



FAIRHAVEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
June 24, 2026

MEMBERS PRESENT: Nicole Pacheco, Erik Andersen, Kelly Ochoa, Donna McKenna, Michael Sherman, Erik Baumann

STAFF PRESENT: Superintendent Tara Kohler, Assistant Superintendent Mark Balestracci, School Business Manager Nicole Potter

The meeting was called to order by Superintendent Kohler at 6:31pm.

Organization of Committee Members:

A motion was made by Ms. McKenna to nominate Mrs. Pacheco as the Chair of the School Committee, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed, (6-0).

Newly appointed Chair Nicole Pacheco took over the proceedings and continued to lead the meeting.

A motion was made by Ms. McKenna to nominate Mr. Andersen as the Vice Chair of the School Committee, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Ms. McKenna as the School Committee liaison for the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC), seconded by Mr. Andersen, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mr. Baumann to the Policy Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mr. Andersen to the Policy Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mrs. Pacheco to the Policy Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to table the vote for a School Committee liaison to the Belonging Committee until the September meeting, seconded by Mr. Andersen, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Mr. Baumann to nominate Ms. Ochoa as the School Committee liaison for the Civil Rights Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mr. Sherman to the Acushnet Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mr. Andersen to the Policy Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to nominate Mrs. Pacheco to the Policy Sub Committee, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed, (6-0).

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Ms. McKenna to approve the May 20, 2026 Regular Session Minutes, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed with two abstentions from Mr. Baumann and Mr. Sherman (4-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to approve the May 20, 2026 Executive Session Minutes for content only, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed with two abstentions from Mr. Baumann and Mr. Sherman (4-0).

Reports & Recommendations of the Superintendent:

Update on the FY27 Budget:

Superintendent Kohler informed the Committee that the Town's override failed, resulting in the previously discussed budget reductions: A separate elementary special education program is needed at Leroy L. Wood School. In order to accommodate this program, some class sizes at Fairhaven High School will increase slightly. Two elementary teaching positions will remain eliminated.

The District had planned to move the Preschool Program from Leroy L. Wood School to East Fairhaven Elementary School to save approximately \$30,000 in transportation and other costs but the District received \$33,000 more than expected in Circuit Breaker funding. Superintendent Kohler recommended using the additional funds to cover the costs of keeping the Preschool Program at Leroy L. Wood School for the upcoming school year. The Committee supported this decision while the District evaluates the program's future.

School Choice Update:

Superintendent Kohler told the Committee we have 24 applications so far. The District will hold a blind lottery set for June 30, 2026. Mrs. Pacheco asked about a deadline, Superintendent Kohler stated the first round deadline is June 29, 2026.

Updated on Fairhaven High School Pathways & Partnerships:

Marlene Sabeh, College and Career Coordinator at Fairhaven High School updated the Committee on the new Pathways the students have available to them. New environmental, healthcare, and electrical designations launched with no GPA requirements making them accessible to all students. Mrs. Sabeh also stated they are working with Bristol Community College on early college programs for students as well.

Food Service Update:

The former food service manager remained temporarily to help ensure a smooth transition. The District expects approximately \$40,000 in excess funds from the food service contract. These funds will be placed in the food service account and used to replace needed kitchen equipment and supplies.

Receive Information regarding SMEC:

Catherine Cooper, Executive Director of SMEC explained SMEC's role and the challenges of maintaining specialized programs and facilities to the Committee. Stating SMEC provides extensive services for students with disabilities ages 3 all the way up. This also includes vocational training and independent living skills for 18-21 year olds at the Tripp School, which serves multiple districts including Fairhaven. She stated the Tripp School facility, leased for nearly 10 years, is centrally located and supports various programs with therapists, nurses, and transportation being based there. Mrs Cooper also said that services adapt to changing student needs, including medically fragile programs and transitional plans. Facility maintenance concerns with the Tripp School's aging infrastructure, especially the heating system and roof, highlight the need for capital investment to sustain programs. Rising rental costs would raise tuition fees, making facility upkeep a critical budget factor. SMEC's operational budget is funded entirely through tuition and fees paid by districts, with no membership fee, underscoring the direct cost relationship to services used. This financial model ties operational sustainability to district support and enrollment. The committee appreciated the detailed explanation from Mrs. Cooper, helping clarify SMEC's mission and addressing community questions about funding and services.

Fairhaven High School Break In Update:

Superintendent Kohler let the Committee know that the suspects in the break-in at the High School have been identified and it is now in the hands of the court system. She is hoping through the court, the District will recover the funding to make the repairs which are approximately \$8,000 - \$10,000. She stated if the funding does not come through the court system, it will come from the revolver fund.

Upcoming Events:

The next School Committee meeting is August 26, 2026.

New Business:

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to approve the Title I Instructional Coach-Literacy Focused Job Description (attachment A), passed by Ms. McKenna, approved (6-0).

A motion was made by Mr. Baumann to establish a School Choice Revolving Account, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to establish a Student Activity Account for the Marching Band, seconded by Mr. Sherman, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Mr. Sherman to authorize up to \$35,000 from the Elizabeth Hastings Middle School Facility Tennis Rental Revolver, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed (6-0).

The Committee received Policies CR17A (physical restraint) and SE55 (Special Education Facilities and Classrooms for a first read. Assistant Superintendent Balestracci explained to the Committee that the two policies are state laws.

A motion was made by Ms. McKenna to allow Fairhaven High School music students to attend an out of state field trip to the Philadelphia Heritage Festival on April 15-18, 2027, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to accept a donation of \$5,012.46 for the 8th grade walkathon from the Elizabeth Hasting Middle School PTO, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Mr. Sherman to accept a donation of \$520.50 for the 8th grade activity account from the Elizabeth Hasting Middle School PTO, seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to accept a donation of \$10,500 from the Fairhaven High School Alumni Association for 2025 Superbowl Rings, seconded by Ms. McKenna passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. Ochoa to award the Fairhaven High School Storage Facility Roof project to Gibson Roofs Inc. for \$56,200, seconded by Ms. McKenna, passed (6-0).

A motion was made by Ms. McKenna to surplus Pick Up Trucks (one to go to Town Auction & one to go to Town Hall for possible continued use), seconded by Ms. Ochoa, passed (6-0).

Unfinished Business:

Update on Acushnet Tuition Agreement:

The Committee discussed the status of tuition negotiations with Acushnet and reviewed provisions in existing agreements with other districts. Concerns were raised regarding language that could result in increased tuition obligations for other districts if Fairhaven negotiated a higher rate with Acushnet.

The Committee agreed that further discussion with the Town Administrator and Superintendent is necessary to evaluate options and determine a path forward before resuming negotiations with Acushnet. The Committee supported regrouping internally prior to scheduling another subcommittee meeting with Acushnet.

A motion was made by Mr. Sherman to adjourn, seconded by Ms. McKenna, roll call vote, passed (6-0).

Adjourned at 7:43pm.

Sheri Souza
Secretary to the School Committee
Fairhaven Public Schools

Approved August 26, 2026

Fairhaven Public School District

Title I Instructional Coach - Literacy Focus

The Literacy Instructional Coach will support teaching and learning of reading by providing personalized coaching and professional development. The coach works with the Teaching and Learning lead to build elementary teachers' data-driven instructional skills and prioritize educator growth and student success.

Job Highlights

Qualifications

- Master's Degree
- Educator licensure required
- Strong interpersonal, organizational, and communication skills
- Experience with early literacy instruction and curriculum implementation
- Familiarity with adult learning, coaching, or leading professional development
- Knowledge of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks
- Ability to build trusting relationships with colleagues and across lines of difference
- Exposure to data-driven instruction and assessment practices
- Self-directed and goal-oriented with a strong desire to always improve
- Belief in the ability of all students to learn

Responsibilities

As a content expert in literacy the coach will:

- Collaborate with the Teaching and Learning lead to align coaching initiatives with district and school-wide goals, contributing to the development and execution of the school's instructional vision
- Engage in instructional observation and coaching cycles including but not limited to pre-observation conferences and classroom coaching visits, data analysis, collaborative goal setting, modeling of strategies and co-teaching, and actionable feedback
- Support individual teachers in implementing flexible grouping instructional strategies as a structure for Tier 1 and Tier 2 support and progress monitoring
- Work with school leadership to identify and recommend staff support and learning priorities through learning walks and classroom observations
- Support integration of UDL and SEL principles into lesson planning and instruction
- Ensure coaching and instructional support meet the needs of diverse learners, including multilingual students
- Promote culturally responsive and inclusive practices across instructional settings
- Works with district and school leadership to combat systemic barriers that limit student, family, and staff members' equitable access to opportunity
- Any other relative duties as assigned