

**Minutes of the Swansea School Committee
Wednesday April 9th, 2025**

**Swansea Schools Administration Building
Norman B. Smith School Committee Room**

In Attendance at the Table:

Mr. Scott Holcomb Superintendent of Schools	Ms. Elizabeth White Asst. Superintendent of Schools	Mr. Sean Scanlon Director of Student Services
Mrs. Alanna Solitro School Committee Chair	Mrs. Sonya Barbosa School Committee Vice Chair	Mr. Thomas Rodrigues Jr. School Committee Member
Mr. James Carvalho School Committee Member	Mrs. Ana Ponte-Porto School Committee Member	Mrs. Joanne Rebelo Director of Finance/Operations

Student Representative – Abby Souza

Record of Minutes

- The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM.
- Mr. Rodrigues called for a moment of silence for those of the Armed Forces and law enforcement for all they have done.
- The open session was initiated with a roll call vote of all School Committee Members.
- The Committee was working with Consent Agenda for Items 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10.

2. Public Input:

A) Wendy Looker of 686 Wilbur Avenue and Nicole Perry of 2 Cheryl Drive spoke on behalf of CPAC and the parents and grandparents of Swansea students. The women thanked Mrs. Solitro for all of her hard work as the School Committee Chair. Mrs. Looker read a poem to describe Mrs. Solitro's hard work and dedication to the students of Swansea.

3. Discussion Items:

A) Be A Light Award – Melissa Bruce, Scott Sunaz-Lods, and Bonnie Oagles of Luther Elementary were chosen by School Committee Member, Ana Ponte-Porto. The three teachers were described as “a huge part of the success of the Social/Emotional Program at Luther” and “experienced, patient and kind, and dependable.” Mrs. Ponte-Porto explained that the three teachers were nominated by a coworker, and she knew that they were special enough to choose for this meeting's award.

A motion was made by Mr. Rodrigues to switch the order of Discussion Items B and C, which was seconded by Mr. Carvalho. A roll call vote was initiated: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mrs. Solitro – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.

B) Spotlight on Education – Mark G. Hoyle Elementary School

- i. Nurse Leslie Stoltz presented about establishing a morning meditation program for students who felt nervous, stressed, or overwhelmed. Mrs. Stoltz explained that starting this program to create a space for students to regulate themselves and start their day with mindfulness to help them throughout the day. Mrs. Stoltz explained that the program has been established and running for six months.
- ii. Mrs. Stoltz explained that six students were involved at the beginning of the program and that feedback has been positive from students, staff and parents. Mrs. Stoltz explained that the program has adjusted over the last six weeks and minor details have been updated to better the program.
- iii. Mrs. Stoltz explained that she reintroduced the CPR for Kids program to Hoyle and Gardner second graders and Luther and Brown students from all three grades. Mrs. Stoltz explained that the CPR classes were highly successful, and every class was full. Mrs. Stoltz explained that teaching CPR at a young age can build confidence, create a culture of preparedness, increase bystander CPR rates, retain information over time, encourage responsibility, and address emergencies at home.
- iv. Mrs. Stoltz explained the district totals for CPR across all of the schools and explained that all grade levels from 2-12 are offered to learn CPR.
- v. One of the Hoyle students explained that the mediation helped her calm down and relax when she has high energy in school. Another student explained the important skills she learned in the CPR class and how important the skills she learned were.
- vi. The Committee thanked Mrs. Stoltz for offering these programs for the students and expressed their gratitude for the skills these students are being taught at a young age.

C) Joseph Case High School student representative update

- i. The update was given by Abby Souza.
- ii. On April 4th, junior students Alexander Reed and Olivia Santos attended “Government Day” at the Massachusetts State House with history teacher, David Silva.
- iii. The theatre company closed their competition season two weeks ago at the Back Bay Arena Center in Boston. Their next performance will be of “Chocolate and the Chocolate Factory” which will be showing in May.
- iv. On Wednesday, April 2nd, the high school observed Autism Awareness Day where students and staff wore blue in honor of their fellow community members with autism.
- v. Senior Colin Treelore, attended the Massachusetts Music Association’s Allstate Festival where he played at Symphony Hall in Boston.
- vi. Students will be selecting their classes for the next school year next week.

D) Superintendent's Report

Mr. Holcomb expressed that the agenda looks different than normal and explained that Mrs. Rebelo, Mrs. White, and Mr. Scanlon were presenting the Superintendent's information alongside him.

i. FY26 budget and beyond – Cost Savings Measures

a. Mr. Holcomb explained that A&F Committee Member Doug Fiory asked for pricing on numerous programs that can be utilized towards the FY26 budget. Mr. Holcomb explained that the surround care program, the preschool program, the transportation contract, and user fees in sports, clubs and activities information are going to be discussed during this meeting before giving the A&F Committee the numbers.

b. Surround Care Program – Mrs. White explained that the program supports pre-K-5 students and runs all of the 180 days of the school year in the AM and PM. Mrs. White explained that the cost of any one session is \$13 a day per student or \$25 per student for attending both sessions. Mrs. White explained that there is a reduced price for families that have more than two students attending the program. Mrs. White explained that there is a half-day program within surround care that supports the students during the scheduled half-days across the district.

i. Mrs. White explained that there are numerous variables of the surround care program that can be utilized to fund more money.

ii. Mrs. White explained that the number of students enrolled in the program changes monthly based on parents' needs. Mrs. White explained that the AM session is the session that struggles with staffing the most.

iii. Mrs. White explained that the majority of staff in the surround care program are students.

iv. Mrs. White explained that she reached out to other districts about similar surround care programs and explained that most districts run their own programs, with pricing ranging from approximately \$65 to \$102 per week. Mrs. White explained that Swansea's program runs for \$65 per week.

V. Mrs. White explained that in her revenue breakout of the program, the surround care program has different revenue amounts each month due to the change in enrollment each month and parents paying for surround care in advanced. Mrs. White explained that an average of funds per month for the program is \$17,230 per month for FY25.

vi. Mrs. White explained that the summer program, which is a six-week program, could help to bring in more funding and support for parents in

the summer. Mrs. White explained that there are staff members who can be utilized during the summer, but the program director needs an answer as soon as possible to get the program running for this upcoming summer. Mrs. White explained that bringing in 50 students could bring in some revenue over the summer, but not nearly as much as expected. Mrs. White explained that other options could include offering the program over school vacation weeks or raising the cost of the program.

vii. Mr. Holcomb explained that he does not think anything should be changed currently, but that these options can be looked at for FY27 for any future budget issues. Mr. Holcomb explained that the program is flexible and has the opportunity to gain more revenue but advised that the committee does not need to make any changes right away. Mr. Carvahlo agreed and explained that increased fees can cause issues for families who may not be able to afford increased prices or fees.

viii. Mrs. Solitro asked if action needs to be taken currently for the summer program. Mrs. White clarified that the summer program of surround care needs to be voted on for the summer of 2025. Mr. Holcomb explained that the Park and Recreation would work alongside the surround care program to establish a summer program together. Mrs. White explained that she is meeting with Parks and Recreation and the surround care program to further discuss details of the summer program.

ix. Geraldine Mullaly of 990 Hortonville Road asked if someone pays ahead of time for the surround care program but doesn't utilize the service, do they get a reimbursement. Mrs. White said they do get reimbursed.

c. Preschool Tuition – Mr. Scanlon compared pricing of preschool programs from Swansea's preschool to other districts. Mr. Scanlon explained that the Hoyle School program is the program being focused on. Mr. Scanlon explained that most schools run a similar length program compared to ours, but we have five sessions of preschool compared to theirs. Mr. Scanlon explained that Hoyle has three preschool classrooms with half-day sessions.

i. Mr. Scanlon explained that price of Hoyle's preschool program costs \$2,090, which is similar to most other school districts. Mr. Scanlon explained that there could be room to increase the pricing of the program, but he advised that pricing should not occur since enrollment has been locked in for FY26. Mr. Scanlon explained that FY27 pricing can be discussed.

ii. Mr. Scanlon explained that the high school's program, Case's Little Faces, is a different preschool program that costs \$650. Mr. Scanlon explained that this program could be looked into for additional revenue

streams, but that there are significant differences compared to Hoyle's program. Mr. Scanlon explained that the high school program runs on a different schedule where the preschool does not run on the high school's day four of the seven-day cycle. Mr. Scanlon explained that charging more for the high school program would not be beneficial with a revolving schedule due to different operations.

iii. Mr. Scanlon explained that all 40 spots for the preschool get filled each year with a waitlist for additional families. Mr. Scanlon explained that the preschool program is a reliable revenue stream with \$83,600 for each year. Mr. Scanlon explained that the Hoyle preschool program does not cover all of the staffing costs of the program. Mr. Scanlon explained that no decisions need to be made, but that in the future, there are options for changing costs.

iv. Mr. Scanlon explained that if changing the cost of the preschool program is decided, it needs to be decided at the end of this year or the beginning of FY26 to provide parents with transparent pricing and efficient planning.

v. Mr. Rodrigues asked about how long the waitlist is. Mr. Scanlon explained that the AM preschool classes have a longer waitlist than the PM preschool classes. Mr. Rodrigues asked if there is room for expansion to increase the 40 spots. Mr. Scanlon explained that with lack of staffing and classroom space, it would not be possible to open another slot at this time.

vi. Kristin Pettey of 72 Cedar Avenue asked about surveying surround care parents and the potential increase of pricing and increasing spots.

d. Transportation Contract – Mr. Holcomb explained that in the contract, there is a clause that explains that the school committee can decide how many buses run under the contract and can decide to take a bus offline and save approximately \$77,040.

i. Mr. Holcomb explained that he and the principals looked into how many students use the buses. Mr. Holcomb explained that on average, there are some buses with as low as 12 students on the bus, with a high of 50 students on the bus. Mr. Holcomb explained that there is an opportunity to investigate the bus routes and stops to eliminate one of the buses to save approximately \$77,040. Mr. Holcomb explained that there are apps and software programs that can help utilize and map out the most efficient routes for the buses for the x amount of buses desired.

ii. Mr. Scanlon explained that Swansea policies and state policies need to be included in decisions about changing routes and when required transportation is terminated by grade level. Mr. Scanlon explained that

there are numerous factors and considerations when it comes to determining new routes and changes.

iii. Mrs. Solitro asked when routes are changed. Mr. Scanlon explained that changes typically occur during the summer, but it's usually only minor changes like bus stop changes or new students being added to the list.

iv. Mr. Holcomb explained that FY27 is going to come with making difficult decisions. Mr. Holcomb advised the committee to start looking into revenue streams and certain changes, like the ones previously discussed, that could help the FY27 budget. Mr. Holcomb explained that the price of transportation will increase over the next two years as the contract ends in a few years. Mr. Holcomb explained that consolidation would be one of the best options to look into to save costs for future budgets.

e. User Fee Information – Mr. Holcomb explained that he had Anthony Palladino look into user fees across the South Coast Collaborative Schools and understand the breakdown of the fees. Mr. Holcomb explained that 5 out of the 9 schools have user fees.

i. Mr. Holcomb explained that athletic fees range from \$250 to \$350 per sport. Mr. Holcomb explained that these fees could be implemented to other clubs or activities besides sports if desired.

ii. Mr. Holcomb explained that the impact on the community, families, and students needs to be considered during any decisions despite the financial needs of the school district. Mr. Holcomb explained that generating revenue is important and the committee should decide what their desired order of changes is to make the decision easier overall.

iii. The committee addressed that user fees can be damaging for those who cannot afford the program. The committee agreed that user fees would be the last option for budget options to support the students who cannot afford to pay for the clubs or programs they want. Mrs. Solitro explained that numerous students stay within district for the activities and clubs, like the theatre program, and putting user fees on a program like the theatre program would defer students from the high school.

ii. Safety and Security Update

a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the contract was signed per the approval of the last committee meeting. Mr. Holcomb explained that the kickoff meeting will occur after the April vacation, but a date has not been decided. Mr. Holcomb explained that the safety and security committee will be in attendance. Mr.

Holcomb explained that the town gave the committee \$200,000 for this program, and the program only cost about \$70,000 to evaluate the schools.

- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that the door project is still underway and will not be finished until the summer.

iii. Massachusetts School Building Authority Update

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the education plan is still being edited. Mr. Holcomb explained that the next meeting with students will be held on April 16th to continue discussions with middle school students. Mr. Holcomb explained that the education plan must be edited and completed by April 28th to have the school committee vote on the education plan.

iv. Discuss cell phone policy first reading & potential modifications

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the offenses for phone violations did not match up across all the schools. Mr. Holcomb explained that feedback on the second offense surrounded having parents needing to pick up the students' phones. Mr. Holcomb explained that the schools wanted this part of the policy to be reviewed to allow the schools to determine a better solution for a second offense. Mr. Holcomb explained that numerous schools have policies that do not allow phones for the entirety of the school day, regardless of study halls or in the cafeteria.
- b. Abby Souza explained that the concept of having the parents picking up the students' phone after school hours is difficult and should not be included in the policy. Ms. Souza explained that teaching students to be responsible for their phones while they are on their person is important as the world becomes more digital. Ms. Souza explained that teaching students to be more responsible instead of tearing away the phones altogether may not work.
- c. Mrs. Ponte-Porto explained that at the last sub-committee meeting, their main goal was to not see the phones in the school during the day.
- d. Mr. Scanlon explained that the consequences outlined in the policy may lead to future consequences that do not correlate with the consequences, like insubordination and suspensions. Mr. Scanlon explained that the consequences will not be cut and dry, and that the school administrators should decide what the consequences should be that would best fit their schools' needs.
- e. Mrs. Solitro explained that many students submitted feedback that they wanted a phone policy because they explained that no one talks to one another and some students explained that they wish their phones could be taken away to focus on their education and their classes.

4. Action Items:

A) Vote to accept the Memorandum of Understanding between the Swansea Educators' Association and the Swansea School Committee.

The vote was motioned by Mr. Carvalho and seconded by Mrs. Ponte-Porto. A roll call vote was initiated: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mrs. Solitro – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.

B) Vote on second reading of the new policy: IKFA Competency Determination for Students.

The vote was motioned by Mr. Carvalho and seconded by Mrs. Ponte-Porto. A roll call vote was initiated: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mrs. Solitro – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.

C) Vote on the second reading of revised policy: IKF Graduation Requirements

The vote was motioned by Mr. Rodrigues and seconded by Mrs. Barbosa. A roll call vote was initiated: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mrs. Solitro – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.

5. Personnel Items: None at this time.

6. Correspondence: Letter of thanks from Chris Kenyon, Swansea Little League President, re: David Farrell.

7. Informational Items: None at this time.

8. Other Business:

A) Mr. Carvalho explained that Mrs. Solitro has done an incredible job on the school committee, and he explained that he is thankful that he asked her to run for school committee years ago. Mr. Carvalho explained that Mrs. Solitro has always had the kids in mind, and he has been grateful to work alongside her.

B) Mrs. Ponte-Porto explained that Mrs. Solitro reached out to her to get to know her when she was running for school committee, and she explained that their first meeting ended up being almost two hours long. Mrs. Ponte-Porto explained that Mrs. Solitro took her under her wing and supported her during her first year on the committee. Mrs. Ponte-Porto explained that Mrs. Solitro always took a chance and supported not only the students but the teachers.

C) Mrs. Barbosa explained that Mrs. Solitro and the committee have accomplished numerous achievements during her time on the committee. Mrs. Barbosa explained that she is grateful for everything Mrs. Solitro has done for her and the committee.

D) Mr. Rodrigues thanked Mrs. Solitro for everything she has done on the committee.

E) Mr. Rodrigues explained that he went to see 101 Dalmatians at one of the schools and congratulated the students for their incredible work.

F) Mr. Holcomb explained that he has worked with numerous boards during his career, and he explained that Mrs. Solitro is one of the best board members he has worked with. Mr. Holcomb highlighted Mrs. Solitro's dedication through her taking notes during her final meeting and he explained that even though this meeting is Mrs. Solitro's final meeting, she still cares about what is occurring and continues to understand the future updates that the committee will vote on after she leaves. Mr. Holcomb thanked her for everything she has done and for allowing Mr. Holcomb to work alongside this team.

G) Mrs. White explained that the commitment and sacrifice of the board members is detailed, and Mrs. White explained that she has the ultimate respect for Mrs. Solitro for all of the work she has put in.

H) Mrs. Rebelo explained that Mrs. Solitro would be missed deeply, and she explained that she has been able to create relationships with the committee members more because of her.

I) Mr. Scanlon explained that Mrs. Solitro's opening remarks at the A&F Committee meeting were important and reflected of who Swansea is. Mr. Scanlon explained that Mrs. Solitro always steps up for the school community and thanked her for all of her support to the school district.

9: Approval of Minutes: December 16th, 2024, March 5th, 2025, March 24th, 2025

10. Approval of Bills: None at this time.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 28th, 2025, at 6:00PM.

The Open Session was closed by a roll call vote: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mrs. Solitro – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Dawson

Minutes Clerk