

**Minutes of the Swansea School Committee
Monday, September 8th, 2025**

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

In Attendance at the Table:

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

Student Representative – Georgia Cleary

Record of Minutes

- The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM.
- Mr. Carvalho asked for a moment of silence for all people suffering from medical issues at this time.
- The open session was initiated with a roll call vote of all School Committee Members: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barkett-Petty – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.
- The Committee was working with Consent Agenda for Items 6 and 7.
 - Mr. Rodrigues asked to pull Item 6 off the agenda.

2. Public Input:

3. Discussion Items:

A) Superintendent's Report

i. Summer camp and reading camp

a. Mrs. White explained that the summer recreation camp had an “overwhelming success” for the first year of the program. Mrs. White explained that a survey was sent out and the responses were positive. Mrs. White explained that 35 students attended across the six weeks of the program, and each week had different themes and activities that were hosted by numerous departments across the town of Swansea. Mrs. White thanked the counselors that were involved in the program.

b. Mrs. White explained that the summer reading program involved students from pre-kindergarten through third grade, and 33 students completed the program during the five-week period. Mrs. White explained that the students were excited

to attend the program and there were numerous activities to help the students improve their reading skills where gaps may occur in students.

ii. Start of school update(s)

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the start of school was good. Mr. Holcomb highlighted the effort that the teachers and faculty put into welcoming students back to school, through their curriculum and the classroom environment they create for the students to feel welcome.
- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that cutting the one bus from the fleet affected the start of school through the extra stops on other bus routes and more students on buses. Mr. Holcomb explained that Mr. Scanlon has been working endlessly to make sure that these issues can be resolved throughout the school year. Mr. Scanlon explained that they worked all summer to change all of the bus routes to make sure they had an accurate number of students who rode the bus. Mr. Scanlon explained that they did a count of students on the second week of school, and the number of students reflected the decision to remove one of the buses from the fleet. Mr. Scanlon explained that as they continue to monitor the buses, their goal will be to refine the timing of the buses' arrival and departures and making sure the buses don't become overcrowded throughout the school year.
- c. Mrs. Barkett-Petty asked if something changes for a family and they need transportation, to whom should they go. Mr. Scanlon explained that the family can go through their student's school and fill out a transportation form. Mr. Scanlon explained that it will take up to 48 hours to confirm the change and update the bus driver and route.
- d. Student representative, Georgia Cleary, said the phone policy was effective in the high school and there are noticeable changes with the environment. Ms. Cleary mentioned that the field hockey team has won their last three games and the boys' soccer team has also won their games. Ms. Cleary explained that school election was set to start soon. Ms. Cleary explained that "Mamma Mia" is set to open next month.

iii. Strategic planning presentation & discussion

- a. Dr. Amanda McGrath is a community member with a child in Swansea's elementary schools who is an expert in education. Dr. McGrath was asked to review the strategic plan and give the committee some feedback.
- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that the strategic plan consists of a three-phase plan from 2025-2030.
 - a. Phase One included a SWOT analysis, data collection, and gathering intel on what changes needed to be changed.
 - b. Phase Two included building up the plan based on the research gathered. Dr. McGrath explained that the data was analyzed and identified focus areas to idolize the plans. Dr. McGrath explained that

the data was used to identify the core values and mission of the strategic plan.

- c. Phase Three included implementation of the strategic plan. Mr. Holcomb explained that this phase utilizes feedback of the plan from principals, teachers, and the community. Mr. Holcomb explained that when this plan is implemented, they will come before the school committee each month and update on the progress and advocate for the viability of the plan to stay on track. Mr. Holcomb explained that the school committee will be beneficial in implementing changes or improvements of the plan as the plan comes to fruition.
- c. Dr. McGrath and Mr. Holcomb explained that when creating the mission statement for the strategic plan, they reviewed all responses and created the best mission statement that reflected the overall voice of the community, while also honoring everyone's opinions and comments.
- d. Dr. McGrath explained that the core values include student centered, inclusiveness, sense of community, and excellence in academics. Mr. Holcomb explained that the core values are celebrating the diversity of everyone in town, and that every person is valued the same regardless of who they are. Dr. McGrath explained that the "sense of community" core value is rooted in the school district and should be embraced more. Dr. McGrath explained that if students feel like they belong at school, they will take more pride in their education.
- e. Dr. McGrath explained that the focus areas of the plan include:
 - a. Safety, Belonging, and Well-Being
 - b. Teaching, Learning, and Leading
 - c. Facilities, Finance, and Human Capital
 - d. Community Engagement
- f. Mr. Holcomb explained that if this plan is voted on and approved by the committee, the strategic plan graphic will be posted online and within all of the schools in the district. Mr. Holcomb explained that it's important for these core values to be displayed for all students to help them sync into the community through the classroom.
- g. Mrs. Ponte-Porto praised the connections between the core values, the mission statement, and the vision statements and how they're all intertwined. Mrs. Barkett-Petty described the plan as ambitious, and the mission of the plan is strong.
- h. Mrs. Barkett-Petty asked about the cardinal logo on the graphic for the strategic plan not matching the other logos across town. Mr. Holcomb explained that they are updating the cardinal on the graphic to match the cardinal on high school's gymnasium floor. Mr. Holcomb explained that later down the road, unifying the cardinal logo across the entire district to determine an official cardinal logo. Mrs. Barkett-Petty explained that making a brand for the district would not be a bad idea.

iv. Superintendent goals

a. Mr. Holcomb explained that his goals align with the strategic plan. Mr. Holcomb explained that even though he has this set of specific goals, the committee should continue to work on other tasks or projects that may not be outlined in his goals.

b. Mr. Holcomb's goals for the year included:

a. Strengthen strategic communication and establish a social media presence.

b. Monthly staff recognitions, including hosting events to celebrate staff, and mental health supports.

c. Support academic growth, identify proficiency gaps, and development interventions in the gaps.

d. Foster student belonging and create a transition-mentoring program for students.

e. Facility and safety enhancements for all buildings in the district.

f. Work on critical areas in security based on Good Harbour's assessment.

g. Form a K-12 curriculum team, create a calendar, and create a cohesive curriculum across the district.

c. Mr. Holcomb explained that last year there were concerns about financial value, and he explained that all of these goals except for the security goal do not necessarily hold any financial value that may affect the budget.

d. Mr. Rodrigues explained that these goals are extensive, but he knows they will be successful and important for the schools.

v. Parent teacher organization

a. Mr. Holcomb explained that this ties into the trust discussion and the building project updates. Mr. Holcomb explained that Mr. Carvalho had an idea to reach out to the PTOs in the district, get their calendars for meetings, and request to join their meetings to let the organizations know about the updates of the new building and the current financial situation of the budget and future budgets.

b. Mr. Carvalho explained that he and Mr. Holcomb discussed reaching out to the community more, through meeting with K-2, 3-5, middle and high school. Mr. Carvalho explained that the school committee could host a meeting that is dedicated to the community asking questions and having a discussion with the community. Mr. Carvalho explained that the school committee needs to further their discussions to the community even more than regular meetings.

c. Mr. Holcomb explained that while this idea is good, timing is something that needs to be worked on. Mr. Holcomb explained that this would mean adding three more-night meetings to the school committee schedule. He described that this may cause burnout or timing concerns for the committee, administrators, and the PTOs.

d. Mr. Carvalho motioned to start with Pre-K-Grade 2 and allow the principals to choose the location and date, which was seconded by Mrs. Ponte-Porto. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

Mrs. Barkett-Petty motioned to take the agenda out of order and lead with Agenda Item 3-8 next, which was seconded by Mr. Carvalho. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

After discussion of Agenda Item 3-8, Mr. Carvalho motioned to take the agenda out of order and discuss Agenda Item 3-7 next, which was seconded by Mrs. Ponte-Porto. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

vi. Deeper learning and universal design for learning

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the school district wanted to focus on deeper learning competencies and create a universal design for learning.
- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that the six core competencies of deeper learning are:
 - a. Master core academic content.
 - b. Think critically and solve complex problems.
 - c. Work collaboratively.
 - d. Communicate effectively.
 - e. Learn how to learn (metacognition)
 - f. Develop academic mindsets.
- c. Mr. Holcomb explained that the administrative staff decided to focus on the “work collaboratively” as the goal for this school year. Mr. Holcomb explained that creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment, removing barriers to learning, and enhancing educational experiences for all students are the key pieces to the universal design.
- d. Mrs. White explained that universal design for learning has lead to a 20-30% increase in student engagement, along with an 18% reduction in behavioral incidents and 9 fewer disruptions per semester in a typical 50-minute class. Mrs. White explained that they will be looking at how they receive information, how they execute their knowledge, and how they present what they know.

vii. Trust fund discussion

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the trust fund came into question during the building meetings. Mr. Holcomb explained that Mr. Scanlon’s brother-in-law

had inquired about doing pro-bono work for the trust fund. Mr. Holcomb explained that their board decided that they could not do it because the law firm works too closely with Bank of America, which holds the trust fund in question.

- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that they are looking at different avenues and language within the trust fund to utilize the funds for the building. Mr. Holcomb explained that the school district utilizes \$235,000 from the trust fund for salaries for this school year.

viii. Joseph Case Junior High School building project update

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that another community meeting is being held at the high school before the building committee meets. The meeting will focus on the current information on the build and provide information to the community about what is happening. Mr. Holcomb explained that the building committee approved in a 6-1 vote for a brand-new school to be built, which is the cheapest and fastest project option.
- b. Mr. Holcomb explained that the potential option for the old middle school would allow for the Southcoast Collaborative school to move into the old middle school building. Mr. Holcomb explained that the school committee could lease the building to a private academy, like Kings Academy, which Mr. Holcomb reached out to.

ix. Building envelope assessments

- a. Mrs. Rebelo explained that as part of her goal to update the long-term capital plan, she has been focusing on the building envelopes and finding the best way to capture the information. Mrs. Rebelo has been working to identify weak spots, maintenance time frames, and conditions of parts of the buildings in the district.
- b. Mrs. Rebelo explained that she looked into the district's partner, Tremco, about the status of the roofs in the district. Mrs. Rebelo asked if they also do building envelopes, and they said yes. Mrs. Rebelo then decided to look into other companies who work with building envelopes to determine who would be the best to work with while creating this capital plan.
- c. Mrs. Rebelo explained that the MSBA's accelerated repair program is still working with roofs and windows, but are only working with heat pumps, not the full boilers in the schools.

x. Safety and security update(s)

- a. Mr. Holcomb explained that the new keyless fob system has been working good with minor issues. Mr. Holcomb explained that the security committee is meeting on Thursday, September 11th about the next areas of concern with security. Mr. Holcomb explained that at the next school committee meeting, he will have more information to share with the board.

4. Action Items:

A) Vote to approve the strategic plan as presented.

The vote was motioned by Mr. Carvalho to for the plan to be amended and approve, which was seconded by Mrs. Ponte-Porto. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

B) Vote to approve the superintendent's goals as presented.

The vote was motioned by Mr. Carvalho and seconded by Mr. Rodrigues. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

C) Vote to approve a donation of school supplies from The Christ Church Outreach Ministry valued at approximately \$250.00.

The vote was motioned by Mrs. Ponte-Porto and seconded by Mrs. Barkett-Petty. A vote of the committee was taken with the motion carrying and passing unanimously 5-0.

5. New Business

6. Approval of Minutes: August 11th, 2025

A) Mr. Rodrigues explained that the minutes need to be reviewed for errors.

7. Approval of Bills

8. Executive Session:

A) Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 3: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO State Council 93, Local 1701 – Food Service Workers.

B) Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 3: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Swansea Educators Association – Teachers, Para-Educators and Secretaries.

C) Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a), Purpose 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel, specifically, to discuss the terms and conditions of the Gardner Elementary School Principal's Contract, and to return to open session, as the Chair so declares.

**Mr. Rodrigues motioned to enter Executive Session, which was seconded by Mr. Carvalho.
A roll call vote was taken to enter Executive Session: Mr. Carvalho – aye, Mrs. Ponte-Porto – aye, Mrs. Barkett-Petty – aye, Mrs. Barbosa – aye, Mr. Rodrigues – aye.**

The next meeting will be held on September 22, 2025, at 6PM.

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

The meeting was adjourned publicly at 8:26PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Dawson

Minutes Clerk