

**LINCOLN-SUDBURY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, November 5, 2025**

7:00PM

HYBRID

Present

Ravi Simon, *Chair*, Cathie Bitter, *Vice Chair*,
Maura Carty, Lucy Maulsby, Charles Morton (Remote), Jack Ryan

Also Present

Susan Bottan, *LSRHS Interim Director of Finance and Operations*
Alexia Hultin, *LSRHS Student Senate President*
Leah Johnson, *LSRHS METCO Student*
Rebecca Mayer, *LSRHS Co-President of the Teachers' Association*
Andrew Stephens, *LSRHS Superintendent/Principal*

Call to Order

Chair Ravi Simon called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

Public Comment

Ravi Simon motioned to extend 'Public Comment' by 15 minutes. Jack seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote.

Pallavi Gandhi - Sudbury, MA.

"I'm a resident of Sudbury. My son who will be speaking tonight will be at LS next year."

"I'm an eighth grader at Curtis. I'd like Diwali to be a school holiday because I'm going to LS next year. My family celebrates Diwali. I'd also like Diwali to be a holiday, so I can properly celebrate. Homework, after school activities, and having to sleep on time makes this nearly impossible, especially as I transition into high school. I think it is only fair that kids like me can have a whole day to celebrate this important tradition. It's like Christmas or Thanksgiving to anybody else. Thank you for letting me speak. And please consider making Diwali a school holiday."

Ishaan Dongre - Sudbury, MA.

"I am a freshman at Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School. I understand that the School Committee is considering making Diwali a school holiday, and I'm asking that our district recognize Diwali as a school holiday. When I moved from Pennsylvania, where schools already recognize Diwali as a holiday, I was surprised and disappointed at the fact that we weren't given a day off here to celebrate our holiday, while other religious holidays are celebrated. Diwali, one of the most meaningful days on the Hindu calendar. Students who celebrate need to choose between missing school work or missing the celebration. It is like a 'Catch 22' situation where neither choice feels fair. Recognizing Diwali isn't just about a day off. It's about inclusion, showing that every culture and faith in our community is equally respected and valued.

Vidya Parwani - Sudbury, MA.

"Good evening. My son, who is currently in eighth grade, and going to LS next year, is going to speak a few words."

"Good evening. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I'm an eighth grader at Curtis Middle School, I am going to attend Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School next year. I like to respectfully request Diwali to be recognized as a school holiday. While Diwali is the most important festival for my family and for many others in our community, it is a time for light, brighter celebration and togetherness. When we have school on Diwali students like me and others often have to miss festivities to keep up with schoolwork or tests. This will become even harder when we're in high school next year. Recognizing Diwali as a school holiday respects all cultures and allows students to celebrate without worrying about school. Thank you for your time and consideration."

Tracy Garozzo - Sudbury, MA.

"I'm speaking tonight out of deep concern and heartbreak. I'm urging you to keep the Jewish high holiday on our school calendar. This is not a scheduling decision. It's a message about who belongs who's seen and whose traditions are respected in our community. For generations, Jewish families have looked carefully at school calendars before moving to a new town. We don't do this for special treatment. We do it because it tells us whether the community will welcome us. We need to feel welcomed. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the holiest days of the Jewish year, days of prayer, reflection, and renewal. On these days, observant Jews cannot drive to work or attend school. It's not optional if these days are removed from the calendar. Jewish students and staff will face an impossible choice, either to violate their faith or out themselves by requesting an absence and explaining why this is unfair and dangerous in today's climate."

"In August 2025, the Massachusetts special commission on combating anti-Semitism published, showing that Jewish students across the state are increasingly afraid to be open about their Judaism. They report hiding religious symbols, avoiding conversations and fearing backlash. Removing these holidays would force every Jewish student to disclose their faith. This is not an administrative issue. It's an issue of safety, dignity,

and equity. Forcing a Jewish student to reveal their faith to justify an absence is as wrong as

forcing an LGBTQ+ student to come out to attend a pride event. We would never tolerate that for any other identity, we must not tolerate it for our Jewish students."

"In recent years, we've seen swastika's appear in our schools and in our town, yet no meaningful public response has followed. Removing these holidays would now only deepen the feeling that anti-Semitism is treated differently as less serious and less deserving of action, keeping the Jewish High holy days on the calendar costs nothing, but it means everything to those of us who are Jewish, it simply says, "you belong here!"

"I urge you to keep the holidays in place to show Lincoln and Sudbury stands firmly against anti-Semitism and that every student- Jewish or not deserves to feel seen, safe, and respected."

Iliyaan Qureshi -

"I would like to request Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to become holidays on the Lincoln Sudbury calendar. To me, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are the biggest days on the Muslim calendar. Christian students are able to take off and focus on their families, focus on their tradition, as well as their religions for Christmas and Easter. For Muslims, it's the same way- after Ramadan, fasting for 30 days. After Hajj- there's pilgrimage."

"This would help a lot of the Muslim families and students not have to worry about missing tests, rescheduling essay deadlines, or missing school events."

Abhijeet Shinde - Sudbury, MA.

"I have two kids. My son is currently in middle school. He will attend high school in two years. My daughter who is in elementary school will like her voice to be heard, also. So, I'm going to let them speak."

"I'm in seventh grade at Curtis Middle School. I would like Diwali to become a holiday because it will give me time to spend with my family, and we can celebrate all the Diwali traditions together without school hours getting in the way. We also won't have any worries about schoolwork. Another reason why Diwali should be a holiday is because we can share the fun and happiness associated with Diwali. We can invite our friends over and do the fun traditions together. Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion about having Diwali as a school holiday."

"My name is Prenia. I'm a second grader, and I really want Diwali to be a school holiday, so other people can spend their time with their family. Thank you."

Kavita Tesfay - Sudbury, MA.

"My daughter is an SPS student. She didn't get to speak on Monday, she's a future LS student and would like to say a few words."

"Hi- I attend Loring Elementary School, and I would like to have Diwali as a holiday for my family and other Hindus across the world. Thank you."

Kimaya Vemuri- Sudbury, MA.

"Kimaya is my second grader. She goes to Peter Noyes, and she would like to say a few words because she didn't get a chance to say it at the SPS committee meeting. We are really grateful you're letting us speak."

"My name is Kimaya. I really want everyone to have a holiday for Diwali because Diwali should be celebrated. You have parties and yummy food. It is about light winning over darkness. You get to do Pooja, that is, prayers. You get together with family and friends, and share really yummy sweets. You also exchange gifts. It's like having one more day of Christmas. Who can say no to that?"

Rana Muntasser- Sudbury, MA.

"Thank you for taking the time to hear community voices on this decision. I'm a Junior at Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School."

"I'm a Muslim student, and I'm proud of my faith and culture, but I've also learned what it feels like when something deeply meaningful to you doesn't exist in a space. The school calendar doesn't even acknowledge Muslim families. Eid is sacred. It is a morning of prayer, a day of charity, a gathering of family and gratitude. It is a celebration of faith, community, and joy. Yet every time Eid falls on a school day, students like me face a choice no one should ever have to make: Honor your religion, or keep up with your education. No one should sit in the mosque, knowing they will return to school already behind, and no one should feel the pressure to celebrate their holiest day with one eye on their family and one eye on her Chromebook. Recognizing Eid is just like recognizing Diwali and Lunar New Year. It's not about extra days off. It is about dignity. It is about respect. It is about telling students from every background that their identities are not an afterthought. It teaches every other student that community is not one culture, one religion, or one story. It is all of us woven together. When schools acknowledge a holiday, they are acknowledging the people who celebrate it. They are saying you belong, your culture belongs, and you never have to choose between who you are and where you learn."

"This District prides itself on being welcoming, diverse, and forward. Thinking by diversity only matters when it is reflected. Inclusion only matters when it is practiced. Representation only matters when students can feel it and see it, and not just hear it. Recognizing these holidays is a step toward real equity; toward a school system that sees their students fully, their families, their traditions, their faiths, and their humanity. It is a simple change, but it sends a powerful message: Every student deserves the same respect. The same understanding in the same chance to show up whole."

"Thank you for considering this meaningful step towards fairness, belonging, and true representation."

Safa Khan - Sudbury, MA.

"Tonight, my fifth grade daughter who is a student at Nixon Elementary would like to share a few words"

"I would like Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to be a holiday. On Eid, I wake up early and get ready. I wear nice new clothes to go to the mosque. At the mosque, we celebrate by inviting friends and family. We have dessert and yummy food. I also get lots of gifts, and money. But even though all that happens, I don't love how it was on a school day, and I missed a lot of school work, it's hard for me to catch up. This will be harder for me in higher grades. The day after eating we had exams, and that ruined all the fun. This is why I really want Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha to be a holiday."

"Now, my son, he's a seventh grader at Curtis Middle School."

"Dear School Committee of Lincoln Sudbury High School. I am a student at Curtis Middle School, I'm a future LS student when Ed is on a school day. I have to skip school and miss some class activities. More things will be due when I am in high school."

Summar Siddiqui - Sudbury, MA

"Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to speak. I have two kids at Israel Loring elementary school. I'd like to introduce my daughter, who's in second grade."

"I go to Israel Loring school. I would like Eid off as a holiday. It is special to me and my family. I also like school and don't like to miss any activities. Please add Eid as a holiday. It is special to me and my family, like Christmas is."

Matt Lazowski- Sudbury, MA.

"It was wonderful to hear the young students speak about their holidays and their representation and their culture. From my understanding you're weighing in on should be maintained Jewish holidays. In addition to adding other religious holidays, you know, I've been here for about 15 years. I have two children in high school, junior and senior. I am Jewish, very active in the Jewish Community. Andrew, you and I have spoken. It would be a detriment to what Sudbury stands for in terms of a very diverse and in depth cultural community to remove any holidays."

"I commend the young children to speak up for their culture. So important to have that identity. As we grow up, and I'm 55 and look back, I grew up in West Hartford, Connecticut. It's amazing, the richness that fills your life, and you're able to pass on to other people, not just your own children, but add value to the community. Inclusiveness and Sudbury has been that for the 15 years I've been here. I'm imploring you to maintain that. If there's a real need, and a community where sacred holidays are represented, so they can take a day off from school and fulfill their lives and their culture and their religion. I think, as a community, we owe that to them. It's one thing to teach

about Math and Science, but it's also to teach about who we are as people and a culture that is so diverse. I'm sorry in such a divisive political climate that we're in. Let us be a light to our state; in our nation it is possible to have a diverse fabric of people and culture and celebrate uniqueness together."

Neeraj Kasi - Sudbury, MA.

"I'm a Junior at LS. I want to take a few minutes to share my personal experience and explain why the Hindus celebration of Diwali means so much to me and many other students who are part of the LS community. I have many great memories of celebrating the holiday with friends and family. It has become increasingly harder to celebrate fully in middle school and especially High School. Even though Diwali is an excused holiday, this means missing, and falling behind our school work. This forces me and many other students to choose between academics and religious and cultural traditions."

"This year, I took school off to celebrate, and it took me almost until the end of the week to make up for all the work that I missed. No student should have to make that choice. Recognizing the school holiday will not only allow students to celebrate without stress, but it also reflects LS's commitment to be inclusive. Many other school districts across Massachusetts have already adopted Diwali as a school holiday."

Johnathan Shepe- Lincoln

"Thank you for the time and care that you all devote. I'm here to express concern about the proposal to remove Jewish Holidays from the school calendar."

"The issue is not about privileging any group over another. It's about equity, psychological safety, and student belonging. When the school currently pauses on major Jewish holidays, that allows Jewish students to participate fully in both their education and their identity. If these days are removed, Jewish students will have to request individual absence. That may seem administratively simple, but the impact is significant. Students will miss instruction, struggle to make up work, and most importantly, they will be forced to probably identify themselves as Jewish in order to avoid academic penalty. At a time when anti-Semitism is rising nationally and locally. Many Jewish students and families are understandably cautious about the wrong intention themselves. Some are still figuring out how they'd want to express their identity, and they should be able to do that privately on their own terms. The school should not require disclosure as the price of observing a cultural or religious tradition. In crucial, maintaining these holidays does not take anything away from our non-Jewish students. It simply prevents Jewish students who are already a minority in our district from bearing a disproportionate burden in making their identity compatible with academic success. Lincoln Sudbury has long been proud of fostering a culture of pluralism, dignity, and respect. Keeping the Jewish holidays is a clear expression of those values in practice. It shows up in decisions like this one. I urge you to please maintain the current calendar, so every student can learn without compromise."

Randi Rotjan- Lincoln, MA.

"Hi, my eighth grader would like to say something."

"I currently attend Lincoln elementary school, and I'm going to LS next year. The Jewish holidays are really important to me."

"We would like to throw our support behind every word that Jonathan just said. Thank you very much for your time and consideration."

Ahmed Fosley

"I have a ninth grader at LS, and I just want to give my support in having Eid and Dawaili added to the school calendar. Some people might have an opinion of the current calendar and what the status quo is, however it's not equitable. We need some change, and it has to be equitable and fair to everyone. This is not taking anything away from anybody else. This is making sure every student feels that they belong in the school district."

Ravi Simon motioned to extend 'Public Comment' by three(3) minutes. Jack seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote.

Joseph Kolchinsky - Lincoln, MA.

"Thank you for giving me a moment to speak here at the last second. I reviewed the survey results. I really appreciated the objective approach that the school took. I think the School Committee should have the ability to do what you're doing or do what the committee is doing now, which is to reasonably review what is needed and wanted by various constituents. To make the appropriate changes that make the most sense in giving the best possible education. I also think it is an appropriate time for making certain changes. To remove Jewish holidays from the calendar, now, at a time of rising anti-Semitism in the community. I think, sends an inadvertently wrong message, and that there'd be a better time to make this kind of change."

"I ask that the School Committee take that into account. You know when considering these kinds of adjustments. To potentially, bring this back up at another time. When maybe these actions wouldn't be misconstrued as a continuation of some sort of wave of negative sentiment."

Consent Agenda

Ravi Simon, *Chair of LSSC*

- Approval of Minutes for Tuesday, October 22, 2025 [Minutes for October 22, 2025](#)
- Approval of Warrant/Vouchers [Warrant/Vouchers](#)
- Approval of Donations [Unified Sports Donations](#) & [LS Winter Athletics Sports](#)

*Ravi Simon motioned to approve all three(3) items on the 'Consent Agenda'. Jack Ryan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
(SEE ACTION ITEMS SECTION)*

Student Senate

Alexia Hultin, *President of the Student Senate*

- The Student Senate Junior Senator elections and are now planning the winter fundraiser, which will happen the week before winter break.

METCO Update

Leah Johnson, *LSRHS METCO Student*

- On Tuesday, November 4th, about six(6) METCO students attended the 'W.E.B Du Bois Medal Award' Ceremony at Harvard University, where students saw public figures like Spike Lee, Misty Copeland, and Brittany Griner.
- Congratulations to METCO's fall athletics! The football team made it to the playoffs.
- METCO's senior students are submitting their college applications.
- Anticipate a METCO Leadership Council event taking place in December.

Teachers' Association Updates

Rebecca Mayer, *LSRHS Co-President of the Teachers' Association*

- Quarter one has been busy, with college recommendations, grades are due Thursday, November 6th.
- The MetroWest Health Survey was administered Thursday, November 6th.
- Faculty meetings involved discussions on grading 'norms' and teaching strategies.
- A new wellness class called "Power Skills" (teaching students life skills, communications, and problem-solving) started quarter two. Thank you Ashley Gomes and Vicky Caburian.

Director of Finance and Operations Report

Susan Bottan, *Interim Director of Finance and Operations*

Andrew Stephens, *LSRHS Superintendent/Principal*

- The Business office is in the process of preparing for the preliminary budget, expecting official guidance next week.
- Susan Bottan and Andrew Stephens reported reviewing projected expenses and revenue to match guidance from Sudbury and Lincoln, anticipating a tight budget or potential gap.

Superintendent/Principal Report

Andrew Stephens, *LSRHS Superintendent/Principal*

- Congratulations to all fall sports teams for making the playoffs and representing their communities well.
- LSB Player presents 'The Music Man' from November 19th-22nd, with ticket information to follow.

Sherman Bridge Update:

- An update on the Sherman's Bridge project, a two-town effort with Wayland and Sudbury, is still in discussion, with a visioning workshop held in early October.
 - The project to replace the top portion of a bridge (3-6 months), not the entire structure, is projected to begin no earlier than summer due to ongoing work and permitting.
 - Concerns exist regarding potential bridge closure impacts on school traffic.
 - The project aims for one-lane traffic on the bridge once it progresses, which could mitigate issues.
 - Studies were done on traffic speeds, but reducing the speed limit below 25 mph requires state approval.
- School Committee members question whether the committee should advocate for speed limit signs, potentially involving Wayland and the state, as the bridge's repaving might inadvertently encourage higher speeds due to a straighter, wider path.
- Emergency services need a smooth bridge for quick access, making speed bumps impractical.
 - This creates a conflict between safety and the desire for a smoother roadway.

Further Updates:

- On Monday, December 1st, an upcoming AI-focused Professional Development, featuring a keynote speaker and multiple sessions for staff, designed to provide a foundational understanding of AI's impact on teaching and learning.

- Concerns about potential changes to federal SNAP payments have led to the school informing counselors to assist individuals.
 - Anticipate a food drive with LSPO, potentially involving multiple food banks.
 - Additionally, the Sudbury Foundations approved \$155,000 in emergency funding for 17 local relief organizations, including food pantries, to help the community.

Subcommittee, Liaison, and Representative Updates

Policy Subcommittee

Lucy Maulsby, *Policy Subcommittee Member*

Maura Carty, *member of the Policy Subcommittee, &*
Charles Morton, *member of the Policy Subcommittee*

- The Policy subcommittee met on Monday, October 27th, discussing a competency determination policy and student absences.
- The subcommittee reviewed a draft of the competency determination policy on November 11th and continues to have a growing list of items for further discussion.

Building Committee (Roof Project)

Jack Ryan, *Member of LSSC*

Maura Carty, *Member of LSSC*

Andrew Stephens, *LSRHS Superintendent/Principal*

- The Building Committee discovered a problem with a previously approved roof solution, recommended by a consultant in 20023 and voted on by the School Committee last November.
 - The solution, a fluid-applied roof coating, is an untested method.
- The committee, contractors, and designers worked through the weekend to address this, as the original plan could lead to an unsuccessful project costing the town millions.
- The roof repair project needs a second opinion, but action is required soon, ideally in the summer.
 - A trusted consultant is needed for a second opinion for the demanding building committee, who are experienced with the building's history.
- Deadlines for town meetings in March and May necessitate securing funds quickly.
- Recent infrared scans show the roof is stable, but the decision remains whether to restore or replace it.

- The recommendation is to proceed with an Owners Project Manager (OPM) by issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ).
 - The RFQm, which includes an energy assessment and a comparison of renovation versus replacement, will seek a consultant to provide a second opinion on potential changes and conduct a cost-benefit analysis.
- The latest version of the RFQ is currently available.
- The School Committee approved an expedited request for qualifications for an OPM, pending council approval, to hire consultants to provide a second opinion and then manage the project. (SEE ACTION ITEMS SECTION)
- The goal is to have the OPM on board by January to analyze and provide information by the end of March for a funding request.
- The funding for the OPM will require a School Committee vote and contract approval.
- The School Committee discussed using a stabilization fund for capital projects, specifically for roof restoration, with the cost to be reimbursed to the fund.

Lincoln State of the Town Update

Cathie Bitter, *LSSC Vice Chair*

Maura Carty, *LSSC member*

- Cathie Bitter and Maura Carty reported presenting the School Committee goals, as well as, discussed the school's initiatives.
 - Additionally, AI's role in schools was discussed, an update will be provided next year.
- This event was a good opportunity to engage with residents and hear about various community efforts.

Information and Discussion

Ravi Simon, *LSSC Chair*

Discussion on calendar review process in preparation for 11/13

Tri-District School Committee Meeting

[Presentation on the Tri-District Calendar Subcommittee's work](#)

[Tri-District Calendar Survey Results Presentation \(10/29/25\)](#)

[Tri-District Calendar Review Listening Session Summary](#)

[Feedback from LS, SPS, and LPS Administration to Tri-District Calendar Subcommittee](#)

[Tri-District Calendar Review Subcommittee: Information from other School Districts](#)

[Spreadsheet with Comparable District Calendars](#)

[L-S School Calendar Mock-Up](#)

[L-S Attendance Data](#)

[L-S Transportation Costs - FY 26 & FY 27](#)

- The School Committee recapped discussions about reviewing the calendar.

- Due to requests to add holidays from diverse cultural and faith communities, in collaborations with SPS and LPS.
- Recent meetings included a discussion with the Chinese American Association about Lunar New Year's cultural significance and its impact on school days.
- Chair Ravi Simon reviewed the community survey results and discussed holidays under consideration for school calendars.
 - These include Rosh Hashanah (traditionally on LS, SPS, and LPS calendars). Yom Kippur (also traditionally a non-school day for the same schools), and Good Friday.
 - The Tri-District Calendar committee consulted with Rabbis and a Priest regarding the mentioned holidays.
- Any new holidays not historically on calendars were discussed, including those requested by Muslim community members.
- The Tri-District committee discussed defining religious and cultural holidays and criteria for their inclusion on the school calendar.
- School Committee members agreed to address how to discuss calendar changes in future conversations.
- The Tri-District's advice stated that deciding non-state/federal holidays is within the School Committee's purview, provided state requirements for 180 days and 990 hours are met.
 - Adding a new holiday extends the school year by a year, but low attendance days still count as full days towards the 180-day requirement.
- The discussion covered school day calculations, particularly for partial days due to weather, and the 180-day requirement.
 - Feedback from the METCO director regarding New Year's celebrations and the importance of recognizing diverse cultures, while noting minimal transportation impacts.
 - Supt. Andrew Stephens emphasized educational continuity and consistency, suggesting that frequent breaks are not generally beneficial for learning, especially for students with special needs.
 - The teacher contract does not specify holiday dates, but significant calendar changes could necessitate impact bargaining due to altered working conditions.
 - Based on the staff survey responses about taking Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Good Friday off, suggests a total cost of \$2,000 to \$3,200 in substitute teacher costs.
 - The cost of covering teacher absences for a day, with 17 teachers out each needing three blocks covered at \$45 per block, is approximately \$2,200. Additionally running buses on days when SPS is not, costs \$2,100 per additional day.

- Lincoln's buses operate fully paid by the school, while Sudbury's buses, normally split, must be fully paid if Sudbury is not in session.
- Chair Ravi Simon reviewed the survey results, he recommended listeners to view the full presentation due to the text's potential for misinterpretation without visuals.
 - The survey, conducted across the three districts via Google Forms in nine languages, received over 1900 responses over 18 days.
 - Results showed 13% of families would be absent for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and 11% for Good Friday.
 - Staff attendance was similar, with 11.5% out for Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur and 17% for Good Friday.
 - Roughly half of the survey respondents preferred only state and federal holidays, while the other half preferred maintaining the current calendar. Staff believed the community benefited more from additional holidays than they personally would.
 - The School Committee discussed the impacts of administrative decisions on students and families, including interruptions from absences and childcare costs.
- The 'Calendar Review' Subcommittee considered four main options: maintaining the current calendar, adding holidays for Diwali and Lunar New Year, observing only state and federal holidays, or rotating a limited number of non-state holidays.
 - Other possibilities included adjusting the number of holidays or early release dates.
 - A suggestion was also made to approve calendars for two years at a time instead of one.
 - The Tri-District Committee discussed calendar options, with a 3-1 preference for state and federal holidays.
 - However, they decided to present two calendars: one with only state and federal holidays, and another with additional holidays.
- School Committee members Maura Carty and Cathie Bitter created a spreadsheet to evaluate different calendar models based on weighted criteria.
 - The main goal is to discuss what options are currently being considered and what is off the table.
 - SPS will present two options at their next meeting.
 - Rotations was not a significant point of discussion, with a general consensus against this particular option.

At 9:18PM, Ravi Simon motioned for a five(5) minute recess. Jack Ryan seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote. (SEE ACTION ITEMS SECTION)

School Committee members returned to open session at 9:25PM

- A School Committee member mentioned the issue of focusing solely on state and federal holy days, arguing that this approach could lead to people losing existing holidays without gaining new ones.
 - The current holiday structure is unfair, specifically regarding the inclusion of four holidays without discussion.
 - The mentioned School Committee member stated Lunar New Year should be acknowledged.
 - A half-day observance might allow for more flexibility.
 - There were concerns about removing existing holidays due to new requests and questioned the necessity of four new holidays.
 - While acknowledging the importance of celebrating cultural events like Lunar New Year, they suggest offering more flexibility, perhaps through half-days, to accommodate additional holidays.
- A School Committee member acknowledged concerns from the Jewish community about rising antisemitism and reflected on various experiences over the past six months regarding a calendar.
 - The main priorities for the calendar are academic learning, continuity, and minimizing disruption.
 - The district typically ends the school year before Juneteenth, as it is difficult for those who celebrate it to also manage final exams.
 - Extending the school year into late June, as that's not optimal for learning and causes community concern.
 - The preference is for state and federal holidays.
- A School Committee member proposed shifting half-day Wednesdays to Fridays during the week of Good Friday to enhance learning.
 - Another suggestion is to discuss delayed MCAS exams, which are no longer mandatory for graduation, and bringing all students back for full days.
 - The core concern is academic learning.
- A School Committee member questioned the survey and its results, citing issues with its methodology. The inclusion of a neutral option in the 'Likert Scale', and the uncertainty of whether respondents were actual stakeholders.
 - The survey results appeared to be unreliable and suggest better methods for gathering such information, despite potential costs.

- The mentioned School Committee member believes moving blocks around on a mock calendar to implement changes; adding days for cultural or religious reasons is the most important step towards finding workable solutions.
- Rotating and removing current holidays is unacceptable.
- The mentioned School Committee member is interested in discussing a three-out-of-four holiday model, particularly regarding religious observances.
- The mentioned School Committee member believes the only viable outcomes are to maintain the 'Status Quo' or adding holidays after careful planning.
- The mentioned School Committee member rejected a state and federal approach, arguing that while it seems simple and equal, it ignores family differences in childcare needs and would be a significant step backward.
- The mentioned School Committee member suggested consolidating the February and April break.
 - Chair Ravi Simon clarified that while the mentioned breaks are common, they are not state-mandated, and the idea of combining them was discussed but not pursued due to concerns like ski team schedules.
- A School Committee member's perspective on said matter evolved, but is still in favor of state and federal approaches for neutrality and familiarity.
 - The mentioned School Committee member expressed concern about anti-semitism and the challenge of students feeling comfortable taking religious observances days, finding it problematic to place the burden of this decision on students.
 - The mentioned School Committee member highlighted the privilege associated with taking extra vacation time for childcare.
 - Extending the academic year could impact summer jobs for students and faculty, as well as childcare options.
 - The mentioned School Committee member emphasized the need to consider economies and families' capacity to absorb additional days, alongside inclusion and equity, which are often discussed in the context of religious and cultural identity.
 - The mentioned School Committee member expressed discomfort with the rotating schedule and the idea of maintaining the current approach.
- A School Committee member preferred adding holidays over state and federal options, particularly to avoid Jewish students missing school for their high holidays.

- The mentioned School Committee member pointed that no calendar can be fully equitable, as many religious groups will still not have their holidays recognized.
 - Jewish holidays have been on the calendar since the 1970s, and community members moved to Lincoln and Sudbury for this reason.
 - Removing these holidays would hurt the Jewish community, particularly given current antisemitism.
- A School Committee member stated removing religious and cultural holidays from the school calendar, even in a government school with separation of church and state.
 - While it creates an ordinary day for secular families, it forces religious families to make accommodations, hindering their ability to fully express themselves.
- A School Committee member acknowledged the calendar subcommittee's preference for state and federal holidays over adding new ones.
 - The Calendar subcommittee is open to adding holidays if the impact on the calendar can be mitigated, suggesting a half-day for Good Friday and potentially for Lunar New Year.
 - The mentioned School Committee member considers the idea of moving a half-day from a Wednesday to Lunar New Year's day and understands why rotation as an option is unpopular.
 - The rotation schedule could be a useful tool for managing holidays, especially when some holidays fall on weekends, allowing for additions without over-scheduling.
 - The rotating schedule defaults to Christian holidays, with other faiths rotated in.
- A School Committee member acknowledged concerns about adding too many holidays, but believes a line can be drawn to include significant holidays for major cultural and faith groups in the community, as other districts manage a set number of holidays.
- There are significant operational concerns, like attendance systems (ASPEN) not easily accommodating schedule changes.
 - Moving a half-day from Wednesday to Friday wouldn't lose instructional time, but it would disrupt the Wednesday schedule where students leave later, while ACA and faculty/ department meetings occur.
- A School Committee member emphasized the importance of respecting these observances and notes that many people advocate for Diwali to be a non-school day.

- The mentioned School Committee member stated the significance of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha for the Muslim Community, comparing their importance to the Jewish High Holidays.
- A School Committee member discussed two Muslim holidays, noting that Eid al-Fitr is generally preferred for school observances over Eid al-Adha due to its celebrating nature.
- The community might be open to a half-day for Eid al-Adha, as the main celebration is in the evening.
- Diwali received the most requests. Honoring two Christian and Jewish holidays suggests also honoring two high holidays like Lunar New Year.
- While fewer people leave school for Lunar New Year than other holidays, more would leave for Lunar New Year than Diwali, and even more would miss school for observation.
- A key concern for parents is that Lunar New Year often coincides with exam week, forcing a difficult choice between schoolwork and observance.
- A School Committee member questioned an opportunity for cultural observances or recognition of Lunar New Year, suggesting activities like a demonstration during lunch rather than a full assembly.
- A School Committee member proposed adjusting the school calendar, specifically for February 2029, to accommodate back-to-back holidays and recess.
 - Changing these dates would require significant advance notice due to people planning vacations years in advance and the need to coordinate with SPS and LPS.
- The goal is to minimize disruption to schools and avoid extending into summer while still honoring cultural identity.

Action Items:

-VOTE: Ravi Simon motioned to extend 'Public Comment' by 15 minutes. Jack seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote.

-VOTE: Ravi Simon motioned to extend 'Public Comment' by 3 minutes. Jack seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote.

-VOTE: Ravi Simon motioned to approve all three (3) items on the 'Consent Agenda'. Jack Ryan seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

-VOTE: Jack Ryan motioned to approve 'The issuance of a Request For Qualifications (RFQ) for Owner's Project Manager (OPM), pending the committee's approval, to hire consultants in providing a second opinion, and then manage the project'. Ravi Simon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

-VOTE: At 9:18PM, Ravi Simon motioned for a five(5) minute recess. Jack Ryan seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote.

Public Comment

No Public Comment(s)

Adjournment

Jack Ryan motioned to adjourn the open meeting. Ravi Simon seconded the motion. Six(6) out of six(6) members of the School Committee were in favor via roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 10:47PM.