



Ayer Shirley Regional School District

115 Washington St.
Ayer, MA 01432
Phone: (978) 772-8600

Regular Session Minutes

Ayer Shirley Regional Middle School - Library Wednesday, December 17, 2025, 6:30pm

Committee Members Present:

Kevin Bresnahan, Chairperson
Joyce Reischutz, Vice-Chairperson (Remote)
Ashley Pinard, Member
Jim Quinty, Member
Chris Rupprecht, Member

Staff Members Present:

Adam Renda, Ed.D., Superintendent
Charlie Caliri, Assistant Superintendent
William Plunkett, Director of Finance
Michelle Towne, Executive Assistant

Committee Members Absent:

Ms. Spann, Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Bresnahan, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

Roll Call

Mr. Bresnahan, Mrs. Pinard, Mr. Quinty, Mrs. Reischutz (remote), and Mr. Rupprecht were present. Ms. Spann was absent.

Public Comment

Mrs. Jessica Chisholm, a Shirley resident and parent of three students in the District, addressed the Committee regarding a Middle School lunch incident involving her son and expressed related safety concerns.

Mr. Bresnahan, Chairperson, thanked Mrs. Chisholm and commented that as noted in his email response the prior week, the Committee places student safety as a top priority and that the personnel matter is being addressed internally.

Consent Agenda - Vote

- December 2, 2025, Regular Session Minutes for Release
- Warrants
 - AP Warrant 1075 dated 11/21/2025 for \$369,209.20 - FY26 Biweekly AP Warrant
 - AP Warrant 1076 dated 11/21/2025 for \$33,008.00 - FY26 Coaching
 - AP Warrant 1083 dated 12/05/2025 for \$130.85 - FY26 Credit Card Charges
 - AP Warrant 1084 dated 12/05/2025 for \$925,243.95 FY26 - Biweekly AP Warrant

- Payroll Warrant dated 11/28/2025 for \$1,140,929.24 FY26 - Biweekly Payroll Warrant
- Payroll Warrant dated 11/28/2025 for \$46,414.84 - FY26 Coaching Warrant
- Payroll Warrant dated 12/12/2025 for \$1,087,837.71 - FY26 Biweekly Payroll Warrant
- Payroll Warrant dated 12/12/2025 for \$22,623.42 - FY26 Stipend Warrant

Mr. Rupprecht moved and Mr. Quinty seconded to approve the consent agenda. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

New Business

- **Robotics Out of State and Overnight Field Trips for the 2025-2026 School Year - Mrs. Pamela Clemence, Robotics Assistant Coach - Vote**
 - NE District Granite State Event, Friday, March 13 to Sunday, March 15, 2026, Bedford High School, 47 Nashua Road, Bedford, NH USA (out-of-state)
 - New England FIRST District Championship, Wednesday, April 15 to Saturday, April 18, 2026, Eastern States Exposition, 1305 Memorial Ave, West Springfield, MA USA (overnight)
 - FIRST Championship - FIRST Robotics Competition, Tuesday, April 28 to Sunday, May 3, 2026, George R. Brown Convention Center, 1001 Avenida De Las Americas, Houston, TX USA (out-of-state/overnight)

Mrs. Clemence, High School Robotics coach, along with two senior members of the team requested Committee approval for the field trips listed. The students spoke to their experiences of being able to travel to these events and meet with other Robotics teams, and the roles they have participated in during their time on the Robotics team.

Mr. Rupprecht moved and Mrs. Pinard seconded to approve the Robotics field trips. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

New Business

- **Presentation on Middle School Recess Park Civics Project - Dr. Christopher Pataky, ASRMS History/Social Sciences Teacher**
Dr. Pataky along with several students from the Middle School Student Government provided the Committee with a presentation on a recess park project.

Goal of the project:

- Create a safe and inclusive play area
- Assistant staff in monitoring students
- Engage in positive play and not negative behavior
- Increase student happiness and school pride

Kompan has been selected as the vendor for the project. Phase 1 is estimated at \$780,386.89, and Phase 2 is estimated at \$334,544.22, for a total projected cost of

\$1,114,930. Students have been actively fundraising for the project and have raised just under \$10,000 to date. They are also working with the District's grant writer to pursue grant opportunities to support project funding.

- **Recertification of the FY26 Budget - Mr. William Plunkett, Director of Finance - Vote**

Mr. Plunkett commented that as previously discussed, the District is operating with a razor-thin budget this year, due in part to efforts to keep member town assessments as low as possible while managing rising costs related to health insurance, transportation, charter school tuition out, and out-of-district special education tuitions.

Mr. Plunkett commented that the District has a unique opportunity to incorporate additional State and Local receipt revenues into the FY26 budget, including the following:

- \$167,762 in additional FY25 carryforward Regional Transportation Reimbursement
- \$105,823 in additional Chapter 70 funding, per the final FY26 Cherry Sheet
 - Chapter 70 State funding increased from \$90/per pupil to \$150/per pupil as of July 1, 2025
- \$60,000 in General Fund depository interest
- \$51,780 in additional Charter School Reimbursement, per the final FY26 Cherry Sheet calculation
- \$11,122 in FY25 carryforward funding for McKinney-Vento Transportation Reimbursement
- \$3,200 in interest from Local Receipts
- \$313 increase in Medicaid receipts

Mr. Plunkett went on to say that these transfers would not impact assessments to the member towns, but would increase the overall FY26 budget by \$400,000, and requested the Committee recertify the FY26 budget at an all funds total of \$38,107,861.

- This total includes \$400,000 in additional General Fund revenues, offset by \$400,000 in additional General Fund expenditures. Recertification of the FY26 budget requires a two-thirds vote of the full Committee. Upon approval, the District will provide the local appropriating authorities with a copy of the amended budget within seven days.

Mr. Quinty, Member, questioned how the application of this late income would affect the District's ability to control increases for the upcoming budget. While appreciative of the additional revenue, noted that the District was not expecting these increases, and now that they are incorporated into the budget figures complicates future planning. He emphasized that the budget is built on what is required to operate the District and with an already challenging FY27 budget anticipated, increasing the approved budget creates a new starting point. He commented that while the District can work through these challenges, it is

important to be able to identify potential additional revenues that may materialize at a later date.

Mr. Plunkett responded that the additional funding streams discussed, such as transportation reimbursement, are entitlements for a regional district based on the number of students transported more than 1 1/2 miles and the associated costs, and he does not anticipate changes to this revenue. He added that Charter School reimbursement is expected to remain steady based on enrollment. Overall, he noted the impact represents approximately a 1% increase to the total budget, and further explained that when a receivable from a prior year is identified, the District has the option to decide whether to record it in the current fiscal year or defer it to the following year.

Mr. Rupprecht moved and Mrs. Reischutz seconded to recertify the FY26 budget as presented. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

Dr. Renda, Superintendent, noted that the motion to recertify the budget should include the amount of \$38,107,861 being read into the vote.

Mr. Rupprecht amended his prior motion and moved to approve the recertification of the FY26 budget at \$38,107,861. Mrs. Pinard seconded the motion. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

Ongoing Business

- **Approval of Capital Stabilization Funding Request - Mr. William Plunkett, Director of Finance - Vote**

Mr. Plunkett proposed a funding request from the Capital Stabilization Fund in the amount not to exceed \$300,000 to offset anticipated FY26 General Fund Facilities expenditures. This will free up funding in the General Fund for expenses for the remainder of the fiscal year; any unused funds to the Capital Stabilization Fund at the end of the FY26 fiscal year will be returned. The current balance in the Capital Stabilization Fund is \$795,925.76.

Mr. Plunkett requested the approval to use up to \$300,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to fund FY26 Facilities expenditures.

Mr. Rupprecht moved and Mrs. Pinard seconded to approve the capital stabilization funding request. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

- **Budget/Best Practices - Dr. Adam Renda, Superintendent, Mr. William Plunkett, Director of Finance, and Mr. Daniel Deedy, Financial Consultant**

Mr. Deedy presented a memorandum outlining twenty-one (21) best practices, and provided a high-level overview of five (5) recommended best practices.

1. General Fund Revenue Budget

Mr. Deedy reviewed the District's General Fund Revenue Budget, which includes eleven (11) revenue line items.

- Interest, Local Receipts
- Assessments
- Depository Interest
- Chapter 70
- Charter School Reimbursement
- Medicaid
- Regional Transportation Reimbursement
- Revenue
- Transfer In to General Fund from E&D
- Miscellaneous Revenue
- McKinney Vento Transportation

He noted that several line items are not fully utilized in the budgeting process, despite deposits recorded in FY26, including Interest, Local Receipts, Depository Interest, and Revenue.

A review of five (5) years of actuals showed consistent activity in Depository Interest and Medicaid revenue. Mr. Deedy recommended reviewing three- to five-year historical averages for these revenue sources and budgeting accordingly to reduce or potentially eliminate reliance on Excess & Deficiency (E&D) funds. He noted that this approach aligns with recommendations from the FY24 financial audit.

2. General Fund Expense Budget

Mr. Deedy stated that the FY26 General Fund budget shortfall was driven in part by limited use of historical data when developing salary and expense budgets. He noted that the projected shortfall was approximately \$1.4 million at the start of his engagement on October 27, 2025, and increased to approximately \$1.8 million as of November 6, 2025, due to salary budget adjustments.

He recommended greater use of three (3) years of End-of-Year Report (EOYR) actuals and three (3) years of General Fund actuals when developing future budgets and suggested consideration of alternative budgeting methodologies, including Zero-Based Budgeting, recognizing that such changes are unlikely for FY27 due to timing constraints.

3. Addition of a District Accountant Position

Mr. Deedy reported that the Director of Finance's involvement in daily transactional work limits capacity for oversight of the General Fund budget. He recommended the District consider adding a Business Office position (e.g., District Accountant or Assistant Business Manager) to provide daily financial

support, improve oversight, and assist with long-term succession planning. He noted that similar practices exist in other regional districts.

4. Addition of a Monthly Treasurer's Report

Mr. Deedy recommended that the Treasurer provide a monthly Treasurer's Report to Administration and the School Committee. He advised that the report be signed by both the Treasurer and the Director of Finance and included in the School Committee packet for review and vote.

5. Creation of a Budget Subcommittee

Mr. Deedy recommended the creation of a Budget/Finance Subcommittee consisting of three (3) School Committee members. The subcommittee would meet monthly, with increased frequency during budget season, and provide regular updates to the full Committee.

Ms. Pinard, Member, inquired about the process for changing the budget format and what the overall process would entail, including whether such a change would create a hardship for staff or if administration could assist in exploring this approach as part of the FY28 budget development.

Mr. Deedy noted that education would be required if the District were to pursue a zero-based budgeting approach. He explained that zero-based budgeting begins with the assumption that no prior budget exists and requires building the budget from the ground up.

Mr. Bresnahan, Chairperson, asked what the next steps would be for evaluating the recommendations.

Dr. Renda, Superintendent, responded that the leadership team would need to discuss how they would like to proceed moving forward. He noted a desire for increased transparency and additional discussions with the School Committee. He also stated that adding a position in a difficult budget year would be challenging, but administration will explore the option in future budget cycles.

Mr. Rupprecht, Member, asked whether the District is taking a multi-year view of the budget and whether line items are aligned consistently across fiscal years.

Mr. Deedy responded that the District is still assessing this approach but noted that the budget process should include at least a three-year projection, particularly to account for payroll and salary costs. He also explained that certain positions are currently funded through other revenue streams, such as the 240 Grant, and that uncertainties in federal funding may require bringing some of these positions into the operating budget.

Dr. Renda, Superintendent, commented that the District has already begun moving positions out of School Choice and entitlement grants, identifying this as a best practice. He noted that this effort was discussed last year and remains ongoing, with additional areas identified where further changes are needed. He added that the District is currently operating lean during difficult fiscal times and may need to use School Choice funds in the upcoming year; however, the plan is to discontinue this practice moving forward.

- **Proposed Revision Policy IKF- Competency Determination - Mr. Charlie Caliri - Second Read and Vote**

Mr. Caliri noted that the suggested edits from the last meeting had been provided in the revised policy presented and requested Committee approval of the revisions in order to meet DESE's revised policy requirement date of December 31, 2025.

COMPETENCY DETERMINATION

In addition to meeting the local graduation requirements and community service hours articulated in School Committee Policy IKF, a student must meet the competency determination (CD) articulated in MGL c. 69 sect. 1D and in 603 CMR 30.00-30.05 in order to receive their high school diploma from Ayer Shirley Regional High School (ASRHS).

According to the statute and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the competency determination shall be based on the academic standards and curriculum frameworks for tenth graders in the areas of mathematics, science and technology (STE), history and social science, foreign languages, and English language arts (ELA), and shall represent a determination that a particular student has demonstrated mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in these areas by satisfactorily completing coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the state academic standards and curriculum frameworks in the areas measured by the MCAS high school tests administered in 2023. **Mastery of skills in US History will apply starting with the graduating class of 2027.**

An Ayer Shirley Regional School District (ASRSD) student will earn their CD when they participate in the high school administration of the MCAS in ELA, Math, and STE, and demonstrate proficiency in related coursework in ELA, Math, STE, and US History (starting with the Class of 2027) as articulated below.

For a student enrolled in the ASRSD, showing mastery shall mean that a student successfully demonstrates proficiency in accordance with the district's grading policy through at least one of the following:

1. **Passing the course with a grade of 60% or higher, or**
2. **Passing the final assessment for the course with a grade of 60% or higher, or**
3. **Passing a capstone or portfolio project associated with the specified course with a grade of 60% or higher; or**
4. **An equivalent measure identified in the district's CD policy.**

A student enrolled in the ASRSD will be determined to have satisfactorily completed coursework and earned full credit in accordance with the district's grading policy and the requirements outlined below:

- **Satisfactorily completing coursework shall mean that a student earns full credit in accordance with the district's grading policy. At ASRHS, a student earns full credit for a course by achieving a passing grade of 60% or higher.**
- **In some cases, a student may be graded on a Pass/Fail basis; in such instances, earning a Pass (P) constitutes satisfactory completion and full credit for the course.**
- **Courses required to demonstrate competency shall be full-year courses or their approved equivalents. An approved summer school course taken following an unsuccessful attempt during the school year, or an approved accelerated course taken during the summer, shall also be considered satisfactory completion of the required coursework.**

Aligned Courses

ASRSD offers the following courses in alignment with the state curriculum frameworks that meet the above requirements. [Course numbers and titles may be amended each year in the annual program of studies].

Content Area	Requirements
English Language Arts (ELA)	<p>Students will meet the CD for ELA by successfully completing at least two years of coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that cover the content of the following courses or higher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grade 9 ELA or Humanities I ● Grade 10 ELA or Humanities II ● Grade 11 ELA or American Literature or AP Language & Composition ● Grade 12 ELA or World Literature, AP Language & Composition, or AP Literature & Composition ● English Language Development I ● English Language Development II ● Other courses equivalent to Grade 9 and 10 ELA
Mathematics (Math)	<p>Students will meet the CD for Math by successfully completing at least two years of coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that cover the content of the following courses or higher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Algebra I ● Geometry ● Algebra II ● Integrated Math I ● Integrated Math II ● Integrated Math III ● Other courses equivalent to Algebra I and Geometry
Science/Technology Engineering (STE)	<p>Students will meet the CD for STE by successfully completing at least one year of coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that cover the content of the following courses or higher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Biology or AP Biology ● Chemistry or AP Chemistry ● Physics or AP Physics ● Technology Engineering/Computer Science Courses, including PLTW courses ● Other courses equivalent to a full year of lab-based science
U.S. History (starting with Class of 2027)	<p>Students will meet the CD for U.S. History (Social Sciences) by successfully completing at least one year of coursework aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks that cover the content of the following courses or higher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● U.S. History I ● U.S. History II ● AP U.S. History ● Other courses equivalent to a full year of U.S. History

Additional Considerations

Students with Disabilities (SWD)

ASRSD must both provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to SWD and must also determine that the student has met the CD and local graduation requirements prior to the student earning a diploma. Discussion of the CD must be a part of the IEP Team's transition planning.

- For SWD who have been placed in out-of-district placements, ASRSD will accept equivalent coursework completed at the out-of-district schools following ASRSD practices for credit transfer and course alignment.
- All SWD who are attending ASRHS will be provided support to meet their specific special education goals and/or needs as outlined in their IEP while taking the aforementioned courses to meet CD requirements in ELA, Math, STE, and U.S. History. All SWD who are seeking a high school diploma and demonstrating competency in the courses or their equivalent as outlined above will be eligible to earn the CD and their high school diploma.

English Learners (EL) or Multilingual Learners (ML)

MLs who successfully complete English Language Development (ELD) I, ELD II, or both courses will be considered having met the CD in ELA. These courses are aligned to the ELA Curriculum Frameworks and considered equivalent to English 9 and 10. MLs who successfully complete a combination of ELD and ELA courses totaling two, shall be considered to have met the CD in ELA.

Late-Enrolling Students:

A late-enrolling student is a student who enrolls in ASRSD after Grade 9. A late-enrolling student may earn a CD in the following ways:

- Following the district's practices for credit transfer, transcript review, and course alignment by the high school principal or designee, or
- Completing additional course requirements as outlined above by the high school principal or designee, or
- Earning a qualifying MCAS score (i.e., meeting or exceeding) on the relevant high school MCAS

Notification and Appeals Process

ASRHS will provide student and caregiver notification regarding student progress toward the competency determination following the end of the student's completion of tenth grade, and no later than November 1 immediately following completion of tenth grade. If a current student or their caregiver wishes to appeal a CD, the student or caregiver must submit an appeal in writing to the building principal before February 15. The building principal will convene a team that will include the Assistant Principal, the student's counselor, and the curriculum leader(s) in the subject in question. Additionally, a special education teacher or ESL teacher will be included as necessary. A transcript review will be performed and a decision rendered within 30 school days. If the appeal is denied, the student or caregiver may appeal the decision to the Assistant Superintendent for review. If the appeal is denied, the student or caregiver may appeal the decision to the Superintendent for review, whose decision will be final.

Those enrolled in ASRSD or ASRHS, or Ayer High School in the classes of 2003 through 2024 who did not earn a diploma may appeal the decision through the following process:

- A written request may be submitted to the building principal requesting a review of the student's record to determine if the student is eligible for a diploma.
- To be eligible for a diploma, the individual must have been previously enrolled in the district, met all local graduation requirements, not been previously reported as a graduate in any other district's Student Information Management System submission, and must meet the district's current CD requirements.
- Upon receipt of request, a team of school personnel including the ASRHS Principal, the ASRSD Assistant Superintendent, and the student's high school counselor or counseling director will be convened to review the request, the student's transcript, and relevant school records. In the event that current requirements are met in addition to other local graduation requirements, the student will be eligible to receive an ASRHS diploma. If the appeal is denied, the student or caregiver may appeal the decision to the Superintendent for review, whose decision will be final.

Mr. Quinty moved and Mr. Rupprecht seconded to approve the policy as presented. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

Chairperson's Notes

None

Other Topics for Discussion Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of this Meeting

None

Communications

Day	Date	Event	Time	Location
Thursday	December 18	High School winter concert	6:30pm	High School
Tuesday	December 23	½ Day of School - NO Preschool sessions. Lunch will be served. Dismissal times: HS @ 11:25am, MS @ 11:15am, LAW/PH @ 12:15pm		
Wednesday, December 24-31, and January 1 & 2		No school for Winter break. Students return to school on Monday, January 5		
Monday	January 5	Athletic Boosters meeting	7:00pm	High School
Tuesday	January 6	School Committee meeting	6:30pm	High School - Media Center
Thursday	January 8	Annual Title I Virtual Meeting	9:00am	Zoom
Thursday	January 8	Page Hilltop PTO meeting	6:30pm	Page Hilltop

Executive Session

- Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(3) for the purpose of conducting strategy with respect to collective bargaining, as conducting this deliberation in an open session would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee. The Committee will return to the Open Session for the sole purpose of adjournment.

At 7:55pm, Mr. Rupprecht moved and Mrs. Reischutz seconded to enter into Executive Session and return to the Regular Session with the sole purpose of adjournment. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

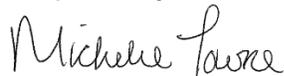
Adjournment

At 8:36pm, Mrs. Reischutz moved and Mr. Rupprecht seconded to adjourn the Regular Session. All were in favor. Motion passes 5-0.

Documents Included in the December 17, 2025, Meeting Packet:

1. December 2, 2025, Minutes for Release
2. Robotics Field Trip Request Forms
3. PPT: Middle School Recess Park Civic Project
4. Memo: Proposed FY26 Budget Re-Certification
5. DESE Memo dated September 9, 2025
6. DESE Screen Capture: FY26 Chapter 70 Summary
7. Proposed FY26 Budget for Re-Certification
8. Memo: Capital Stabilization Funding Request
9. Packet: Suggested Best Practices
10. Proposed Revision to Policy IKF: Competency Determination
11. Communications

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle C. Towne,
Executive Assistant, Recording Secretary