuss Review and Approve the School Committee Liaison framework. Mrs. Sala moved to approve the framework for the School Committee Liaison. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.
The framework document was developed to clearly outline the expectations and purpose of the liaison role. The liaison is intended to improve the flow of information between the two bodies, reduce misunderstandings, support coordinated planning efforts, and minimize reliance on informal communications.
The document establishes a structured framework that includes guiding principles, appointment procedures, the scope of the liaison role, communication expectations, and reporting responsibilities to each committee. The liaison role is not intended to replace joint workshops, budget hearings, or capital planning sessions, but rather to complement those formal collaboration opportunities.

The purpose of the School Committee–Town Council liaison framework is to strengthen communication and collaboration on matters of shared municipal interest, while preserving the independence and statutory authority of each governing body.

11. Discuss Review and Approve resolution in support of proposed legislation, H 3756 relating to school employees. Mrs. Sala moved to approve the resolution in support of proposed legislation H3756 relating to school employees. Mrs. Fafard seconded the amended motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. The bill supports stronger protections for school districts by requiring greater disclosure and more rigorous review of applicants' prior employment in educational and child-related positions. The legislation promotes transparency between districts so that when educators leave one district and seek employment in another, relevant employment history and concerns can be appropriately shared. By improving communication and accountability in the hiring process, the bill helps ensure districts are aware of past employment issues and prevents unqualified individuals from moving between districts without proper review, ultimately strengthening safeguards for students and schools.

12. School Building Committee Update. Mr. Iannitelli provided an update to the committee, noting that the OPM just received the paperwork from SLAM Architects. Within the next week or two, the Building Committee is expected to schedule a meeting to review the materials and, hopefully, close out the process.

13. Communications:
    a) A copy of resignations/retirements/new hires in the district

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

GMS RAMP Designation:

Congratulations to our GMS school counseling professionals who earned RAMP ***(Recognized (ASCA) American School Counselor Association Model Program).***

Thank you to our amazing staff at GMS and for all your hard work, we are proud of our GMS school counseling program. This was a three year process to meet all of the requirements.

RAMP schools are committed to delivering school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model framework. By having the RAMP designation, it demonstrates to administrators, school committees, families and the community that the schools are committed to supporting the mission of the school and district. The RAMP designation lasts for 5 years, and we encourage GMS and SHS to maintain the RAMP status. Congratulations again for this amazing distinction!

SPRING SPORTS

Spring coaching positions unfilled & are posted

- Assistant Boys Tennis @ SHS
- Assistant Softball @ SHS
- Girls Softball @ GMS

Student athlete sports registration begins March 16th

PD DAY

Monday, March 9th is a Professional Development Day for teachers, there is no school.

SCHOOL EVENTS:

SHS Footloose performance is next weekend in SHS Auditorium:

- Friday, 3/13th at 7pm
- Saturday 3/14th at 7pm and
- Sunday 3/15th at 2pm

Mrs. Odom-Villella is looking forward to attending her first SHS performance

As a reminder, as of today June 23rd is the last day of school, until further notice.

LAPERCHE FAMILY DANCE
3/13th @ Rhodes on the Pawtuxet in Cranston.
MARCH MADNESS theme, dinner, dancing & fun
GMS DANCE - Grade 8
3/20th 6-8 pm
OCRS
3/13th Grade 5 Bingo event 5-7pm
Elementary Teaching and Learning Nights are also coming up:

- March 25th PVES
- April 15th OCRS
- April 16th LaPerche

15. Public Forum: None.

16. Consider Items to Add to Future Agendas: Mr. LeBlanc would like the district to gather feedback from educators regarding the curriculum they are currently teaching. This will be done by surveying our teachers to better understand their experiences and perspectives.

17. Consider and Vote on Motion (by roll call vote) to convene Executive Session pursuant to R.I. General Laws 42-46-5(a). Mrs. Sala moved to convene Executive Session pursuant to RI General Laws 42-46-5(a). Legal advice related to a personnel matter in accordance with Open Meetings Act 42-46-5(a)(2). Legal advice related to matter *Does 1-5 v. Smithfield School Department RIDE No. 25-077A* in accordance with the Open Meeting Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5 (a)(2). Review of Executive Session Minutes of December 18, 2025, January 14, 2026 and February 5, 2026. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. This requires an individual vote. The individual vote was 5-0 vote polled by Mr. Iannitelli, Chair.

18. Executive Session (Closed) pursuant to RI General Laws Section 42-46-5(a) to discuss:
    A) Legal advice pertaining to personnel RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2)
    B) Legal advice related to matter *Does 1-5 v. Smithfield School Department RIDE No. 25-077A* in accordance with the Open Meeting Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5
    C) Review of Executive Session Minutes of December 18, 2025
    D) Review of Executive Session Minutes of January 14, 2026
    E) Review of Executive Session Minutes of February 5, 2026
    F) Consideration and Vote to adjourn Executive Session

    Returned to open session at 8:46 pm. Mr. Iannitelli reported there were no votes taken in the executive session.

19. 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