

**SMITHFIELD SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
SMITHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER
THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026
6:30 PM
MINUTES**

Members present: Mr. Richard Iannitelli Chair, Mrs. Amanda Fafard, Secretary, Mr. Jeffrey LeBlanc and Dr. Ashley Hogan. Also present: Lisa Odom-Villella, Interim Superintendent, Wendy Amelotte, Interim Assistant Superintendent, John Ward, Interim Finance Director, Sean Clough, Esq., School Committee/School Department Attorney and Student Representative Logan Boucher. Excused absence: Mrs. Jessica Sala, Vice-Chair.

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. Consider and Vote on Motion (by roll call vote) to convene Executive Session pursuant to R.I. General Laws 42-46-5(a). Mrs. Fafard moved to convene Executive Session pursuant to RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5(a). Legal advice related to Attorney General Investigation in accordance with the Open Meeting Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5 (a)(2). Legal advice related to potential contractual matter in accordance with the Open Meetings Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5(a)(2). Review of Executive Session Minutes of March 5, 2026. Mr. LeBlanc seconded the motion. This requires an individual vote. The individual vote was 4-0 vote polled by Mr. Iannitelli, Chair.
5. Executive Session (Closed) pursuant to RI General Laws Section 42-46-5(a) to discuss:
 - A) Legal advice related to Attorney General Investigation in accordance with the Open Meeting Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5(a)(2)
 - B) Legal advice related to potential contractual matter in accordance with Open Meetings Act RI Gen. Laws 42-46-5(a)(2)
 - C) Review of Executive Session Minutes of March 5, 2026
 - D) Consideration and Vote to adjourn Executive Session

Returned to open session at 7:07 pm. Mr. Iannitelli reported there were no votes taken in the executive session.

6. Consent Agenda Items:

Mrs. Fafard moved to approve Consent Agenda Item:

6.1 Minutes:

- A) Approval of Open Minutes from the March 5, 2026 School Committee Meeting
- B) Approval and Sealing of Executive Session Minutes of December 18, 2025
- C) Approval and Sealing of Executive Session Minutes of January 14, 2026
- D) Approval and Sealing of Executive Session Minutes of February 5, 2026

6.2 Bills:

- A) Regular Bills totaling \$311,383.28
- B) Direct Checks from February 25, 2026 through March 16, 2026 totaling \$36,809.94

6.3 Homeschooling: (none)

Mr. LeBlanc seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

7. High School Representatives Report.

Logan reported:

- The SHS drama club performed their annual musical in the auditorium on March 13th and 14th at 7pm and March 15th at 2pm. The show was "Footloose" and showcased talent from students at school through musical theater and through live music with the pit band. The show also raised money for the musical department through raffles in the lobby and through ticket sales which will directly benefit future musicals and the music department.
- Spring sports began on March 16th
- Students are now preparing for the April 7th SAT and PSAT exams in their advisory using Khan academy. The practice has the chance to bring every student's score up on the tests.

8. Recognition of High School Student. A SHS grade 9 student is a state winner in the *Write Rhode Island* contest. The student's story, *Faded Pictures*, will be published and receive several awards and a cash prize. *Write Rhode Island* is a short fiction competition for RI students presented by School One. Each year, they receive over 100 entries from students across the state. Judges selected two top middle school stories and two top high school stories as state winners and sixteen additional stories as notable mentions. All of these will receive awards and be published.

There will be an award ceremony on Sunday, April 12th at the Community Music Works at 2:00 pm, where the student will receive recognition, a citation from the Governor's Office and a copy of the print anthology. The committee presented the student with the Superintendent's Award of Recognition for this outstanding achievement. Parents and family were present with the student to accept the award.

9. Discuss Review and Approve to go out to RFP for advertisement of Elevator Repairs for Gallagher Middle School. Mr. LeBlanc moved to approve to go out to RFP for advertisement of Elevator Repairs for Gallagher Middle School. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Mr. Mencucci was present to give the history of the elevator at GMS, which is nonfunctional. It is estimated for a cost of \$150,000. This is to do repairs on the elevator, not a replacement.

10. Discuss Review and Approve to go out to RFP for advertisement for Boiler Cleaning Services 2026. Mr. LeBlanc moved to approve to go out to RFP for advertisement for Boiler Cleaning Services 2026. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Mr. Mencucci stated this is standard that goes out every year.

11. Discuss Review and Approve to go out to RFP for advertisement for Snow Plowing Services 2026. Mr. LeBlanc moved to approve to go out to RFP for advertisement for Snow Plowing Services 2026. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Mr. Mencucci said we used the town a lot this year, and would like to expand on that. We would like to get a cost factor and discuss further with the town.

12. Discuss Review and Approve rescission of DATTCO bus contract extension. Mrs. LeBlanc moved to approve rescission of DATTCO bus contract extension. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

13. Discuss Review and Approve to go out to RFP for Transportation Services with the Northwest Schools Consortium. Mr. LeBlanc moved to approve to go out to RFP for Transportation Services with the Northwest Schools Consortium. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

14. Second reading and approval of handbook policy CHCA. Mrs. Fafard moved to approve the handbook policy CHCA. Mr. LeBlanc seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. The committee did a first reading at the last meeting. There were no changes.
15. Second reading and approval of subcommittee policy BGBA. Mrs. Fafard moved to approve the subcommittee policy BGBA. Dr. Hogan seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. The committee did a first reading at the last meeting. There were no changes.
16. Discuss Review and Approve of school committee member appointments to the policy subcommittee. Mrs. Fafard moved to approve of school committee member Jeff LeBlanc and Mr. Iannitelli to the policy subcommittee. Dr. Hogan seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Mr. Iannitelli called for school committee interest. Mr. LeBlanc expressed interest in being on the committee. The meetings are proposed to be after school hours. Mr. Iannitelli offered to help as well, if Mrs. Sala would like to, he would allow her to be on the committee. Dr. Hogan offered to serve on the committee if there was a need.
17. Budget Update. Mrs. Odom-Villella reviewed the Town Manager's recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2026–2027 and outlined the implications for Smithfield Public Schools with the committee. The School Department submitted a request reflecting the resources necessary to maintain and improve the quality of educational programming, student supports, and facility conditions across the district. This request included:

- A 4% increase in operating funds, and
\$1.3 million in capital improvements to address critical infrastructure and facility needs as well as curriculum and technology needs.

The Town Manager's recommended budget, however, includes:

- A 0.86% increase in operating funds, and
\$200,000 allocated for capital improvements.
- \$500,000 allocated for technology & curriculum materials

The committee had a discussion about reductions that present significant challenges and the direct and immediate impact on SPS. Further, without the necessary capital investment, the district risks falling out of alignment with state expectations from the School Building Authority at RIDE and delaying critical improvements to the facility needs for students.

Based on this initial analysis, the district may be required to consider:

- Staffing reductions, potentially impacting up to 15 positions across the district, which would affect class sizes, student supports, and overall service delivery
- Reductions in student instructional supplies, including basic classroom materials such as paper and other essential resources
- Deferral of critical capital and maintenance projects, accelerating facility deterioration and increasing long-term costs

Mrs. Odom-Villella told the committee at this time, the district is continuing to analyze the full scope of the proposed reductions. The committee discussed there are very few remaining areas to reduce without directly impacting student learning and school operations. The magnitude of this gap leaves limited flexibility and requires difficult decisions that will be felt across all schools.

A public hearing on the Town Manager's proposed budget is scheduled for March 31st at 6pm, at which time the proposal will be formally presented and opened for public comment. Mrs. Odom-Villella reviewed the average the town appropriation has been over the past 11 years. Mr. Iannitelli informed the school committee that the school department is poised to meet with the town budget committee as well as all town departments. Later, the budget committee will present to the town council. Mr. Iannitelli will keep the committee informed of upcoming meeting dates with the town on the budget.

18. Discuss Review and Approve accepting the Johnston Public Schools into the Northwest Schools Consortium. Mr. LeBlanc moved to approve accepting the Johnston Public Schools into the Northwest Schools Consortium. Mrs. Fafard seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote. Johnston would join SPS, North Providence, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Cumberland, and Burrillville. The consortium allows for collaboration of our districts and shared services, and applies a \$5,000 tuition cap on tuition for CTE students within these districts, a cost-saving measure. Per NWSC by-laws: The admission of additional districts shall be governed by state law as amended from time to time. After a written request for admission, approval of a majority of the member school committees, and after satisfying any statutory requirements, additional districts may be formally accepted into the Northwest Rhode Island School District Consortium. Mrs. Odom-Villella presented financial impacts associated with Johnston joining as well as the benefits of the Consortium.
19. School Building Committee Update. No update. A meeting will be upcoming soon.
20. Communications:
- a) A copy of resignations/retirements/new hires in the district
21. Interim Superintendent's Report. Mrs. Odom-Villella reported:
- Snow Day Waiver Update:** Confirmation has been received that on March 31, 2026 the Commissioner of Education will request the waiver for two emergency days to the Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education. Lisa will update the committee as more information is learned.
- RICAS testing:** Annual state assessments will be starting on March 24th. Dates vary by school and grade level. Parents should be getting more information about their school's schedule. Lisa encourages all students to attend school daily and try their best.
- Teaching and Learning Nights:** Elementary Schools first teaching and learning night will be held at PVES on 3/25th followed by
O CRS on 4/15th and
LaPerche on 4/16th
- Annie performed by LaPerche** on 3/20th 6:00 pm @ SHS. Tickets \$5 to be purchased online.
- Budget Review Board:** March 31st at 5:30pm at Town Hall
22. Public Forum: None.
23. Consider Items to Add to Future Agendas: The school committee had appointed members of the Superintendent Search Committee last week. A few changes to note, Mrs. Sala was replaced by Mrs. Fafard and Mr. Seltzer was replaced by Mr. Todd Manni. Both changes were due to conflicts with their work schedules.
24. Consider and Vote on Motion to Adjourn. Motion to adjourn made by Mrs. Fafard; Dr. Hogan seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 4-0 vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Petrone
Secretary