DRAFT MINUTES
RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Administrative Unit 50
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To be approved by the Rye School Board at the November 18, 2026, meeting.

RYE SCHOOL DISTRICT
RYE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The monthly meeting of the Rye School Board was held in person on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. at Rye Junior High School. Please be advised that these minutes capture important votes, discussions, and topics of the School Board Meeting.

PRESENT

School Board Members:	Matt Curtin, Chairperson Katherine Errecart, Vice Chairperson Claire Spollen, Secretary Laura Belden, Board Member Michelle Wheeler, Board Member
SAU Central Office Staff:	Ellen Kaschuluk, Superintendent of Schools Susan Penny, Business Administrator Chris Russo, Director of Technology Brian Helfrich, Director of Facilities
School Administrators:	Michelle Pitts, Principal (RES) Anne Gilbert, Principal (RJH)
Student Representative:	Ben, Student, Grade 8
Visitors:	Stephen Borne, Community Members, Staff

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Mr. Curtin called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS / PUBLIC COMMENT
Stephen Borne (Wallace Road) inquired about candidates night, the availability of meeting packets, website updates, and public messaging regarding Question 2 (HB 1300 / Tax Cap). The Board discussed balancing public transparency with packet preparation timing.

DRAFT

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Approval of Public Minutes of September 23, 2026

On a motion by Ms. Wheeler, seconded by Ms. Errecart, the Board voted to approve the public minutes of September 23, 2026. Vote: 4-0 (Ms. Spollen abstained due to absence at the previous meeting).

Approval of Non-Public Minutes of September 23, 2026

Approval of the non-public minutes of September 23, 2026, was deferred to the next regular meeting to allow for distribution of hard copies.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORTS

Principal Reports

Ms. Pitts (RES) reported on student academic progress, noting that tier benchmark assessments showed zero students requiring Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions in reading or math across grades 2 through 4. She highlighted fourth-grade marine biology learning with guest master diver Jim Machinchick, school garden carrot harvesting served at lunch, student voting on playground gaga pit schedules, and water filter enclosure art painted by Ralph Masiello.

Ms. Gilbert (RJH) reported on civic activities, noting 15 fifth graders presented platforms in the NH Kid Governor campaign with the winning school platform advocating a 4-day school week. She highlighted 8th grade peer mentorship assisting 5th graders with end-of-day organization, an 8th grade social studies guest speaker from the Simon Wiesenthal Center discussing Holocaust history, full operation of the RJH Learning Lab, and active use of the newly renovated Life Skills kitchen for cooking classes.

Student Representative Report

Ben reported on cafeteria food quality and portion sizes, fruit and vegetable availability, granola bars, and low water pressure on downstairs water fountains. Board members encouraged Ben to organize a student survey on school lunch feedback before the food service contract renewal.

Director of Technology Report

Mr. Russo presented updates including: completion of Nutanix enterprise cloud administrator training with Chris Cooney in preparation for the multi-year datacenter server migration, delivery and installation of new Nutanix cluster hardware funded across three budget cycles, notification of a third-party Frontline data breach affecting 305 SAU staff members with two years of free credit monitoring provided, network switch programming and fiber infrastructure upgrades coordinated by Jeff Rodgers, digital accounts payable automation workflows in development with Toshiba, copier refresh completion across schools integrated with Papercut print management, rollout of the PowerSchool document storage module for secure FERPA compliant 504 plan access, implementation of automated open-source patch management via Action1, and resolution of 360 out of 429 start-of-year helpdesk tickets. He also conducted the annual review of Policy JICL / Student Acceptable Use Procedure (AUP), noting no policy changes were required at this time.

Director of Facilities Report

DRAFT

Mr. Helfrich presented updates including: seasonal heating transition and fall boiler maintenance with Palmer & Sicard, completion of summer capital projects including exterior security door replacements, parking lot reinforcement, granite curbing at RES, kitchen equipment upgrades, playground safety woodchips, the RJH Life Skills kitchen renovation, completion of the AHERA three-year asbestos reinspection by Examinetics confirming all contained materials remain in good condition, recognition of Jim Gordon and the custodial team for summer floor waxing and grounds upkeep, review of the 100-page Turner Group draft facility assessment reports for RES and RJH outlining long-term ADA, mechanical, and structural priority project, and presentation of the updated 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) spreadsheet for FY27–FY36. The Board agreed to form a facility subcommittee comprising Mr. Curtin and Ms. Spollen to work alongside administration and The Turner Group.

Superintendent Report

Ms. Kaschuluk shared updates from her report including: the initial regional AREA Agreement Advisory Committee meeting with Portsmouth (SAU 52) held October 15, 2026, covering the 1968 agreement history, tuition formulas, and quarterly meeting schedules, opening remarks at the NEASS Superintendents Conference at Wentworth by the Sea, attendance at the Bradley F. Kidder Educational Law Conference covering HB 1300 tax cap compliance, neutral informational newsletter plans regarding Question 2, ongoing "*Mornings on the Move*" visitations and "Super 6" administrative team collaboration, and current SAU job openings.

FINANCIALS

Approval of Manifests

On a motion by Ms. Errecart, seconded by Ms. Spollen, the Board voted to approve the manifest dated September 21, 2026 (for period 9/19–9/21) in the amount of $1,662.35. Vote: 5-0

On a motion by Ms. Errecart, seconded by Ms. Wheeler, the Board voted to approve the manifest dated October 2, 2026 (for period 9/22–10/2) in the amount of $608,597.78. Vote: 5-0

Approval of Budget Transfers

Ms. Penny presented seven budget transfers related to Extended School Year (ESY) payroll reclassifications, and unbudgeted ESY tuition.

On a motion by Ms. Errecart, seconded by Ms. Wheeler, the Board voted to approve the seven budget transfers in the net amount of $205,393.07. Vote: 5-0

Financial Report & RSA 32:5-i (HB 1300 / Tax Cap) Analysis

Ms. Penny reviewed financial reports, highlighting a positive tuition variance of $238,450 resulting from 14 fewer high school tuition students than projected (10 8th graders did not transition to PHS 9th grade).

She presented a detailed fiscal analysis of RSA 32:5-i (Question 2), demonstrating that local tax revenue accounts for 68.82% of Rye's school funding. If Question 2 were to pass, applying the March 2026 CPI cap (3.2%) retroactively would require an immediate budget cut of over $700,000 from Rye's current operating

DRAFT

budget, despite the district having passed a modest budget with only a 2.1% increase over the previous year. She also noted health insurance costs increased by 12.88% this year (averaging 7.97% over 3 years) and transportation contracts increase by ~4.75% annually, both significantly exceeding CPI.

NEW BUSINESS

Public Informational Hearing Notice

The Board scheduled a Public Informational Hearing on Ballot Question 2 (HB 1300) for Monday, October 26, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. at Rye Junior High School, following a Board budget work session from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Official School Board Position on November Ballot Question 2

The Board deliberated on taking an official position regarding Question 2 on the November 3, 2026, ballot.

On a motion by Mr. Curtin, seconded by Ms. Wheeler, the Board voted unanimously (5-0) to adopt the official Rye School Board statement recommending that voters vote NO on November Ballot Question 2:

"On November 3, 2026, Rye voters will be asked to decide whether to adopt a school district tax cap proposed on Ballot Question 2. This question will appear on the ballot as a result of legislation enacted by the State Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. It was not placed on the ballot by the Rye School Board or through a local petition process.

After careful review, the Rye School Board has voted to oppose adoption of a tax cap and recommends that voters vote NO on Ballot Question 2.

If adopted, the local school tax levy could not grow beyond the prior year's amount adjusted for inflation and new construction, regardless of the actual costs required to operate the school district. While inflation is one factor that affects school budgets, many of the district's most significant expenses, including special education services, employee health insurance, transportation, utilities, safety and security requirements, and contractual obligations, often increase at rates that don't align with general inflation. The cap would not change those obligations; it would only reduce the revenue available to meet them.

The ballot language claims that the caps would not affect classroom instruction or school-based services, but this is misleading. If costs rise faster than the allowable increase in revenue, the district could be forced to make cuts elsewhere, potentially affecting teaching staff, class sizes, extra-curricular activities, and/or academic offerings.

The Rye School Board believes that budget decisions are best made through the existing local process, which provides transparency, public discussion, and direct voter participation. A formula established by the state does not accurately reflect local circumstances or actual school budget needs.

The Rye School Board respects the financial pressures facing residents and remains committed to managing school spending responsibly. Our most recent budget reflects that commitment, with an increase of just 2.1%

DRAFT

over the previous year. Despite this modest increase, had the proposed tax cap been in place, we would have been forced to reduce that budget by over $700,000. We will continue to develop budgets that are thoughtful, transparent, and accountable to Rye voters while maintaining the high-quality education our community values.

With these considerations in mind, the Rye School Board recommends a NO vote on Question 2 on the November ballot.

Matthew Curtin - Rye School Board Chairperson
Katherine Errecart - Rye School Board Vice Chairperson
Claire Spollen - Rye School Board Secretary
Michelle Wheeler - Rye School Board Member
Laura Belden - Rye School Board Member"

Discussion. Vote: 5-0

POLICY

Second Reading & Final Approval

On a motion by Ms. Wheeler, seconded by Ms. Spollen, the Board voted to approve the second reading and adoption of policies AC (Non-Discrimination / Equal Opportunity Statement and Foreign Language Translation) and ACA (Action on Non-Discrimination / Equal Opportunity). Vote: 5-0

On a motion by Ms. Wheeler, seconded by Ms. Spollen, the Board voted to approve the second reading and adoption of policies DF (Student Debt / Meal Charges) and DFA (Investments). Vote: 5-0

PERSONNEL

Retirement Acceptance

The Board reviewed a letter of retirement from teacher Maggie Hanna.

On a motion by Ms. Spollen, seconded by Ms. Wheeler, the Board voted with deep gratitude to accept the retirement of Maggie Hanna. Vote: 5-0

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

On a motion by Ms. Belden, seconded by Ms. Spollen, the Board voted to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (c) at 7:52 p.m.

Roll Call Vote:

Katherine Errecart: Yes
Michelle Wheeler: Yes
Laura Belden: Yes
Claire Spollen: Yes
Matt Curtin: Yes

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Vote: 5-0

On a motion by Ms. Errecart, seconded by Ms. Belden, the Board voted to exit non-public session and return to public session at 8:21 p.m. Vote: 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Errecart, seconded by Ms. Belden, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. Vote: 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Kaschuluk, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools, SAU 50
October 21, 2026

Rye School Board Secretary Date

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