EAST PROVIDENCE SPECIAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING
OPEN SESSION – September 14, 2026

I. Call to Order Open Session

The East Providence School Committee met in open session on Monday, September 14, 2026 at 5:30 pm in the auditorium at East Providence High School. Mr. Luiz called the meeting to order at 5:31 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, Interim Finance Director, Jessica Arruda, Interim Controller and Consultant Joseph Crowley were also present. The Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence were observed.

Motion by Mr. Queenan, seconded by Mr. deSimas and carried unanimously to move up Action Item #1 Contract for Kent Heights Assistant Principal.

Motion by Mr. deSimas, seconded by Mr. Ferreira and carried unanimously to approve the contract for the Kent Heights Assistant Principal as submitted. Superintendent Perry stated that James Zanfini has a decades long career as a building administrator and teacher and was recommended for this position by the panel of members on the interview committee. Mr. Zanfini will support the principal at Kent Heights and will start immediately.

II. Budget Workshop Session IV

Superintendent Perry stated this budget session is the final opportunity to ask any last minute questions. He is hoping for the Committee to vote on the proposed budget. This budget looks different than many of the budgets in the past and one which is proposing a deficit. He has a proposed budget prepared to address concerns and proposed budget reduction options. Having met with members of the team, they feel that they have the knowledge to plan for a reduction across the board. There will be negotiations with two unions, rising utility costs, transportation cand special educations costs, specifically out-of-district placements that they need to pay attention to throughout the year. Dr. Perry is confident going forward to present and monitor a budget to the Committee next year. He stated that his primary goal has been to be transparent and realistic about the fiscal situation. He presented two documents - the same one provided last month, the FY2027 proposed budget summary and the FY2027 budget document which has been updated for this meeting.

Superintendent Perry presented the following six budget reduction options at a glance and stated that during times of financial strain, school departments look for savings in various organizational areas. Below are examples of six such areas. These do not represent all the places where savings or reductions can be found. They are presented for the purpose of providing context to the idea of closing budget deficits. Every dollar amount in this synopsis is an illustrative planning estimate built on stated assumptions, not a validated figure from the district's financial system. The document contains no employee names, no individual salary figures, no student data and identifies no bargaining unit. It is important to note that the

information below is provided for the purpose of planning, and does not represent any formal reduction plan.

1. Operational and non-personnel cuts: school departments reduce or find savings in various programs or operations.
2. Certified staff reduction: school departments eliminate or reduce positions to find savings.
3. Close school(s) and redistrict: school departments move students to different schools to find savings.
4. Zero-percent first-year wage increase: school districts do not provide raises to employees to find savings.
5. Early retirement incentive: school districts provide benefits to veteran staff members to find savings.
6. Expanded walk distance / transportation: school districts expand the distance a student must live from school in order to receive bussing.

Mr. Piccerelli informed the Committee that budgetary practices were going to become much stronger going forward. They are utilizing better accounting software and will be providing more detailed monthly reports to the School Committee so they can be better informed about the district's accounting. Dr. Perry stated that they are confident that going forward they will be able to present to the Committee and monitor a budget that will look much better next year.

Mr. Luiz asked Mr. Piccerelli if there were any changes to the proposed budget from last week to this week. He responded that most changes were from line items that were improperly coded. Also, since the last meeting, they received two new students coming into the district which has increased costs. Mr. desimas stated that this will be a much easier process going forward with the proper coding.

Mr. Luiz asked Mr. Crowley, in his expert opinion, in what is presented from Superintendent Perry, can anything be changed. Mr. Crowley stated that things weren't good going into this. The district is carrying almost $2M from last year. The Superintendent has given a list to reduce costs in the future, but not in FY27 budget.

Mr. Queenan inquired about strategies going forward and what steps will be taken for the district to close the gap. Mr. Piccerelli stated that if they could approve to have a weekly accounts payable, it would be easier to allocate money and easier to manage.

Superintendent Perry stated that they have a solid finance team and are in the process of adding a staff accountant. They need some tangible ideas on how to close this deficit budget. Several ways were brought up in his budget reduction options report. They want to be able to count on legislators to assist in the State of RI to provide adequate funding and increase aid to East Providence. That will have an enormous impact. They are one of many districts experiencing this same situation. He stated that they have been thoughtful about this deficit and need to make significant moves and be transparent.

Mr. Ferreira inquired if the budget is $106,866,061 or $110,698,003. Superintendent Perry confirmed the budget is $106,866,061 which will be presented to the City Council. Although the

budget amounts to $106.8M in total revenue, including a maximum 4% increase in local aid from the City, the budget projects $110,698,003 in anticipated expenditures.

Mr. Ferreira stated that this presentation was an excellent start on the budget reduction options but was disappointed that the Committee didn't get this information sooner. He said the budget has the same issues that were on the last budget and is not supporting it. The budget reduction options have no dollar amount, dates or goals included.

The Superintendent noted that he has now been in the role for approximately eight weeks. He expressed that it would have been beneficial for the School Committee to have received certain information or materials prior to his start, rather than after. He is not happy about not giving specific numbers this evening but stresses the importance of transparency with what is being put forward. He emphasized that the priorities and initiatives currently being introduced are not new to the school department and many represent ideas and proposals that have been under discussion prior to this year.

Dr. Perry characterized the current proposal as the best budget the district has to put forward and highlighted the following points:

- Opening of schools was very successful.
- The district experienced the departure of a staff accountant.
- A new Finance Director has since been hired.
- He described this budget as "a start," noting that it presents several significant topics for the Committee's consideration.

Mr. Luiz asked Mr. Crowley if anything from the Superintendent's list could have been worked on if it was given to them five weeks ago. Mr. Crowley responded that it wouldn't have made a difference a month ago. All of the items on that list would see a significant savings in a future budget, not the FY27 budget. These reductions will happen in 2028. They do not have the tools to do anything significantly during this coming year.

Ms. Beauchaine stated that they have been discussing budget reductions for weeks. 80% of the budget is accounted for and can't be touched. There are also several unfunded mandates. They need to figure out what's best for children and work from there.

Mr. Piccerelli stated that if the proposed budget is approved, the Committee will see monthly reports from the accounting software through the fiscal year. He thanked the department heads and school principals for their help.

Mr. deSimas stated that Dr. Perry and team has done a great job to redo all the accounting from last year. Once the team gets a handle on this, the Committee will be able to tackle it.

Mr. Luiz asked Mr. Crowley if the Committee received this information in January 2026, were there things that could have been done. Mr. Crowley stated that there are a number of things that could have been put in place at that time.

Ms. Beauchaine asked what would happen if the Committee refused to pass the proposed budget before them. Mr. Crowley responded that it would violate state law and the state and City could then deny any more money.

The proposed budget needs to be presented to the City Council by September 16, 2026.

III. Discussion /Action Items

1. Contract for Kent Heights Assistant Principal – This item was moved up on the agenda.

2. Proposed 2026-2027 School Budget
Motion by Mr. deSimas, seconded by Ms. Beauchaine and carried by a vote of 4-1 to approve the proposed 2026-2027 school budget as submitted with what Mr. Crowley confirmed that the school department has to pass a budget with the City Council forty-five days before the end of the fiscal year. If a budget is not passed, the City Council could deny money. Mr. Ferreira voted nay.

IV. Adjournment
Motion by Ms. Beauchaine, seconded by Mr. deSimas and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Corsi, Executive Assistant

Anthony Ferreira, School Committee Clerk