

EASTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EASTHAMPTON MUNICIPAL BUILDING

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SCHOOL COMMITTEE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

In Person/Hybrid

50 Payson Avenue, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Monday, March 2, 2026

3:30 PM

Present

Megan W. Harvey, Laura Scott, Bonnie Atkins, Superintendent Michelle Balch, Director of Business Services Julia Saari-Franks, Mayor Salem Derby

Call to Order

Subcommittee Chair Megan Harvey called the meeting to order at 3:38 pm.

Public Comment

None

FY'26 Update

Julia Saari-Franks, the Director of Business Services, provided the committee with two updates on the current fiscal year. First, more was budgeted last year for vocational tuition than will likely be used, so there will be some savings from that budget line. Second, there were unanticipated and unavoidable increased costs associated with replacing a nurse in the district quickly, which required the use of a temporary staffing agency until the position was permanently filled. This resulted in unexpected charges of \$60,182.16 above the budgeted amount. The district has filed an Appropriation Request with the City of Easthampton for Mayoral and City Council approval (see attached document). The appropriation will be presented to the full committee at the next regular session meeting.

FY'27 Budget Update

Julia provided an update to the committee on the FY'27 Budget Projections (see attached document). A new contract was negotiated for copier services in the district that has resulted in cost savings for next year. Those cost savings will be applied to the software requests, thereby eliminating the request for funds to cover central office software. Mayor Derby expressed interest in having the city collaborate with the district on the copier contract (perhaps leading to more savings). Mayor Derby also reported that the City is negotiating with Clear Gov for a discount on the software with full city adoption.

Dr. Balch provided an update to the committee on the results of ongoing investigation into how current district personnel can best be used next year to provide level services to students (including enrollment data and maintaining

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class sizes of less than 24, particularly at early elementary grade levels) (see attached document). Not replacing a retiring teacher from the 3rd grade level and reduction of a 5th grade classroom (not a reduction of a position – all personnel will remain in district) will allow for two positions (a world languages teacher and a STEAM teacher) to be hired within the current staffing levels, thereby eliminating the request for two teacher salaries in the FY’27 proposed budget. These changes reflect district efforts to maintain our needs-based and values-based budget as efficiently as possible.

The full budget will be ready for review and subcommittee vote at the next Finance Subcommittee meeting.

Mayor Derby requested information at the next subcommittee meeting related to the timeline of when specific costs are spent within a fiscal year, and when expected revenues (i.e., circuit breaker funds) are received in a fiscal year. The committee discussed that information in general, and Julia Saari-Franks will bring that information to the next meeting. The Mayor also asked for an overview of how many positions in the district are currently funded from grants. The committee discussed the district’s approach over the past five years of essentially not using grant funding to pay for personnel in an effort to be fiscally conservative and to not create positions that would later need to be eliminated. There are currently some personnel on grant funding, as specified by particular grants (i.e., the BRYT grant).

Finally, the committee discussed if increasing reliance on solar power is an option moving forward. Solar power is not incentivized right now but is part of the City’s capital plans and we hope to move that direction over the next 5-10 years.

Other Business	None
Next Meeting Dates	Monday, March 9 2026 3:30 PM – In-person/hybrid Tuesday, March 24 2026 6:00 PM –School Committee Regular Session / Public Hearing on FY’27 Budget – In-person/hybrid
Adjourn	Laura Scott made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Bonnie Atkins. Motion passes unanimously. Meeting is adjourned at 4:08 pm.

Secretary