Regular School Committee Meeting
Minutes - March 24, 2026

Vice Chair; Shelley Reed called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm in the Agawam Junior High School Auditorium.

Roll Call of Attendance Present: **6** ; Absent: **1**.

Citizen's Speak Time: There were two people who signed up for Citizen speak this evening.
Shelley Reed read the rules about Citizen Speak before the first speaker approached the podium. Each speaker had to include their name and address before they spoke.

Dana Henry from 152 Franklin Street was the first speaker. Dana was here tonight to give the town a quick update about Rosie Robotics. Rosie Robotics has been around for 25 years. They are currently ½ way through another competition season and have been in the shop since January 10th. The first competition was two weeks ago at Western New England University (WNEU). The competition went well, out of 38 teams - Rosie seated 10th. They placed 10th after qualification matches and then they were picked to go into the playoffs. In the playoffs, the team went 2 and down - Rosie went down epically in flames. It just wasn't their day. The next event will be at the University of Vermont next week. If they qualify, the 2026 New England First District Championships is scheduled for April 15–18, 2026, at the Eastern States Exposition (The Big E) in West Springfield, MA. Come to the competition, even if we don't make it. It is a great time! After that, onto World Championships in Houston if we qualify. Thank you for the support!

The second speaker was **John Elwell** of 56 Emerson Road. I won't take up much time, but I wanted to take a moment to highlight the incredible work our students are doing. Rosie is truly student-driven, led by our high schoolers with a level of ownership and pride that is inspiring to see. We have a group that includes up to five female students and seven seniors. Our students are actively participating in some way, demonstrating a strong sense of community, responsibility, and engagement. What makes this especially meaningful is that this effort is not being directed from the top down—it is being shaped and carried forward by the students themselves. They are collaborating, leading, and supporting one another, creating something that reflects their voices and their commitment.

HighLights on Education: Academic A's

Shelley Reed - This is one of our favorite events that we look forward to every year. Shelley then introduced all of the dignitaries that were at the event. They included George Bitzas, Cecilia Calabrese, Peter McNair, Christine Rickmon, Anthony Suffriti, Ed Borgatti and Dino Mercadante. At that point Shelley Reed turned it over to Superintendent Martin.

Superintendent Martin explained that the Academic A's originated over 25 years ago by former School Committee member, Susan Pettazzoni who is in the audience with us tonight. The Academic A's are awarded to those students who have maintained a grade point average of 3.0 or better for their freshman, sophomore and junior years as well as the first semester of their senior year. There are 130 students being honored this evening. This growth can be attributed not only to the hard work of the students, but also to their teachers, administrators and the parents who stress the importance of academic excellence.

All students were called up to the stage one by one and shook hands with all of the School Committee Members, City Council members in attendance, the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent. After the last student's name was called, all of the students were asked to return on stage for a group picture.

Superintendent Notes:

- Spring sports at the high school are now in full swing. Thank you to our Athletic Director, Karen Gomez and her staff for making all of the necessary accommodations around the construction site at the high school. There are many moving parts involved in ensuring everything runs smoothly. Information can be found on the High School Website, under Athletics.

- MCAS testing has begun and will run through May. Following today's ELA session at the high school, we want to emphasize that these assessments provide critical data for our school. Please join us in encouraging your students to put forth their best effort.

- The next Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council meeting will take place on March 30th, virtually, at 5:30 p.m. I would like to thank the parents who joined me in January who provided feedback on school-home engagement and new kindergartener information.

Student Advisory Committee Representative Update: Aiden Therrien

- **ECC** - ECC recently held a successful Kindergarten Information Night with 94 families in attendance. They would like to thank Elementary Principals, Kindergarten Teachers, Central Office Staff, and the AHS Child Development class for providing childcare during the event. Students have also been participating in reading challenges as part of their "Reading Rockstars" initiative. Looking ahead, teachers are preparing for preschool screenings for Fall 2026, and ECC will host a Literacy and STEAM Night on April 7th.

- **Granger** - Kindergarten screening for incoming students will take place on March 24th and March 25th. On March 31st, students will attend a schoolwide laser show assembly. Looking ahead, ELA MCAS testing will take place on April 7th and 8th, and Kindergarten students will go on a field trip to the Holyoke Children's Museum at Amelia Park on April 8th.

- **Sapelli** - The school continues its efforts to build community through its monthly schoolwide morning announcement assembly, where students come together for announcements, recognitions, and a shared message. Sapelli also recently hosted its Kindergarten Information Night, welcoming incoming families and sharing information about the transition into elementary school.

- **Phelps** - Spring Picture Day will take place tomorrow, March 25th. In addition, Phelps will host its STEAM Fair on March 26th from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

- **Clark** - The Scholastic Book Fair will run from March 30th through April 2nd, followed by Family Bingo Night on April 2nd from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Students will also take the ELA MCAS on April 7th and April 8th.

- **Doering** - On March 20th, twenty of the sixth-grade students attended the "Write On!" conference at Westfield State University, where they participated in writing workshops and shared their work with others.

- **Junior High** - Physical education classes have begun a volleyball unit with teams representing countries from around the world, leading up to an all-school tournament. The Band and Choir will hold their concert on March 26th at 7:00 pm, and the next Social Night will take place on March 27th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

Students are also continuing course registration for next year, and MCAS ELA testing will take place on April 13th and April 15th.

- **High School** - AHS will host the MICCA Music Festival on March 27th and 28th, and the Winter Guard continues its strong season with another first-place finish and upcoming performances, including their community show and New England Finals. In addition, several students have been recognized for outstanding achievements. Anthony Barbarani earned the MIAA Sportsmanship Award for ice hockey, and Keira Murphy was named MIAA Student Athlete of the Month. Rosie Robotics also had a strong showing at Western New England University, finishing in the top 10 and earning the Innovation in Control Award. Peer Leadership students have begun visiting Doering School to work with sixth graders on decision-making and leadership skills.

Unfinished Business: **SCR - 26-36 -Full-Day Pre-K Pilot Program Tuition Rate.**

- On a motion made by *AJ Christopher* and seconded by *Dawn DeMatteo* the committee via roll call, voted to approve the $400.00 full day tuition rate per month for the PreK pilot program.
    - ***Vote : 6 to 1 absent.***

Business Meeting:

- **Routine Matters**
    - Approval of Minutes - On a motion made by *Michael Perry* and seconded by *Wendy Rua* the committee via roll call, voted to approve the **March 10, 2026,** regular meeting minutes.
        - ***Vote : 6 to 1 absent.***

- **Warrants/Transfers**
    - On a motion made by *AJ Christopher* and seconded by *Wendy Rua* , the committee via roll call, voted to approve the following warrants as read: ***Vote : 6 to 1 absent.***

SW- 26-93	$23,120.40
SW-26-94	$1,240,379.13
SW-26-95	$17,533.59
SW-26-96	$43,607.34
SW-26-97	$71,180.63
SW-26-98	$21,539.74
SW-26-99	$58,554.70

- **Reports**
    - Agawam Junior High School Program of Studies presented by Norm Robbins
        - Norm Robbins explained what to expect for the 2026-2027 program of studies. They are changing up things a little bit. Trying to modernize some of the classes and give students more electives to choose from.
            - Students will have fewer transitions with a 6 period day.
            - Longer classes periods to increase the depth of knowledge
            - More unified art classes
            - More student choice and voice
            - Rotating weekly schedule

- Teaming Model
- There was a Sample Student schedule in the presentation. Each day the students will have ELA, Math, Science and History. They are also required to take a ½ year of PE, Health, Literacy studies7 & 8 and STEM.
- 7th grade electives - students are required to take one from each category
  - Science & Information Technology
  - World Language & Cultures
  - Visual & Performing Arts
  - 16 additional electives to choose from
- 8th grade electives - students are required to take one from each category
  - World Language & Cultures
  - Visual and Performing Arts
  - 22 additional electives to choose from

Questions/Discussions:

Wendy Rua - I love this presentation—it's great to see how you're meeting students where they are and giving them the opportunity to experience new classes.

Norm Robbins - We reviewed several of the different scheduling options, and one of the most exciting changes is that students may now have the opportunity to take classes that they weren't be able to before. For example, a student can now take both band and a language class. This opens the door for more well-rounded experiences and allows students to explore multiple interests—opportunities that weren't possible under the previous schedule.

Michael Perry - Love this - giving the kids more electives is a great idea. With PE only being required for ½ year - a little more concerning that kids won't be moving all day. I love the STEM offerings and the outdoors classrooms. I look forward to seeing how the scheduling goes.

AJ Christopher - One quick question - Is the ½ PE going to be dry land or swimming?

Norm Robbins - It depends on the season, the weather will dictate whether students are inside or outside. It also depends on the time of year for which PE unit is being taught. With the new schedulings, the students will have a longer time for PE, approximately 45 minutes of actual class.

AJ Christopher- That is great - especially for the students who have swimming as the time they would get into the pool, it was time to get out. Swimming is a good unit for kids at this age to have. It's also wonderful to see that language classes are incorporating cultural experiences along with instruction. It is a great thing for our students to experience.

Norm Robbins - Teachers have worked hard on this. A special thank you to Superintendent Martin for her support and also for the support of our community.

Shelley Reed - Will this new schedule rotate? What if a student is consistently late and keep missing the same class?

Norm Robbins - Yes, this will be a weekly rotation. Having the weekly rotation is good for students especially for the students that are tardy. At least this way we know that they will not be missing the same class every day.

Shelley Reed - I like the idea of a longer class time.

Norm Robbins - This is a work in progress, we will tweak as we go.

Subcommittee Updates

AJ Christopher - First an update from LPVEC - this week students that sent in an application to enroll at LPVEC have been notified whether they have been accepted or or are on the waiting list. Also, early this evening we had a joint meeting with the City Council's School Budget Subcommittee and the School Committee to review the proposed FY27 budget.

New Business

- **SCR - 26-37 -Amendment to Article 23 - Teaching Hours and Teaching Load - Agawam Junior High School Schedule**- moves to unfinished business at next meeting.
- **SCR - 26-38 - Modifications to Unit A Contract (2025-2028)** - moves to unfinished business at next meeting.
- **SCR - 26-39 - Request for Approval of the Agawam Junior High School Program of Studies for the 2026-2027 School year** - moves to unfinished business at next meeting.

Policy Review - None

Any Other Items That May Legally come before the Committee

Heather Zielenski - It was very impressive that we had a 130 students receiving Academic A's tonight. Congratulations to Rosie Robics - great presentations - those kids work hard.

Michael Perry - Great to hear about the Robotic program even if it wasn't on the agenda tonight. To our senior students, enjoy this time. Enjoy your high school experience, it goes by fast. Congratulations to Superintendent Martin and her staff for all that you have done with the work on the budget - Very fiscally responsible

Wendy Rua - Senior year really does need to slow down—it's going by far too quickly, not just for our students, but for parents as well. Congratulations to all of the students who have earned Academic A's—this is an outstanding accomplishment and a true reflection of your hard work and commitment. And to the many parents in our audience tonight, congratulations to you as well. I also want to echo Mrs. DeMatteo's sentiment—it's wonderful to have the band back. It was great to hear from Rosie's coaches this evening. We actually have six girls now part of Rosie Robotics—a true game changer to have them on this team. I am proud to serve as a mentor for Rosie Robotics. Thank you to the district for its continued support of this incredible program.

Shelley Reed - The parade was wet, but fun. It was was great having the band marching at the parade this year.

Dawn DeMatteo - Just want to recap the rainy parade - Great to see the band who also won a lot of awards. Congratulations to all our Academic A's recipients.

Aiden Therrien - Nothing to say.

AJ Christopher - Congratulations to our seniors! Recent events have included the Spanish and French National Honor Society inductions, National Honor Society induction ceremony, and tonight's Academic A's celebration. Each

of these moments highlights the dedication and achievements of our students. A sincere thank you to Principal Blain for the leadership and support in making these events so meaningful for our school community. To our seniors—take a moment to slow down and truly enjoy this time. These milestones pass quickly, and while the real world is approaching fast, so are countless new opportunities.

The Vice Chair moved to adjourn the meeting on a motion made by *Michael Perry* and seconded by *Wendy Rua* without a vote "All those in favour say yea" and "All those opposed say nay.
Vote: Yea 6 to 1 absent .

The meeting concluded at - 7:59 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Collen DeGeorge
Executive Assistant to the School Committee

Wendy Rua
Committee Secretary