



Meeting Notice

Board/Committee Name: Orange Elementary School Committee

Day/Date: March 9, 2026

Time of Meeting: 5:00PM Executive Session, 6:00PM General Session

Location: Fisher Hill Elementary School

Conference Room - Executive Session

Media Center - Regular Session & Public Hearings

59 Dexter St.

Orange, MA 01364

Google Meet joining info: <https://meet.google.com/fec-fkii-mro>

Or dial: +1 865-383-3441 PIN: 893 086 066#

More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/fec-fkii-mro?pin=1494621111821>

MINUTES

All minutes taken by Chrissy Rodriguez.

Public Hearings - 6:00pm

1. Public Hearing on School Choice for the 2026-2027 SY

Mallory opened the public hearing on School Choice. 6:10pm.

Members present: Crystal Clarke, Abigail Bilbrey, Maria Bull and Josefa Scherer (Josefa joined via remote participation)

Mallory explained that School Choice is an annual vote by the School Committee that allows Fisher Hill to open seats for students who are not enrolled in the district. For each School Choice seat filled, Orange receives approximately \$5,000 per student. Conversely, if an Orange student chooses to attend another school under the School Choice program, the district loses \$5,000; if they attend a virtual school, the loss increases to \$13,189.00.

Public Comment -

Denise Andrews asked about the amount we receive for school choice students and if Special Education costs are on top of that. Michele stated that OES would need to pay for any Special Education needs of incoming school choice students.

Karen Perkins talked about large class sizes and stated that we cannot be the "yes school". Students are coming here because they get what they want (one on one paras etc). She believes OES should not accept any school choice students.

Mallory feels that accepting school choice is a gamble. She stated that we don't know which students will apply for school choice, and it will be unknown if they will need services or not. She advocated to not open any school choice seats.

Crystal was also not in favor of opening school choice seats.

Josefa said she is thinking about how many school choice spots we'd need to open to replace all school choice out students, and if we open any seats, open them for the younger grades only.

Mallory closed the FY27 Public Hearing on School Choice at 6:38 pm.

2. Public Hearing on FY27 Budget

Mallory opened the public hearing on the FY27 budget at 6:28pm.

Members present: Crystal Clarke, Abigail Bilbrey, Maria Bull and Josefa Scherer (Josefa joined via remote participation)

Michele reviewed the budget book again, showing the areas where we reduced/adjusted the budget from last month's presentation. The committee requested that we reduce the proposed initial budget of 4.72% down to a 2.16% budget increase.

Title I funds are level funded so the government will issue the same amount as FY26. The district is losing 40,000 in grant funds for next year.

Public Comment -

Denise Andrews stated that next time she would like to pre-read what will be presented and why there is such significant increases for the central office. Michele explained that we are cost sharing health insurance now so Orange is paying more. Insurance is negotiated through the town.

Karen Perkins asked why OES pays for snow removal. Michele explained that the town clears Dexter St. and the district is responsible for clearing school property (same with water and sewer). Karen also asked about/suggested charging for preschool. Michele said that if we do charge tuition it will be taken off of chapter 70.

Michele explained Net School Spending: She said to look at it like a house, it's the basement/min amount, and we should budget more than that. The Town feels that as long as we meet NSS we are okay but it is the minimum amount and we believe it is not the right amount.

Leanne Lovell had a request that Michele use a pie chart when presenting at town meeting.

Mallory closed the FY24 Public Hearing for the Orange FY26 Budget at 7:14pm.

Regular School Committee Minutes

1. Call To Order - Mallory called the School Committee meeting to order at 7:14pm.
Members present: Crystal Clarke, Abigail Bilbrey, Maria Bull and Josefa Scherer (Josefa joined via remote participation)

2. Pledge of Allegiance - Mallory led the Pledge of allegiance.
3. Public Comment -
Corey Knapp read a statement regarding snow removal safety concerns (timing and quality of snow removal done by Lyman). He stated that the kitchen staff got to the school early on a day where it had snowed and the access road was not cleared. He is requesting that it be mandatory that all roads be treated before any staff arrive.
Lyman will be notified/reminded as to when staff arrive at the building.
4. Approval of Minutes - February 9, 2026
On a motion made by Josefa Scherer and seconded by Crystal Clarke, the committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2026. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.
5. Report of the OETA - Dave Mastroianni read a statement from the OETA. They welcomed the new school committee members, Maria and Abigail. They are concerned about school choice and feel school choice seats should not be opened for any grade. They are gearing up for MCAS.
6. Principal Report - Dr. Lewis thanked the new school committee members. Her report was deferred to glimpse into the classroom.
7. Policy of the Month - Mallory read policy BEDH, public comment at School Committee Meetings.
8. Glimpse into the Classroom - Leanne Level and Catherine Lee presented a slide show showing how students recently participated in a combined STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) virtual flight. The experience started with a zoom call with a former teacher in the Mid-East. Catherine explained how they went through the whole pretend flight process, including making passports in art class and having Ms. Murphy as a TSA agent. They thanked Dr. Lewis and Mr. Fraleigh for letting them be creative and supporting the idea. They gave a special shoutout to Mr. Smith and to S&S Appliance for the cardboard.
9. March Items
 - a. Integrated Monitoring Review Report (Information) - Dr. Liz reported that the district has successfully completed the Integrated Monitoring Review (IMR) Audit, and the district received no findings. This is exceptional news and reflects the strong systems, compliance practices, and dedicated work of our staff. Special recognition goes to Phil Saisa, Danielle Bouchard, Dr. Lewis, Marlene DiLeo, and the entire team, including our special education educators and Title I support staff, whose efforts contributed to this outcome.
10. Matters for Action or Vote
 - a. 2026-2027 District Calendar - The School Committee made some recommendations related to the calendar in respect to layout and preference. All three district's School Committees have reviewed the calendar.
On a motion made by Crystal Clarke and seconded by Maria Bull, the committee voted unanimously to approve the revised SY2026-2027 School and District calendar as presented. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.
 - b. Appointment of new R.C Mahar Representative - Dr. Liz explained that with Frank Hains no longer on the committee, it is necessary that the committee appoint an Orange School Committee representative to the Mahar Regional School Committee. This appointment would be temporary pending the committee reorganization in June. Crystal volunteered for the appointment.
On a motion made by Crystal Clarke and seconded by Abigail Bilbrey, the committee voted unanimously to appoint Crystal Clarke as the Orange School

Committee representative to the Mahar Regional School Committee until the full reorganization of the Orange School Committee at the June meeting. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.

11. Sub Committee / Liaison Updates
 - a. Town of Orange Liaison Report - None. The Town needs to appoint a new representative.
 - b. Report of Union #73 Committee - No meeting held.
 - c. Report of the R.C. Mahar Representative - None.
 - d. Report of the Leadership, Accountability & Measurement Subcommittee - Josefa reported that they had a quick meeting to try to reduce the work load in the evaluation year (formatting evaluation documents). They hope to have a complete evidence document sometime at the end of April from the Superintendent. They will then distribute the evaluation tools, tabulate results and share findings at the next school committee meetings across the district. New members do not evaluate the Superintendent but should go through the process to learn.
 - e. Report of the Communications & Policy Subcommittee - No meeting held
 - f. Report of the Resources & Capacity Subcommittee
 - i. Approval of Journal Entries - **On a motion made by Crystal Clarke and seconded by Abigail Bilbrey, the committee voted unanimously to approve the journal entries as presented. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.**

Information requested at the last meeting:
How many 504s and who does them at Mahar and PCS?

 - a. PCS has a total of 19 504's, and those are done by the building Principal (note: total enrollment of the school is 128 students).
 - b. Mahar has a total of 62 students with 504s. High school students with a 504 are completed by the guidance department and the Vice Principal is responsible for middle school students with 504s.
 - g. Report of the CES Representative - Mallory reported that CES is in the process of finding a new Executive Director and hired an agency to help with the process. Two finalists were brought forward and Dr. Portia Bonner was ultimately selected. There has been some discontent with the choice. They are trying to find an Interim Director until mid-July.
 - h. Report of the CAPS Representative - The recent agenda and CAPS updated were provided for the committee's review.
 - i. Report of the SEPAC Representative
 - j. Report of the JLMC Representative - No meeting held.
12. Next Meeting - March 19, 2026 (virtual meeting), and April 13, 2026 (regular meeting)

Read Across America - Mr. Fraleigh presented a slide show about Read Across America/Dr. Suess's birthday showing the community guest readers that came to Fisher Hill on March 2nd.
13. Items for Future Consideration
 - a. Public participation for meetings during public comment remotely - vote in April.

14. Adjournment - ***On a motion made by Maria Bull and seconded by Crystal Clarke, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm. Roll call taken by Mallory Ellis.***

Approved: 4/13/26

Signature of Secretary: _____

The agenda reflects topics that the Chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed.

Public Comment Protocols

The School Committee welcomes public comment on items that are within the scope of the School Committee's responsibilities. The Public Comment agenda item is reserved for this purpose. Members of the public wishing to address the Committee should be aware of the following guidelines:

- The Chair will recognize those wishing to speak and give them the floor. Only persons recognized by the Chair may speak. For purposes of the minutes, speakers should identify themselves at the beginning of their remarks.
- The purpose of Public Comment is to receive input from the community, not to engage in prolonged conversation with the Committee. The Chair will ensure that any comment or question that requires a response from the committee or the School Department will be addressed in a timely manner.
- All comments should be addressed through the Chair, not any individual committee member or to others in attendance.
- Speakers are expected to respect confidentiality. This includes the confidentiality of the speaker's own child/ren as well as that of school staff and personnel.