
EAST PROVIDENCE SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING OPEN SESSION – August 25, 2026

I. Call to Order Open Session

The East Providence School Committee met in open session on Tuesday, August 25, 2026 at 4:30 pm at the East Providence School Department Administration Office. Mr. Luiz called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm. Members present: David Luiz, Chair, Antonio deSimas, Vice Chair, Anthony Ferreira, Clerk, Jessica Beauchaine and Ryan Queenan. Superintendent Perry, Assistant Superintendent Benedetti-Ramzi, Mark Piccerelli, Acting Finance Director, Jessica Arruda and Consultants Joseph Crowley and Joseph Balducci were also present. The Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence were observed.

II. Budget Workshop I

Dr. Perry presented a preliminary 2027 budget framework. He stated that he wasn't sure how to approach this but had some guidance from the finance department and consultants. A document was provided for discussion. This budget workshop is a first of possibly three more before the proposed budget is presented to the School Committee for approval and then the City Council 45 days prior to the end of the fiscal year. The framework was open for discussion. The goal is be on the same page to create a final budget.

Purpose – This preliminary framework is intended to support public discussion of the FY2027 operating budget. It is a planning model – not a final adopted budget – and is designed around meeting contractual and student-service obligations and beginning a disciplined approach to long-term fiscal stewardship.

Executive Summary – The proposed FY2027 approach is best understood as a stabilization and restructuring budget rather than an expansion budget. The district enters planning with an estimated \$1.3M FY2026 operating deficit concentrated in special education, transportation, health insurance, substitutes and energy. At the same time, a 4% increase in city support and increased state aid provide an opportunity to stabilize those recurring pressures, fund a contractual increase for employees and capture savings from approximately 30 teacher and secretary retirements. However, continued salary and benefits obligations will continue to strain the overall budget.

Superintendent Perry went through key planning assumptions and examples of increased contractual and fixed expenditures such as salaries, benefits, prof/tech services, property services, other services, supplies, property and miscellaneous items and examples of revenue such as local funds, state aid, tuition, rental income, refund prior yr exp, Medicaid, TIAA reimbursement and other for FY2026 budgeted, FY2027 proposed (draft) and \$ increase/decrease over 2026.

Projected Deficit – \$6,527,422 (projected increase in expenses); \$3,591,258 (projected increase in revenue) = (\$3,031,213).

Why the FY2026 Deficit Must Be Addressed First – The projected \$1.3M FY2026 deficit is concentrated in special education, transportation, health insurance, substitutes and energy. These are not primarily discretionary or one-time expenditures. They are core operating costs that are likely to recur. The FY2027 budget should, therefore, increase the underlying appropriations in these accounts to realistic levels rather than carrying the deficit forward or relying on year-end transfers. The framework reserves \$1.3M to correct the current structural imbalance.

The model assumes a contractual increase for employees. The district benefits from normal turnover because replacement employees will generally enter at lower salary levels than long-serving retirees. Separately, the framework contemplates eliminating 8 positions across four bargaining units late enough in the fiscal year that only approximately two months of savings would be realized in FY2027. A conservative \$175,000 is recognized in FY2027. The more significant benefit would occur in FY2028 when the full savings could approach \$1M, depending on the actual positions selected and their salary and benefit costs.

Open for discussion

Mr. deSimas inquired about the money that is owed the City. Superintendent Perry explained that in 2023 there was a change in legislation which changed the distribution of money from the state. Distribution was twice per year and was changed to a monthly distribution. The City finance department and the school finance department had to come up with a plan. The City would forward the school department \$5M and every time the district got a monthly distribution, the district would pay it back within five years. The balance to the City is approximately \$750K. The school department has requested that they not pay this month and asked for an extension to cover payroll.

Ms. Beauchaine stated that the previous finance director stated that the district had \$4M cash on hand. It was presented in a confidential document included with the finance report. After paying off the Riverside Middle School window project there is a \$3M balance in case the money was needed. She inquired if this was a misrepresentation and stated that the committee deserves an explanation.

Superintendent Perry stated that the Acting Finance Director, Mark Piccerelli, reviewed that inquiry and found that the money was used to pay bills. The \$4M referred to was regular monthly finances.

Mr. Ferreira inquired how the project was paid if it was coming to the district through reimbursement. He would like it put in writing if the City gives the district a payment plan.

Superintendent Perry intends to inform the school committee in advance going forward.

Mr. Piccerelli stated that the monthly payable system is flawed and is affecting cash flow. New implementation needs school committee approval. He can manage it as a finance director. Superintendent Perry stated that the acting finance director and acting controller will utilize the school accounting system and come November 1 they will make sure everything is put in correctly. He acknowledged that the district can do much better with reporting. They have already implemented a new payroll system.

Facilities Stewardship – The district has to address the facilities stewardship for buildings. The budget does not propose a School Facilities Capital Reserve. This is a concern because such a reserve would address two simultaneous responsibilities; preserving the community's investment in newer facilities, including the 2021 high school and the 2025-2027 middle school/pre-k investments; and addressing ongoing capital needs in older school buildings.

Capital funds should be reserved for major lifecycle and replacement needs such as HVAC systems, roofs, electrical and plumbing infrastructure, building envelope work, paving, security systems and other assets with multi-year useful lives. Routine repairs and preventive maintenance should remain in the operating budget. Establishing this now will reduce the likelihood that future major repairs must be financed by diverting instructional funds.

Budget Principles for FY2027 – Restore structural balance before adding significant new recurring commitments; Honor contractual obligations while using retirement turnover to moderate payroll growth; Rebase special education, transportation, health, substitutes and energy to realistic expenditure levels; Protect classroom, technology, multilingual learner and professional development resources from fixed cost pressure; Begin recurring capital funding to protect both new and existing school facilities; Plan for the creation of meaningful contingency rather than budgeting every available dollar; and Use the position reductions to improve the district's long-term cost structure, not as the primary mechanism for balancing FY2027.

Impact on Educational Offerings – Consideration must be given to the impact of budget cuts on students. If full time teaching positions are eliminated, there is a potential of increasing class sizes. This is never good for student achievement. If positions that don't impact class sizes, such as social workers or school counselors, are eliminated, students may not receive the additional support they need to be successful. Also, the proposed draft budget framework does not provide curriculum update requirements. Many positions are required by law.

Items to Verify Before Final Adoption – Final FY2026 deficit by account and year-end expenditure projections; Exact teacher/secretary retirement roster and replacement salary placements; The estimate of contractual salary schedules and step/lane movement; Actual special education placements, tuition rates and categorical reimbursements; Positions proposed for reduction and their two-month/full-year loaded savings; Final state aid notices and any changes in other recurring revenue; and A prioritized multi-year facilities plan governing use of the capital reserve.

There was discussion regarding the sale of the East Bay Educational Collaborative and where the money will be utilized, which was to be approved by the school committee. Mr. Balducci stated that the funds went into the general fund.

Superintendent Perry stated that this is what they have for a budget framework to present to the school committee. Moving forward an accurate report will be presented to the school committee of money held by the City for the high school project with an up to date amount of money and how it can be spent. Quarterly or monthly reports would allow the committee to utilize funds. RIDE provides a report and some of it is reimbursable. Superintendent Perry will ask Ms. DaSilva from Peregrine for a report on projects reimbursable from RIDE. With the new administration, there will be a culture of clarity with all funds. Mr. deSimas stated that it is important to have a capital improvement plan, not a capital plan.

Dr. Perry stated that for purpose of this budget process, budget proposals were created after meeting with principals and directors. His intention going forward is to get the best reporting and looking for a system that is more transparent. He will be working with four people and asking good questions The committee deserves to see specific line items in the budget. The next meeting he will provide more specific information and details.

Ms. Beauchaine stated they might want to revisit Use of Property procedures. Mr. Ferreira inquired about the \$200K in rental and if it includes all rentals at the high school. The \$200K is for all buildings being utilized. Mr. Ferreira would like to eliminate rentals at the high school and would like a breakdown from each school but focus on what the high school is bring in for revenue.

Mr. Crowley stated that the high school building belongs to the city, operated by the school department. The city sees it as revenue.

The next budget workshop will be held on Wednesday, September 2 at 5pm at the high school.

III. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Queenan, seconded by Mr. Ferreira and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Sharon Corsi, Executive Assistant


Anthony Ferreira, School Committee Clerk