
EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING OPEN SESSION – August 11, 2026

I. Call to Order - Open Session

The East Providence School Committee met in Open Session on Tuesday, August 11, 2026 at 6:00 pm in the auditorium at East Providence High School. Present: David Luiz, Chair, Antonio deSimas, Vice Chair, Anthony Ferreira, Clerk, Ryan Queenan and Jessica Beauchaine. Superintendent Robert Perry and Assistant Superintendent Lisa Benedetti-Ramzi were also present. Mr. Luiz called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

II. Consent Agenda

1. **Communications** – Monthly enrollment numbers and technology data were included in the school committee packet.

2. **Home School Requests** – There were thirty-two homeschool requests.

3. **Approval of Minutes:**

- July 14, 2026 Executive & Open Session School Committee Meeting
- July 23, 2026 Special Executive & Open Session School Committee Meeting
- July 13, 2026 Building Committee Meeting

4. Personnel Report

Appointments – Janice Sanchez, Paraprofessional at Silver Spring, effective 2026-2027 school year; Dawn Dyer, Paraprofessional at Oldham Pre-K, effective 2026-2027 school year; Alison O'Donnell, ALP Content Teacher at EPHS, effective 2026-2027 school year; Kate Mendillo, Paraprofessional at Kent Heights, effective 2026-2027 school year; Meghan Johnson, Paraprofessional at Oldham Pre-K, effective 2026-2027 school year; Neida Gilmete, School Counselor at MMS (1 yr. only), effective 2026-2027 school year; Stacy Hofstetter, Teacher at Oldham Pre-K, effective 2026-2027 school year; Emily Diggle, Grade 5 Teacher at Silver Spring, effective 2026-2027 school year; Diana Ferreira, MLL Family Liaison at Central Admin, effective 2026-2027 school year; Kayla Davis, Grade 4 Teacher at Waddington, effective 2026-2027 school year; Mikayla Kiernan, School Psychologist – District, effective 2026-2027 school year; Madison Enos, Paraprofessional at Whiteknact, effective 2026-2027 school year; Cara Kotsiris, Administrative Assistant to Superintendent, effective 7/29/26; Kaileen Field, Resource Teacher at Riverside Middle School, effective 2026-2027 school year; Jessie Godfrey, Connections Teacher at Silver Spring, effective 2026-2027 school year; Lisa Verrette, ALP Lead Teacher, effective 2026-2027 school year; Olympia Good, Paraprofessional at Silver Spring, effective 2026-2027 school year; Sean Salisbury, Paraprofessional at Whiteknact, effective 2026-2027 school year; Anthony Parisi, Paraprofessional at Myron J. Francis, effective 2026-2027 school year; Nicholas Soucy, Paraprofessional at Silver Spring, effective 2026-2027 school year; and Victoria Carroll, Paraprofessional at Oldham Pre-K, effective 2026-2027 school year.

Resignations – Kristi Lombardo, School Counselor, effective 7/14/26; Steven Ribeiro, Maintenance, effective 7/20/26; and Madison Dulúde, Staff Accountant, effective 8/6/26.

Retirements – Sharon Corsi, Administrative Assistant to Superintendent, effective 7/31/26.

Leaves of Absence – None

5. Bill List

- Voucher No. 1076 dated 7/29/26 - \$5,338.00
- Voucher No. 1077 dated 7/29/26 - \$234,025.48
- Voucher No. 1090 dated 8/11/26 - \$885,586.57
- Voucher No. 1092 dated 8/11/26 - \$784,843.71

6. Stage III Invoices - MMS/Waddington Projects for July 2026

- Ai3 Basic Services MMS - \$59,078.54
- Peregrine Group – MMS - \$50,600.00
- Peregrine Group – Wadd - \$21,780.00
- Shawmut – MMS - \$2,355,174.28
- Shawmut – Wadd - \$203,209.48
- Willscot - MMS – \$2,943.97
- PODS - MMS - \$233.20
- Thielsch Engineering – MMS - \$6,626.50
- HAS, Inc. – MMS - \$3,513.77
- East Prov Schools – MMS - \$3,513.77
- East Prov Schools – MMS - \$4,000.00
- WB Mason – MMS - \$7,430.00

Total \$2,718,103.51

Motion by Mr. Queenan, seconded by Mr. deSimas and carried unanimously to approve the consent agenda as submitted.

III. Superintendent's Report

1. Opening of Schools for 2026-2027 – Superintendent Perry presented a back-to-school timeline for the 2026-2027 opening of schools. He had meetings with all but one principal. One question he asked each principal was are you ready to open schools. They confirmed that were ready. Dr. Perry feels confident in opening in an efficient and professional way. August 17th will be elementary principals' first day; August 19-20 will be the leadership retreat; August 21 buildings will be open to teachers; August 25 is new teacher orientation; August 31 is a professional development day; and September 1 is Convocation where Superintendent Perry will be expressing his vision for the school year. September 2 is first day for students in Pre-K, grades 1-5, 6 and 9. September 3 all students except kindergarten report to school. September 4 is the first full day for kindergarten. Kindergarten screenings by appointment are being held on September 2 and 3. EPHS is doing a welcome back event on August 25 at 6pm. August 26 and 27 is a Pre-K event at 4pm. Myron J. Francis, Kent Heights, Whiteknact, Orlo Avenue, Waddington and Silver Spring has welcome back events at 4pm and 5pm on August 31. Hennessey will be holding an open house on September 1 at 4pm and Martin Middle School and Riverside Middle School will be hosting a meet the teachers night at 6pm on September 24.

2. Facilities/Building Committee Update – Dan Carpenter

Waddington - Gym floor has been replaced, along with the front gym entrance hallway, and

stairs in the front and back of the gym. This also included flooring in the gym closet and kitchen area. The new dishwasher is being hooked up now that the floor has been replaced, and ready for use this coming school year.

Riverside Middle School - Sidewalk caulking repairs have been completed.

Orlo - Sidewalk work continues between Pawtucket Hot Mix and The City DPW. The goal is to have everything finished by August 17th. City DPW poured sidewalks on 8/4 and 8/5 on Blanche ave.

Francis - Due to PHMA paving city streets, they have had insufficient manpower to be able to complete the Orlo sidewalks and Francis sidewalks at the same time. This will push Francis to possible Saturday work during the school year, or in between the 17th and Sept 1st.

EPHS Track - The expansion joint channel has been cut into the track, leveled with sand, and poured with an elastomeric silicone topcoat. This should alleviate the cracking around the track that we have seen previously, and keep out any water from entering the track underside. The far side of the track is still to be completed.

EPHS - Arden has been working to complete the electrical and gas hookups needed for the new oven in the kitchen. Auditorium stage painting will be taking place to improve the look of the stage. Due to tape and the material used, it will continue to peel off and delaminate eventually without looking into a replacement flooring in the future. Discussions will have to be had as to what material and further action will be taken for future improvements.

Silver Spring - Countertops and cabinet refinishing is taking place by our painters and carpenter in select rooms downstairs.

Kent Heights - Windriver replaced and completed the grease trap in the kitchen on July 20th.

All RTUs and univent filters have been replaced throughout the district. Fire Dept and building inspection walkthroughs are being scheduled for this coming week. All fire suppression/alarm system inspections are to take place next week. Mr. Carpenter will be sending out an updated schedule of when the schools are fully completed. He has been supplying daily updates to the Superintendent as to the status of buildings.

Building Committee Report - July 2026

Martin Middle School

Paving crew will mobilize on Tuesday 8/11, with work to begin on Wednesday through Friday. Striping will be taking place on the 21st. Sidewalks and curbing has all been finished which will give access to the new parking lot for the upcoming school year. Outside work continues with fiber cement panels and masonry. Interior insulation is ongoing with sheetrock boarding starting to close up walls. MEP trades are ongoing with HVAC, electrical and low voltage. Ceiling work will start in the playground area.

Waddington

Gym floor was completed with striping on Friday August 7th. Final cleanup and the back stairways were completed also. The 11-month warranty walkthrough to take place on Friday, August 14th.

3. Finance Presentation – Mr. Crowley, Mr. Balducci and Mr. Piccerelli presented a finance and budget overview of Fiscal Year 2025; Fiscal Year 2026; and Fiscal Year 2027.

Leadership Transition – Superintendent Perry stated that the Finance Director resigned effective June 26, 2026. The new Superintendent's contract began on July 1, 2026. The new Controller began on July 7, 2026. The Staff Accountant resigned effective August 4, 2026. Mr. Crowley and Mr. Balducci were brought on to address audit and budget planning. Mr. Piccerelli (Controller) was elevated to Acting Director of Finance. The purpose is to get everyone on the same page with a financial outlook of the past, present and future.

Mr. Joseph Balducci is currently a consultant with CLA which is a company that provides audits. He recently retired as a Finance Director for the City of Cranston. Mr. Joseph Crowley has been a long time consultant to the East Providence School Department and to several different districts. Mr. Mark Piccerelli is the Controller and has been elevated to the position of Acting Director of Finance and will provide information as to the District's current status.

Fiscal Year 2025 – The audit for FY25 has not been completed and this is not unique to East Providence. Mr. Balducci will be working on getting this completed so that the district is in compliance with the law. East Providence has been late with getting information to the auditors.

At the end of the fiscal year, it is necessary for a school department to show a balanced budget. Finance Directors use accounting and finance strategies to close out the fiscal year within budget limits. As part of the process, an audit is completed by an auditing firm and the findings are presented to the School Committee. The 2024-2025 audit is currently being performed by CBIZ. Per RI General Laws, audits need to be completed within six months of the close of the fiscal year. The East Providence School Department audit has been delayed due to reporting deficiencies. Once all relevant data has been reported to CBIZ, the audit will be presented to the School Committee and the Auditor General. A recent analysis of the 2025 budget showed that the district is on track to close FY25 with a balanced budget. Providing for proper accounting and reporting allows the district to create an accurate trial balance.

Fiscal Year 2026 – Following the adoption of a budget by the School Committee, a school department begins using allocated funds and collecting revenue from various sources such as the State of Rhode Island. In consideration of current spending trends and an analysis of previous years' expenditures and revenues, it has been determined that East Providence School Department will end the fiscal year with a potential deficit of approximately \$1.3 million. Transportation, out of district special education tuition, health care, energy costs and individual line items are driving the projected deficit.

A projected deficit was reported to the City and Auditor General, per RI General Laws. Superintendent Perry stated that you have to report to the Auditor General within five days if they are in a deficit. There will be another meeting in a month.

At their most recent meeting with the Auditor General, School and City officials collaborated to respond to the concerns of the Auditor General, who continues to monitor the District's financial status. Mr. Piccerelli to give a final trial balance to the Auditor General by the end of the week.

Fiscal Year 2027 – The Fiscal Year 2027 budget is under development. Salaries and benefits represent over 80% of the budget. Salaries and benefits also represent the greatest source of potential budget reductions. Replacements for the recent retirees provide a modest reduction in the salary line. However, other layoffs necessary to reduce the salary budget were not made before the June 1st deadline. Therefore, it will be difficult to reduce the overall operating budget.

Principals and Directors have made requests for the remaining 20% of the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. It will be necessary to closely consider requests for items like equipment, furniture and fixtures. Multi-year contracts for educational and administrative software exist. A request for \$450,000 software is under review. The budget for special education is driven by services required by the individual education plans (IEP). The most significant portion of the Special Education budget is tuitions for students receiving services outside the school district.

A relief may come from recent legislation related to the Bradley School. The change means Bradley students' home districts will now be billed for their tuition. East Providence may see a reduction of around \$1,000,000 in out-of-district expenses.

The athletics budget does not contain any potential reductions if the current offering of athletic programs is maintained. The transportation budget is determined by a contract. The provider may charge the school department for fuel costs that rise above a certain threshold. Fuel price increases during the past year have triggered that.

Items related to building maintenance are often a source of potential cuts. However, even drastic cuts will have a relatively small impact on the total budget. Delayed building maintenance often leads to more costly building maintenance, so relatively small cuts to the maintenance budget are anticipated.

Budgets for other programs and departments are small and offer limited potential for reductions. As budget projections for FY27 are developed, the School Committee will be provided with timely updates.

Superintendent Perry stated that they do need to tighten up some procedures and provide appropriate reporting. The goal going forward is that the School Committee will be provided information with the guidance of the finance department so they are able to make sound decisions.

IV. Policy Committee Report

1. EPSD Financial Reporting and Oversight Policy – 1st read

This item was tabled. More collaboration is needed with the finance consultants.

2. Staff Hiring Policy Proposed Revision – 1st read

This policy was changed in 2020. The Superintendent still has the legal authority to appoint employees. There was some discussion under the section Appointment Authority regarding principals shall recommend the hiring of athletic coaches. The wording should be changed. Legal counsel has reviewed this first read.

V. Public Comments

1. Renee Ignacio followed up to say thank you to Superintendent Perry for responding to her emails. She had some questions with the transportation being overbudget. She stated that Mr. deSimas put a 10% cap for fuel in the contract. The budget is way over and Dr. Perry said he would look into it. Currently the total expenditures and encumbrances exceeded the budget due to the blanket purchase order. The actual transportation overbudget is at \$581,260K. The other issue is with 44% overbudget in the private section that were \$1,703,000 overbudget. She thanked Dr. Perry for answering her questions and will be sending more questions in.

VI. Discussion / Action Items

1. Yondr Pouches – Ms. Benedetti-Ramzi reported that the purpose of this document is to provide the School Committee with an overview of Rhode Island's new requirements regarding student cell phone use in schools and to consider Yondr pouches as our plan for East Providence's implementation. RI General Law 16-21-43 requires every public school to adopt a policy governing student personal electronic devices. The law requires: a bell-to-bell ban on student access to personal internet-connected devices (such as smartphones and tablets) during the school day, effective August 1, 2026.

Students may not have physical access to personal electronic devices during the school day. Districts must notify parents annually of the policy. Exceptions must be provided for students with IEPs or Section 504 Plans depending on the disability and team decision; medical needs such as glucose monitoring; assistive technology; and approved multilingual learner language access supports, if necessary. School personnel may not search the contents of devices that are secured by the school during the school day. Each district must submit its policy to the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE).

Yondr is a lockable magnetic pouch system that allows students to maintain possession of their phones while preventing access during the school day.

Upon arrival, students place phones in the pouch; ensure the pouch is locked by the evidence of the appearance of the pouch locking system; and keep the pouch with them throughout the day. At the end of the day, students unlock the pouch at designated unlocking stations before leaving campus.

Benefits of this plan – supports compliance with Rhode Island's "no physical access" requirement; eliminates classroom distractions; increases student engagement and face-to-face interaction; reduces social media conflicts during the school day; limits unauthorized photography and video recording; and students maintain possession of their personal property.

The cost of a Yondr pouch is approximately \$25-\$35 per student. Using grant funds, the quote for EPHS, MMS and RMS is \$71,764.

The next steps are to create a school committee policy which has been drafted. The Policy Subcommittee will review and present for school committee approval. Create school implementation plans – Yondr held a kick-off meeting with secondary principals and assistant principals. Representatives from Yondr will be visiting the secondary schools and will work with each school and district administration to plan for every school site. Schools will develop their procedures. AFT and NEA support this bill to get cellphones out of the classrooms. This is an unfunded mandate. Mr. Luiz is on the record as being against this mandate. Mr. Ferreira is not supporting it. Ms. Beauchaine stated that for \$70K they could hire a behavioral specialist for the year instead of locking up cellphones.

2. Overview of Extended School Year (ESY) – Ms. Beauchaine requested this information which was received in their packet. Her questions were answered. Superintendent Perry read some positive feedback from parents regarding the ESY program.

3. Kindergarten Placement Update – Ms. Beauchaine inquired if parents received messages letting them know where their child will be placed. Superintendent Perry stated that principals have notified kindergarten parents on their child's placement. Updates will be emailed to the school committee. Myron J. Francis and Orlo kindergarten classes are open. All others are at capacity.

VII. Announcements – Ms. Beauchaine announced that Ms. Benedetti-Ramzi was just the messenger regarding the Yondr pouch mandate and their discussion/responses were not geared towards her directly. She also announced that on Aug. 22 from 9-12pm the Bridgepointe Christian Church will hold its Back to School fair at the high school. It is for students in Pre-K to grade 5 to receive school supplies at no charge. Parents need to register first.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. deSimas, seconded by Mr. Queenan and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Sharon Corsi, Executive Assistant


Anthony Ferreira, School Committee Clerk