Strafford School Board Meeting Minutes

September 9, 2026

Strafford School Library

UNAPPROVED

School Board Members:

- Ms. Katrina Labrecque, Chair
- Ms. Jessica Grant, Vice Chair
- Mr. Eric Almanzan
- Ms. Michelle Wangerin
- Mr. Jeffrey Hamilton

Staff and Invited Guests Present:

- Robert Seaward, Superintendent of Schools
- April Brown, Board Secretary
- Natalie Blackington, Principal
- Jennifer Mone

Call to Order:

- The board meeting was called to order at 6:01 PM by Ms. Labrecque. A roll call vote was taken with 5 of 5 members present.

I. Non-Public Session

Mr. Almanzan moved to enter into a non-public session at 5:03 AM under authority RSA 91-A:3 II (a, c). Seconded by Ms. Wangerin. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Almanzan moved to return to public session at 6:43 PM. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

- While in Non-Public, the board discussed a student request to attend CBNA, an employee termination, the Superintendent's evaluation and audit findings. No votes were taken.

II. Public Comment

- Public comment was opened for 30 minutes starting at 7:00pm.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

- The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

IV. Agenda Review – Agenda+Signup Sheet+Intro

- Several items were adjusted to the Other portion of the meeting including the current status on the audits, open maintenance position and the principal's report.

V. Prior Meeting Minutes Review

A. Approval of Non-Public and Public Meeting Minutes from August 26, 2026

The board discussed having the non-public minutes state "superintendent evaluation" versus "personnel matters." There were no changes to the public minutes.

Mr. Almanzan moved to approved the non-public and public board meeting minutes for the August 26, 2026

board meeting as amended. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

B. Director of Student Services Report

Administration continues to actively recruit for our direct hire paraeducator positions.

1. Staff Handbook Amendment -- Section 504 Procedures

The superintendent reiterated the Director's request that the 504 section needs to be added to the faculty handbook. Board members agreed.

Mr. Almanzan moved to approve the addition of the 504 section to the faculty handbook as described in the Director's report for employee matters. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

C. Superintendent's Report:

1. Manifest(s)

The manifest is currently in circulation. No issues were identified.

2. Capital Fund Statements

The fund statements for August 2026 were reviewed - No discussion.

3. Action Items

a. New Hires/Resignations

The Superintendent nominated Dianne Reardon for the Title I tutor position at a rate of $30 per hour, funded by Title I grants. The Principal stated that Ms. Reardon comes highly recommended with years of special education experience and loves working with middle school students. Ms. Reardon will support MTSS interventions in the middle school. The position is part-time, up to 29.5 hours per week, 180 days prorated.

Mr. Almanzan moved to approve the CBNA Assignment student request as discussed in non-public. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

b. Facility Use Forms - PTO Meetings; Heart Screening; Rec Basketball

Mr. Seaward presented facility use forms from the Strafford School PTO for PTO meetings, the school nurse, Jamie Clark for Heart Screening event, and Strafford Sports Recreation Center for Youth Basketball games.

Mr. Almanzan moved to approve all three facility use request forms as presented by the Strafford School PTO, the school nurse and Strafford Sports Recreation. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

c. Stipend Nominations

Mr. Seaward presented the nominations for several stipends. Art Studio x2 - Heidi Jordan and Mindy Grant for $1,050 each (Grant Funded); 8th Grade Advisor x2 - Kendra DeCota and Rich Redmond for $1,000 each; National Junior Honor Society Advisor - Jess Clark for $800 (Grant Funded); Yearbook Advisor - Jess Clark for $1,100; Camp Invention x4 - Sarah Pelletier, Audrey Dolan, Maria Jorgensen, and Darci Wilder for $500 each; ESY Teachers x2 - Jennifer MacNeil for $902.40 and Cynthia Hunn for $560; Substitute Coordinator - Jess Clark for $1,288.

Mr. Almanzan moved to approve the stipends as presented. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

List of Nominations can be found on page 35 of the board packet.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

4. Informational/Discussion Items

   a. Ongoing and Completed Board Meeting Task Items

      Several tasks have been completed, forester proposal, auditors contacted, food service committee meeting rescheduled, and additional items have been added to the list. The board requested additional items.

   b. Student Enrollment Projection Report for End of August

      The Superintendent presented enrollment projections comparing June to August data. Current high school enrollment is 164 versus a budgeted 156, representing an overage of 8 students. The board discussed that homeschooling has increased in recent years and many homeschool families return to public school at the high school level. The board directed the Superintendent to conduct community outreach through Alma Blast, library postings, and social media to identify families planning to enroll students at Coe-Brown to improve budget forecasting. Kindergarten enrollment showed a significant increase, creating a large cohort. Minor discrepancies between the Principal's enrollment numbers and official counts were attributed to ongoing Pre-K enrollment changes.

   c. Dental Plan Change + Options

      Mr. Seaward presented the need to reopen negotiations or develop a MOU regarding the dental plan changes. The dental plan 2A is ending effective June 30, 2027 and the district will be required to select another available plan. Available plans are listed in the board packet.

   d. Food Service Menu

      Mr. Seaward explained there had been a number of community complaints about the food service menu at the start of the school year and that after some investigation, it was determined that the current menu was limited in its ability to properly reflect what the district serves for food. Mr. Seaward created an app to replace the limited menu with a more robust version allowing for images of the district's own food to be displayed, helping the community see the high quality products the kitchen is serving to students daily. The board discussed the concern about peanut butter vs. sunbutter and the superintendent explained the district uses Jif Natural peanut butter as option C daily. This product is a middle ground between pure natural peanut butter and the more sugary regular brand of Jif.

   e. Fire Alarm Communicator Repair Update

      Mr. Seaward presented the update of the fire alarm communication system. While the district is still awaiting parts to arrive, the current communication system is limping along. The district anticipates installation of the new system as soon as all the parts arrive.

D. Principal's Report

1. Enrollment Report

   Ms. Blackington stated that her enrollment report does not contain out of district students and noted that Pre-K enrollment is increasing regularly.

2. Cell Phone Enforcement Update

   Ms. Blackington presented the cell phone enforcement update. From now on, Bell to Bell ban on cell phones will mean from the very first bell around 8:30 am until the very last bell at 3:25 PM. In essence this means no cell phones will be out from when a student enters the building until after they depart the building. They must be off and away between those two bells. Bell to bell aligns with the current law and handbook requirements so no board action is required.

115 3. Consultant - Sarah Shirilla

116 The Principal presented Sarah Shirilla as a literacy consultant funded through Title II grants at $2,000 per visit. Ms. Shirilla was referred by a parent who is an instructional strategist in another district. She will support teachers in implementing high quality literacy practices using the district's adopted curricula including Wit & Wisdom. Ms. Shirilla provides pre-built resources and materials accessible through a Google website that teachers may use regardless of whether the consulting relationship continues. The board engaged in extended discussion about technology use in classrooms, with concerns raised about overreliance on Chromebooks versus hands-on learning. The Superintendent and Principal emphasized the importance of balancing technology with traditional methods and noted efforts to implement kiosk mode on Chromebooks to restrict student access to only teacher-approved resources. The Principal confirmed students have silent reading time at the start of each middle school class and emphasized that high quality instruction is the ultimate goal, with data showing current students are making gains in upper grades.

118 **Mr. Almanzan moved to approve Sarah Shirilla for Title II Consultant $2000 per visit, paid through grant funds. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.**

120 **A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.**

122 **VI. Correspondence**

124 A. Thank you card from School's Main Office

125 A thank you card from the front office for the start-up breakfast provided by the school board.

127 B. CBNA November 10, 2026 Regional Board Meeting Invite - Not a normal board meeting day

128 The board discussed that CBNA has scheduled the Regional Board Meeting on Tuesday, November 10th to avoid conflicting with Veterans Day on November 11th. The board discussed and agreed to attend that meeting without holding the traditional board meeting afterward. Mr. Seaward will post the meeting, as all five members plan to attend.

130 **VII. Community Calendar**

132 • Budget season and a welcome to the fall coaches are to be added to the calendar.

134 **VIII. Committee Updates:**

136 A. Policy Committee (2nd Reading = JICK - Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention - Bullying - 2nd reading; 1st Reading = BBBC - Board Member or District Officer Resignation)

137 The board conducted second reading of policy JICK (Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention - Bullying) and first reading of policy BBBC (Board Member or District Officer Resignation). For BBBC, the board discussed amending language on page 42 to require simultaneous notification to the board chair when resignations are submitted, rather than just providing a copy. On page 48 of JICK, the board removed the word "reprisal" as it was undefined and had been removed elsewhere in the policy. The board clarified language on page 6 regarding public forums to ensure administration would be the presenters on bullying prevention strategies rather than board members.

139 **Mr. Almanzan moved to approve second reading for JICK policy. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.**

141 **A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.**

143 **Mr. Almanzan moved to approve the first reading for BBBC - Board Member or District Officer Resignation.**

Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

145 **A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.**

147 B. Transportation Committee

148 The committee met and discussed potentially reducing Coe-Brown bus routes from three to two. Ridership data for the week of August 30th showed morning averages of 15.75, 19.25, and 23.75 students across the three routes, with afternoon ridership lower at 13.5, 17, and 17.5 students. The buses hold approximately 68-72 students at capacity. Eliminating one route would save approximately $90 per day. The board discussed conducting community outreach through a questionnaire to assess impact on families before making changes. The committee will review bus contracts with other companies to ensure the district contract includes necessary provisions. The board discussed that two routes was typical until the early 2000s and considered reducing routes only in the afternoon when ridership is lower. The next committee meeting is scheduled for December, with budget numbers to be presented at the October 28th board meeting.

150 C. Facilities Committee (Tree Survey Quote)

151 The tree survey quote; the goal is to cut the least amount of trees as possible. Both Mr. Almanzan and Mr. Seaward reached out to the county forester with no response as of yet. Quotes range from $1,000 to $4,000 and can be found in the board packet on pages 57 through 60.

153 **Mr. Almanzan moved to approve to accept the proposal bid from Chris Wood with Arboric Cultural Consultation at an estimated rate of $1,057.50, based on his rate of $235.00 an hour with a three hour minimum and travel costs at approximately $352.20. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.**

155 Looking to schedule a meeting soon.

157 **A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.**

159 D. Athletic Committee (Committee Charter)

160 The committee reviewed the draft committee charter, which was reduced from seven pages to less than two. The board discussed clarifying the role of personnel matters in the charter, distinguishing between program evaluation and staff evaluation. A board member spoke with the Coe-Brown Athletic Director about transition support for students moving from middle school to high school athletics, including having high school coaches attend middle school practices or run camps. The board discussed declining female participation in sports, particularly soccer, with some surrounding towns unable to field girls teams. The board suggested exploring cooperative teams with other small towns to provide opportunities for female athletes. A board member reported visiting fall sports practices and noted a tremendous atmosphere across all teams. The committee is working with the Powder Mill Fish and Game Club to potentially host a home cross country meet, which would be a first for Strafford. The charter will return to the athletic committee for further refinement before coming back to the full board.

162 E. Food Service Committee

163 Meeting next Wednesday,September 16,2026, at 3:30.

165 F. NHSBA Delegate (School Funding Tour)

166 The delegate reported that the school funding fairness project outreach circulated at the last meeting is too late for this year but could be considered for next year. New resolutions for the NHSBA annual meeting have been released and will be added to the next board meeting agenda as a separate item for the board to determine how the delegate should vote. A board member expressed that taking an official school board stance on school funding lobbying efforts is not appropriate, as it involves politically sensitive topics and the board should govern within existing law rather than engage in advocacy. The delegate will present recommendations for each resolution at the next meeting.

G. Education Committee

The Dean's meeting is scheduled.

H. Dam Committee

I. Wellness Committee

A meeting is scheduled in October.

J. Negotiations Committee

A separate non-public meeting to follow this public meeting.

IX. Set Future Board Meetings:

- 9/23/2026
- 10/14/2026
- 10/28/2026
- 11/18/2026
- 12/9/2026
- 1/13/2027
- 1/20/2027
- 1/27/2027 - Annual Budget Hearing
- 1/27/2027 - Follow up to Board Meeting
- 2/10/2027
- 3/3/2027
- 3/6/2027 - Annual District Meeting
- 3/24/2027
- 4/7/2027
- 4/21/2027
- 5/12/2027
- 5/26/2027
- 6/9/2027

X. Other

- Mr. Almanzar reported speaking with the district's auditing firm. Mike Campo offered to present findings from both the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 audits at a board meeting, likely in late October or early November. The auditor's recommendations align with the dashboard and reconciliation processes previously discussed by the board.
- The Superintendent presented the vacant full-time maintenance position. The current part-time maintenance worker has been filling the full-time role and has performed exceptionally well, with strong recommendations from the evening maintenance supervisor. The board discussed whether to post the full-time position or promote the current part-time employee directly. The board consensus was to proceed with promoting the current employee to the full-time position, with a formal hiring packet to be presented at the next meeting. The part-time position will then be posted. The overlap of two daytime staff is needed during the mid-morning to mid-afternoon window for lunch, recess, bathroom maintenance, and trash hauling.
- The Superintendent raised a concern that approximately two-thirds of the playground equipment has

reached end of life, with significant rust, metal deterioration, and bending occurring on the two large structures. Primex will conduct a formal safety evaluation, but the Superintendent anticipates recommending removal of the structures by next summer if they cannot be replaced. As the only playground in town, this represents a significant loss of recreational space. The Superintendent indicated this may need to be addressed through a warrant article rather than the operating budget due to the cost.

XI. Non-Public Session

Mr. Almanzan moved to enter into a non-public session at 8:51PM under authority RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Seconded by Ms. Wangerin. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Almanzan moved to return to public session at 9:10 PM. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

- While in Non-Public, the board discussed employee situation and negotiations.

XII. Adjournment

Mr. Almanzan moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 PM. Seconded by Ms. Wangerin.

A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed 5-0.

Minutes Recorded By,

April Brown