

# **Gardner School Committee**

**City Council Chambers, 95 Pleasant Street, Gardner, Massachusetts**

**Regular Meeting – January 6, 2026**

Members present: Mayor Michael Nicholson  
Rachel Cormier  
Anne Hurst  
John LaFreniere  
Jennifer Pelavin  
Robert Swartz  
Paul Cormier

School Personnel Present: Dr. Mark Pellegrino, Superintendent  
Brenda Smith, Recording Secretary  
Dr. Catherine Goguen, Chief Academic Officer

Student Advisors: Aiden Lospennato Student Representative to the School Committee  
Natalie Ruiz Student Representative to the School Committee

## **Call to Order**

Mayor Nicholson, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The meeting opened with a roll call and the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was broadcast live on Channel 8 (Gardner Educational Television Station).

## **Open Time for the General Public**

No one from the General Public requested to speak.

## **Introduction of School Committee Members**

Mayor Nicholson welcomed Mr. Paul Cormier as the new School Committee Member sworn into office on January 5, 2026

## **Reorganization of School Committee - Officers**

Mayor Nicholson read Chapter 37 of the City Charter regarding election of School Committee Officers. Nominations may be made from the floor and no second is required. Members may second the nomination to show support.

## **Vice Chair**

**Mrs. Pelavin nominated Mrs. Rachel Cormier to serve as Vice Chair of the Gardner School Committee for the ensuing year. Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere**

Mayor Nicholson asked three times if there were other nominations for Vice Chair. There were none.

**Mr. Swartz moved that nominations for Vice Chair be closed.**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**As required, a roll call vote was taken on the nomination of Mrs. Cormier.**

<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mr. Swartz</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mrs. Pelavin</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mr. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>
<b>Mayor Nicholson</b>	<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>

**Count - 7 in favor. Unanimous. Mrs. Cormier will serve as Vice Chair.**

**Finance Officer**

**Mrs. Pelavin nominated Mr. John LaFreniere to serve as Finance Officer of the Gardner School Committee for the ensuing year. Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

Mayor Nicholson asked three times if there were other nominations for Finance Officer. There were none.

**Mr. Swartz moved that nominations for Finance Officer be closed.**

**Seconded by Mrs. Pelavin.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**As required, a roll call vote was taken on the nomination of Mr. LaFreniere.**

<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mr. Swartz</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mrs. Pelavin</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mr. Cormier</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>
<b>Mayor Nicholson</b>	<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>

**Count - 7 in favor. Unanimous. Mr. LaFreniere will serve as Finance Officer.**

**Alternate Finance Officers**

**Mr. LaFreniere nominated Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz to serve as Alternate Finance Officers for the Gardner School Committee for the ensuing year.**

Mayor Nicholson asked three times if there were other nominations for Alternate Finance Officers. There were none.

**Mr. Swartz moved that nominations for Alternate Finance Officers be closed.**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**As required, a roll call vote was taken on the nominations of Mr. Swartz and Mrs. Pelavin.**

<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mr. Swartz</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mrs. Pelavin</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mr. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>
<b>Mayor Nicholson</b>	<b>Mrs. Pelavin and Mr. Swartz</b>

**Count - 7 in favor. Unanimous. Mr. Swartz and Mrs. Pelavin will serve as Alternate Finance Officers.**

**Secretary**

**Mrs. Pelavin nominated Mrs. Hurst to serve as Secretary of the Gardner School Committee for the ensuing year. Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

Mayor Nicholson asked three times if there were other nominations for Secretary. There were none.

**Mr. Swartz moved that nominations for Secretary be closed.**

**Seconded by Mr. LaFreniere.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**As required, a roll call vote was taken on the nomination of Mrs. Hurst.**

<b>Mrs. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mr. LaFreniere</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mr. Swartz</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mrs. Pelavin</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mr. Cormier</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>
<b>Mayor Nicholson</b>	<b>Mrs. Hurst</b>

**Count - 7 in favor. Unanimous. Mrs. Hurst will serve as Secretary.**

**Consent Agenda**

**Mr. LaFrenier moved to accept the Consent Agenda as presented:**

- Acceptance of Minutes, December 8, 2025**

- **Ratification of the following Warrants as recommended by the Finance Subcommittee:**
- Warrant # 26-19, dated November 6, 2025, in the amount of \$170,510.57
- Warrant # 26-20, dated November 13, 2025, in the amount of \$139,835.48
- Warrant # 26-21, dated November 20, 2025, in the amount of \$268,644.06
- Donations-  
Shun Fa Lan, Inc. (dba Yen Yen) \$2,500.00

**Seconded by Mr. Swartz**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting**

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Policy Subcommittee**

Mrs. Hurst, Chair of the Policy Subcommittee, reported that the Subcommittee met on December 17, 2025. Minutes of the meeting were presented.

The following policies were reviewed and no changes were required and they will be updated "Reviewed December, 2025":

- ADF – Local Wellness Policy
- DCB – Fiscal Year
- DFG – Use of School Facilities and Equipment, Security and Management
- DJE – Bidding Requirements

Ten policies were recommended to the full School Committee for a first reading. See (Item #3746)

Eight Policies were recommended for second read (Item#3747)

Mayor asked the members if there would be any objection to taking the following out of order **Items 3746 & 3747.**

There were no objections

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Item #3746 – First Reading of Policies**

**The following policies were presented for a first read as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

- **DBD** – Budget Planning
- **DBJ** – Budget Transfer Authority
- **DD** – Grants, Proposals, and Special Projects
- **DGA** – Authorized Signatures
- **DH** – Bonded Employees and Officers
- **DI** – Fiscal Accounting and Reporting
- **DIE** – Audits

- **DJ** - Purchasing
- **IJOA** – Field Trips
- **IJOA-E** - Field Trip Approval Form

**Item #3747 – Second Reading of Policies**

**Mrs. Hurst moved that the District School Committee vote to approve the following policies for a second reading as recommended by the Policy Subcommittee:**

- **BGD** – School Committee Review of Procedures
- **BHC** – School Committee – Staff Communications
- **BIBA** – School Committee Conferences, Conventions, and Workshops
- **CB** – School Superintendent
- **CH** – Policy Implementation
- **CHCA** – Approval of Handbooks and Directives
- **CHD** - Administration in Policy Absence
- **JBB** - Educational Equity

**Seconded by Mrs. Cormier.**

**Vote - so voted.**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Student Advisory Board**

Ms. Natalie Ruiz & Mr. Aiden Lospennato gave their report

Congratulations to our December Wildcat Winners:

Gardner High School was one of a small number of schools invited to attend the Celebrating Academic Success Conference in Marlborough on December 3rd. Schools invited were recognized for having their most recent MCAS scores reach or exceed pre-pandemic levels.

We held our first Annual Holiday Movie Night, on December 13th, where all GPS families were invited to watch a holiday movie with free snacks and drinks in the GHS gymnasium. More than twenty-five families attended.

On December 17th, the English classes for the Class of 2028 were able to go to the Hanover Theatre to see "A Christmas Carol". The play was great, and the students had a wonderful time.

We held our Annual Student Success Assembly where upperclassmen shared their personal experiences of overcoming obstacles and finding success.

We held our Holiday Concert on Thursday, December 18th. The band and chorus programs continue to be top notch and were in full display for a packed Landry Auditorium.

Students interested in engineering were able to visit multiple innovative companies and speak directly with engineers to learn about their work.

Our winter athletic season has officially tipped off. A number of students have worked hard to join our athletic teams and a number of teams already have some wins under their

belts and Cam Gamache reached his 1,000-point milestone this past weekend, January 3rd.

Mayor welcomes and thanks Ms. Ruiz, he let her know he used to sit in her seat when he was in high school.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Dr. Pellegrino wished everyone a Happy New Year, we are off to a great start. Welcome Natalie Ruiz to the committee as our student representative, Natalie is a senior with three years of best buddies she is top ten in her class and is looking into college to study business. I hope everyone had a great holiday and I'm excited to start the next semester.

**FINAL COMMENTS**

Mrs. Cormier

Looking forward to the new term. Nice to see Mr. Cormier here. Thank you for welcoming me back as Vice Chair.

Mr. LaFreniere

Welcome Paul Cormier, looking forward to working with you. Thank you Aiden & Natalie

Mr. Swartz

Happy New Year Everyone, Welcome Paul Cormier our committee is now even with three women and three men. Looking forward to January 20<sup>th</sup> very excited about the National Honor Society invitation to the induction.

Mrs. Pelavin

Happy New Year, Congratulations John, Rachel & Bob for your sub-committee positions and welcome Paul to the School Committee.

Mrs. Hurst.

Same as Ms. Pelavin, and looking forward to another four years with the committee.

Congratulations to everyone. Looking forward to the NHS Induction.

Mr. Cormier

Thank you all for the well-wishing. Very excited to see what the young students bring to offer. I'd like to close with a quote; Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of a fire".

Mayor Nicholson

There is a Parking Ban in effect tonight that just went out. The Rockwell committee will be meeting in February to review applications. Applications are coming in and are open until January 30<sup>th</sup>. exciting time of year for everyone that applies. I hope you can all join us this Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> for the City Inauguration at 6:30. Please let Ryan in my office know if you can attend and we will have a seat for you.

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The Next meeting will take place on Monday, February 9, 2026 6:00PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. LaFreniere moved to adjourn.**

**Seconded by. Mr. Swartz**

**Mayor Nicholson abstained from voting.**

**Vote – so voted.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm

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**Anne Hurst, Secretary**

B. Smith, Recording Secretary