



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 10, 2025

Present:

Danvers:	Mr. Bauer
Gloucester:	Mr. Lummis
Hamilton Wenham:	Mr. Tracy
Ipswich:	Dr. Blake
*Lynn:	Ms. Colella (non-voting)
Manchester Essex:	Ms. Beaudoin
Marblehead:	Mr. Robidoux
Masconomet:	Dr. Harvey
Peabody:	Dr. Vadala
Pentucket:	Dr. Bartholomew
Reading:	Dr. Milaschewski
Rockport:	Dr. Branco
Salem:	Dr. Zrike
Swampscott:	Mr. Calichman
Tri-Town:	Dr. Morrison
Triton:	Mr. Forget

NEC:

F. Rosenberg	L. Fleming
K. Mahoney	K. Mahoney
E. Aldrich	

ABSENT:

Beverly:	Dr. Cushing
Lynnfield:	Mr. Geary
Nahant:	Mr. Liebow
North Reading:	Dr. Daly

1. **Call to Order:** Dr. Harvey called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m.
2. **Welcome & Introductions:** Ms. Rosenberg thanked members for attending in person and welcomed Dr. Calichman, the new superintendent of Swampscott; Recovery High School staff, including principal Ms. Lipinski; Mr. Craig Harris and Annelise Buzaid of the Rennie Center; and Babz Carrapichano, NECEF president.
3. **Approval of Consent Agenda**
Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Lummis and seconded by Mr. Forget to approve the Consent Agenda, which included the May, August & Sept Finance Committee board meeting minutes, Sept 2025 appointments, and warrants.
Vote: The motion was moved unanimously

4. **Executive Directors Report** - Ms. Rosenberg provided a brief report, noting that the full report is available in the board folder. Highlights included:

- Enrollment & Programs: 326 students participated in the ESY program
- Program Visits: Over the past two weeks, Ms. Rosenberg visited all schools and programs.
- Curriculum & Professional Development: Ms. Rosenberg reported on several new curriculum and PD initiatives
- Business & Infrastructure: Updates on finance and infrastructure initiatives, new CBA, and fundraising/grants.
- Regional & Statewide Issues: Discussed regional transportation initiative, and advocacy initiatives through MOEC, including a collaboration with Bridgewater State University that is designed to allow collaborative special educators to remain in their paid positions while pursuing licensure.
- DESE Reviews: Reported on the upcoming six-year DESE program review and DESE financial and governance review.

Mr. Lummis requested additional information about the Bridgewater State initiative and asked if it might be expanded to include educators from districts. There were no other questions.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** Mr. Mahoney presented the Treasurer's Reports for May, June, and July. May: Collections reached 92% of the revised budget. June: Closed with approximately \$3 million in cash flow and 95% of the revised budget collected. While the month showed a negative net change of \$1.1 million, this was not unusual for the period. July: Cash flow tightened as it usually does in the summer. The month reflected a negative \$1.8 million balance, which is being managed through August collections and tuition income for the start of the school year. By the close of July, there was a positive net change in cash balance of \$392,000, aided by Extended School Year (ESY) tuition

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Tracy and seconded by Dr. Vadala to approve the May, June and July 2025 Treasurers report as presented.

Vote: The Motion was moved unanimously

6. **Finance Update:** Mr. Fleming reported that the unaudited year-end numbers show that, as anticipated, we had a deficit of approximately \$944K due to the HVAC project and reduced census in some programs. However, this was offset by reduction in expenses. He is hopeful that we will begin to rebuild the surplus in FY26. Auditors are on-site this week, and updates will continue to be provided throughout the year.

Facilities and Transportation Projects: Mr. Fleming reported that work on the HVAC project is near completion with some remaining subcontractor issues related to controls. We were working closely with the OPM and GC on these issues before final payments are made. The bond drawdown concludes in October.

Mr. Fleming noted that there have been some significant "start-up" challenges with Nicks Transportation, whose administrative capacity has not met expectations. In the interim, Mr. Fleming and Mr. Cameron have taken a hands-on role in managing routes. Once routing software is fully in place, greater savings are expected. He stressed the importance of timely payments from the nine districts involved.

Board members raised concerns about NEC having to use its own resources to cover vendor responsibilities. Mr. Fleming explained that while the vendor overpromised on administrative functions, they remain committed to student needs, and are making the necessary improvements. He will continue to closely monitor the situation.

Mr. Fleming opened the floor for questions regarding the finance update. Mr. Forget emphasized the importance of timely invoice payments. Ms. Beaudoin suggested that tuition reminder emails should be sent directly to superintendents as well. Mr. Fleming reiterated that the key issue remains ensuring invoices are paid on time.

Ms. Rosenberg thanked the Finance Committee for their continued efforts.

7. **New Business:** Ms. Rosenberg gave a brief overview of the new DESE Financial/Governance Review Process which will take place this year. She reminded Board Members of their fiduciary responsibilities including ensuring that each member's home district school committee receives regular updates. Ms. Rosenberg provided Board Members with a one page summary of these responsibilities. She reminded them that, effective July 1, they should have been formally appointed to the NEC board and are expected to report back to their school committees four times per year.
8. **Executive Director Evaluation:** Dr. Harvey reported the evaluation was completed with input from many board members. On behalf of the board, he thanked Ms. Rosenberg for her leadership and accomplishments, highlighting the successful union contract settlement and progress on the HVAC project. He reviewed the evaluation, noting that Ms. Rosenberg and he had discussed it prior to the meeting. Feedback reflected strong appreciation for her work and dedication, with members expressing that they were very pleased with her leadership. Ms. Rosenberg received an overall rating of Proficient.

Ms. Rosenberg thanked the board for their comments and emphasized her appreciation for the opportunity to serve NEC and collaborate with board members. She reiterated her desire for feedback if the board needed more specific information or wanted her to present information in a different way. The full evaluation is available in the board folder.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Robidoux and seconded by Mr. Lummis to approve the Evaluation of Francine Rosenberg, Executive Director as presented.

Vote: The Motion was moved unanimously

9. **Treasurer's Evaluation:** Mr. Forget, Finance Committee Board Chair, reported on the Treasurer's Evaluation. He thanked members for their contributions to the report and recognized Mr. Mahoney for his excellent working relationships with both administration and superintendents. The board expressed appreciation for his expertise and the clarity he brings to financial matters, noting that his work is greatly valued.

Motion: A motion was made by Dr. Harvey and seconded by Dr. Branco to approve Kevin Mahoney, NEC Treasurer's Evaluation as presented.

Vote: The Motion was moved unanimously

10. **Rennie Center Report on Recovery High School:** Ms. Rosenberg provided context on the board's long-term support of Recovery High School, the recent financial challenges, and the importance of addressing evolving regional needs. She reminded the board that last spring they had

authorized her to hire the Rennie Center to conduct a study on The Program Structure and Financial Viability of Northshore Recovery High School.

She introduced Annelise Buzaid from the Rennie Center who presented a comprehensive report. Ms. Buzaid conducted an extensive data review and interviews with superintendents, principals, clinical staff, RHS staff, and community partners. She emphasized the unique and life-saving role of Recovery High School. She also highlighted the financial challenges, and the changing patterns of adolescent substance use. Her overarching conclusion was that RHS remains an essential resource for the region, but that sustaining RHS will require change and adaptation. She recommended considering the following:

1. Renaming Recovery High School to shift perceptions associated with the current school name.
2. Exploring the development of a range of short term models.
3. Exploring whether a community-based location with proximity to public transportation would be financially viable.
4. Looking at staffing models, and considering a reduction in teaching staff and shifting to a personalized learning model.
5. Exploring opportunities for early college or work-based learning.
6. Looking at increasing the surcharge for students with IEPs to better reflect true cost.
7. Strengthening marketing and communication with districts.
8. Continuing to advocate for transportation funding.

A copy of the full report is available in the Board Folder or upon request.

Recovery High School Pilot Program – Findings

School psychologist Craig Harris was hired last spring as a consultant to help develop and implement a short-term pilot program at Recovery High School. He presented findings from the short-term pilot. Of the 8 students served, 6 had IEPs and all met criteria for substance use, with most also having significant trauma histories, and significant mental health needs. None had been making progress in their home districts.

During the 31-day pilot:

- Students achieved an 89% attendance rate.
- All participants passed their classes and earned credits.
- Staff fostered strong, positive peer relationships, with full-time RHS students welcoming pilot participants into the community.

Mr. Harris emphasized the dedication and effectiveness of RHS staff in supporting complex student needs. He noted that the greatest challenge was that after experiencing success for the first time in a long time, most students were reluctant to return to their home districts. He recommended that if RHS continues to offer short-term options, there would need to be a clearer process for transitioning students back to their home districts to ensure continuity of progress and stability after their time at RHS.

Board Discussion – Recovery High School Rennie Center Report

Following the Rennie Center presentation, the board engaged in a discussion about the report, the pilot program and future directions for Recovery High School (RHS).

- **Pilot Costs & Communication:** Ms. Rosenberg noted that the pilot had zero cost, but once financial commitments are involved, clearer communication and structured planning are essential. She emphasized the need for board commitment before proceeding further.

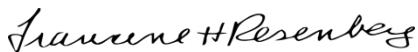
- **Student Transitions:** Mr. Robidoux raised questions about how students enter and exit the program and what the plan looks like after the 45-day pilot. Dr. Vadala and Dr. Branco both supported a more gradual reentry process, allowing students to transition back to their home districts while maintaining clinical support.
- **Funding Concerns:** Ms. Rosenberg highlighted the financial risks, stressing that the board must decide whether to pursue smaller-scale options or commit fully to an expanded model. Dr. Vadala asked if board members would be willing to directly fund the program to sustain enrollment. Ms. Beaudoin emphasized the need to identify best practices for supporting regional needs despite financial constraints.
- **Innovation:** Dr. Morrison suggested exploring new tools such as virtual reality and partnerships with other Recovery Schools to expand support.
- **Program Redesign and Rebranding:** Several members, including Dr. Lummis, Dr. Branco, agreed the older model may no longer meet current needs and emphasized rebranding as key. Ms. Lipinski added that students from the pilot also engaged in the after-school program, receiving continued social-emotional support, and stressed the importance of improving two-way communication with districts.
- **Next Steps:** Ms. Rosenberg proposed forming a small steering committee—including herself, Ms. Lipinski, and Mr. Harris as well as a small group of board members, or their designees (i.e. high school principals or clinical staff)—to explore program models, staffing, and location options, with recommendations to be brought to the October meeting.

11. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made and seconded by Dr. Vadala and Mr. Tracy. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m. with all members in favor.



Kathy Mahoney, Administrative Assistant to Executive Director



Francine Rosenberg, NEC Executive Director