



Winooski School Board of Trustees  
**Regular Meeting &  
Joint Meeting with the Winooski City Council**  
Wednesday, November 12, 2025, 6:00 pm  
WSD Library Learning Commons or via Google Meet  
Google Meet Link: [meet.google.com/szx-qwkh-oeel](https://meet.google.com/szx-qwkh-oeel)

Policy Title 1.0 Ends Statement: All students will graduate from the Winooski School District (WSD) college and career ready at a cost supported by a majority of the Winooski community. WSD students will lead healthy, productive and successful lives and engage with their local and global community.

**Attendees:** *Wilmer Chavarria, Emily Bowers, Sarah Haven, Cheyne Racine, Nicole Mace, Aurora Hurd, Bryn Oakleaf, Joanne Davidman (virtual), Katie Livermore, Robert Millar, Elaine Wang, Thomas Renner, Jacie Barber, Mikayla Kelemen, Elsie Goodrich, Elom Essiba, Katherine Blair, Maybeline Lopez, Kathleen Walsh, Al Turkos, Erik Johnson, Gabby Dzessou, Natalie Dzessou, Dahlia Michoma, Olivia Byamungu, Allyssa Ravelin*

1. **Call to Order for Joint Session**

- a. Robert Millar calls the meeting to order @ **6:02pm**

2. **WSD Board - City Council Joint Meeting** (45 Minutes)

- a. WSD Presentation
  - i. Emily Bowers shares the Ends Policy, stating the three focus areas on students being College and Career ready, supporting the majority of the school community, and engaging with their local and global community.
    1. Indicators of compliance shared.
  - ii. Overview shared with bullet points of each category:
    1. Policy Governance
    2. Board's Role
    3. Active Work
    4. WSD Organization Chart (Can be found on the website)
    5. Total Enrollment- Trending upward
    6. Homestead Tax Rate after SACLA
      - a. Out of the neighboring towns have the lowest rate.
    7. Grade Growth- VTCAP
      - a. We are outpacing our region in regards to growth.

- b. This test started in 2023, we don't have any data previously, as it was previously a different test administered.
    - c. We have only had a Director of Curriculum for 5 years.
    - d. We were improperly funded for years.
  - 8. Budget Adoption Timeline Shared
  - 9. Brynn asks if there is anything the school would like the city to highlight that wasn't included in the presentation.
    - a. Wilmer Chavarria -People may be interested in our efforts to help our immigrant families. Here to answer any questions regarding our policies.
    - b. Robert Millar shares it has been a tough year for education in Vermont. Funds held up in July, Department Education on a Federal level, conversations on State level, re: Act 73, held meetings all over the state, one of them being here @ Winooski School District, with the Task Force. If they went to a Foundation formula, a set amount is given and that is it.
      - i. **To hear the full discussion** [WSD Board - City Council Joint Meeting](#)
- b. City Council Presentation
  - i. Thomas Resmer shares Legislative priorities:
    1. Ensure access to affordable, appropriate housing through policy that preserves, protects and produces the housing Vermonters need.
    2. Criminal Justice Reforms and emergency personnel support to ensure the safety of all Vermonters.
    3. Reducing the impact of climate change to preserve thriving communities for all Vermonters.
    4. Address the impact of education funding on affordability without compromising our state;s commitment to education equity.
  - ii. Nicole Mace states the board also has a resolution on housing and would like to partner happily on this.
  - iii. Robert Millar states that we have invited the Legislators to attend on December 10th.
  - iv. Thomas Resmer shares that the Council has asked the City Manager and staff to prepare budget presentations of items they have excluded in years past as a result the council asks for investment in infrastructure and community services.
  - v. Historic Tax Rates shares the tax increases have been below inflation.
  - vi. Bryn Oakleaf shares 13% increase in health care cost. Our finance director is already considering it. We don't have a sense of what impact this would have. We have our eye on it.
  - vii. Grand List- Amount of taxable buildings we have in the city. Grand list value has increased. Between FY '25-FY '26 the bump hasn't been as large- we have limited land. We have to be very conscious of this.
    1. Elaine Wong the other challenge of Grand List- more housing means more municipalities. If you have more people to serve, at some point you have to raise taxes to serve those people.

- viii. Tax Rates- Winooski is small in comparison to the cities we are compared to. Ex. Burlington has a bigger tax base. When you hear the Tax Rate, keep in mind the residents we have here. Tax dollars raised per household is not among the highest.
- ix. Budget Outreach- Asking the Board and City to chime in.
- c. Discussion and Relevant Updates
  - i. Kathleen Walsh inquires about joint School Board and City outreach.
    - 1. Robert Millar shares that it is part of the regular board meeting later.
    - 2. Aurora Hurd - Generally February.
    - 3. Nicole Mace shares that they did an interactive game to see where priorities are.
- d. Adjournment
  - i. Robert Millar looks for a motion to adjourn the joint meeting
  - ii. Thomas Resmer "So Moved."
  - iii. Passes Unanimously.
  - iv. Meeting adjourned @ **6:59pm**
    - 1. Five minute recess.

3. **Call to Order for Regular Board Meeting**

- a. Robert Millar calls the regular meeting to order at **7:06pm**.

4. **Agenda Review and Adjustments:** (5 Minutes)

- a. ***None Provided.***

5. **Announcements and Recognition**

- a. Welcome Budget Buddies
- b. Native American Heritage Month
- c. Veterans and Military Families Month
- d. Other Announcements and Recognitions
  - i. Robert Millar shares congratulations to the Boys soccer team for their four-peat championship and the Girls for making it to the finals- first time in schools history.

6. **Public Comments:** This item is reserved for comments and questions on topics that are not included on this agenda. Time for public comment is included by default for each item below.

- a. ***None Provided.***

7. **Consent Agenda:** (5 Minutes)

- a. Minutes of Meetings
  - i. Regular Board Meeting: October 8, 2025
  - ii. Finance Committee Meeting: October 20, 2025
- b. Policy Title: 2.3 Financial Condition and Activities
  - i. Approval of Bills:
- c. Policy Title: 2.7 Compensation and Benefits
- d. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Consent Agenda.

- e. Nicole Mace- “So Moved.”
- f. **Passed Unanimously.**

8. **Executive Limitations (Policy Section II):** (60 minutes)

a. Policy Title 2.3 Financial Conditions and Activities

i. Discussion/Action: 2025 Internal Monitoring Report

1. Wilmer Chavarria There were some formatting changes. He also states that the Board is to be made aware when there are interpretation changes. The interpretations didn't change substantially. They may have been rewarded, clarified, made more succinct- not much substance and changes. The format is the same that was initiated a few months ago to help the Board keep track of every portion and to report compliance/show evidence by section rather than all at once. For this one change, I recruited the help of our Director of Finance and Operation, Sarah Haven . She reviewed previous reports, then crafted new language from her vantage point and then Wilmer Chavarria formatted it. It is mostly a new report, a little different than previous years. Keeping the memo at the end to show reassurance that she has also reviewed the policy and Wilmer is in compliance.
2. Robert Millar shares appreciation for the way it is broken up and easy to follow. The interpretation on number 10, it was a copy and paste error, it is number six interpretation. It isn't substantial.
3. Wilmer Chavarria states that he will fix the error, it was just a copy and paste.
4. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the 2025 Internal Monitoring Report on policy 2.3
5. Emily Bowers- “So Moved.”
6. **Passed Unanimously.**

ii. Discussion/Action: Q1 FMR

1. Nicole Mace shares finance committee meets at the close of every quarter, reviews financial management results for that quarter. We look at expenses, revenue and federal funds and grants. We look at our capital reserve funds and fund balance. The memo is intended to note any deviations from the budget plan or things we want to call out. Starting with the first quarter of this fiscal year, in general, it is really difficult to predict exactly how we're going to conclude the fiscal year. At this point, we're projecting all and expenses and revenues will be in line with our approved budget. First quarter we project we will be within our budget, unless something major has happened early on in the year. The documents that go together are the memo and what's been labeled general fund expenses. When we meet as a committee we go over expenses, revenues, grants, etc. If the Board would like us to provide more detail we would be happy to include all of that. Tonight, we just have a summary of expenditures and other elements so we can start with any. The finance committee is Nicole Mace, Emily Bowers, Sarah Haven, Wilmer Chavarria . We meet quarterly.

2. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Q1 Fiscal year '26 financial report.
  3. Katie Livermore/Emily Bowers- "So Moved."
  4. **Passed Unanimously.**
- iii. Discussion/Action: FY 25 Final FMR
1. Nicole Mace shares that the Q4 report is also a little light on content because we are going to get an audit report that will give a lot of detail on how the whole fiscal year wrapped up. We won't get the audit until December/January. We wanted to give the board a sense we are heading into budget season, how did we end last year? We are happily projecting a \$1.2 million budget surplus, which is great because we brought our surplus down pretty significantly through the capital project- buying down the amount we had to borrow for that. Nicole Mace is happy to see that we have more of a cushion, especially with uncertainties. Much of the savings is due to vacancy or salary benefits, contracted services not being fulfilled—mostly related to peak operations revenues. Revenues were pretty much in line with budgets and grants. No big surprises. We are looking to basically double our fund balance- those numbers won't be final until the audit is completed.
  2. Robert Millar asks Nicole Mace to explain the fund balance.
    - a. Nicole Mace it is essentially either surplus or deficit. If you end the year with your revenues being greater than your expenses, then you have a surplus. That amount gets added to our fund balance. The auditors track that and ensure it is accurate. Fund balance can be helpful if you have a one time project that you want to make an investment in, we don't need to have voter approval to use funds in that way. I definitely helped us with the capital project. It can help if we have a surprise on the expense or revenue side, it gives a bit of a cushion- so we don't run out of money. It is also a really great cashflow perspective. Some schools have to borrow money because they can't make payroll, waiting for payments from the state.
    - b. Katie Livermore- Where does that money come from if we have a deficit?
    - c. Nicole Mace clarifies that the fund balance is money in our bank account we can use to pay our bills if we don't have enough money coming in from the city or state payments.
    - d. Robert Millar shares that the Board needs to be notified if they dip into the fund balance, which is important.
      - i. Nicole Mace The Board would need to know and authorize that.
    - e. Wilmer Chavarria recalls that the audit last year said that our current levels were just not healthy?
      - i. Nicole Mace We didn't have enough for the USDA loan payment.They required us to set aside a separate reserve for that

purpose. The auditor gives guidance that a certain number of months cash on hand is a healthy fund balance.

- iv. Robert Millar looks for motion to accept the FMR for quarter four of fiscal year '25.
- v. Emily Bowers' "So Moved."

**vi. Passed Unanimously.**

b. Policy Title: 2.4 Budget

i. Presentation/Discussion: Budget Context 2 and Preliminary Budget

1. Wilmer Chavarria shares the Ends Statement.
2. Operating Budget Trend shared. As of last year, we still saw an increase in budget, but the percent of increase is starting to level.
3. Budget by Object: SY '26-\$33, 289, 732
  - a. Investment 9.4%
  - b. Property/Equipment 0.6%
  - c. Supplies/Materials 3.9%
  - d. Contracted Services 15.7%
  - e. Benefits 20.3%
  - f. Salaries 50.1%
4. Key Budget Pressures
  - a. Preschool & Special Education (Maybeline Lopez & Katherine Blair)
  - b. Special Education: Budget Pressures- Legal obligation for whoever is in the building. Legal obligations. Big driving costs- Student placements: Least Restrictive Environment, Meet students where they are- alternative programming. Students do best when they are close to the community. Staff that is needed to be contracted as WSD cannot meet.
  - c. Nicole Mace shares that the state reimburses for the extraordinary services- A certain percentage.
    - i. Katherine Blair states that we get paid the following year, so the costs are paid upfront. A rough estimate of 68% was shared. The agencies we use are the best fit for the students. They are regulated by the state, however, their costs have gone up.
  - d. Nicole Mace shares that a lot of out of district placements closed after COVID
    - i. Katherine Blair shares that a lot of the current schools have waitlists.
  - e. Preschool: Budget Pressures
    - i. Early intervention, as soon as a child turns 3- they are enrolled
    - ii. ACT 166, lots of changes: Projecting 5 days a week.
    - iii. Uptick in enrollment.
    - iv. Nicole Mace asks for clarification regarding what is required for ACT 166.
      1. Maybeline Lopez- For four year olds, yes. An extra day. We would still have to serve Spec. Ed. students.

- v. Katie Livermore Is it that Act 166 is going to require that the school district has a space for any four year old that wants to go? Or just anyone who signed up has the full time hours?
  - 1. Maybeline Lopez, it is in the talks about options– where they could still choose depending on families. There hasn't been a clear direction on how much that will be. Right now, it has just been 10 hours.
  - 2. Wilmer Chavarria states that the law does require that we pay for all outside providers, for all the kids that are being sent to other places, but are Winooski residents.
- f. Threats to Federal Funds
- 5. Total Enrollment: Graphs for Enrollment shared. Enrollment is trending up.
- 6. Equalized or Weighed Pupil - Shared graph of trend. This is what is paid for students based on services needed, poverty, etc. The state pays us as if we have 2000 students, based on the needs, not on the individual. The number should be the same this year, the calculation should still be the same.
- 7. Homestead Tax Rate after State Adjusted CLA.
  - a. We had one of the highest 2023-2024 @ 2.16%; We were able to bring it down to 1.26% for 2024/2025. We proposed a budget that was level.
  - b. Katie Livermore/Nicole Mace explain that if there is extra money in the education fund, one opinion is to make the rate of all homeowners less. It is artificial, because the following year, it won't be. They will need to find ways to raise the money. Think of putting it on a credit card, and the interest rate.
- 8. Budget Scenarios for FY '27
  - a. Three scenarios: What if we lost all of our funding of grants (federal funding)? What if we lost Partial Federal funding (Grants)? Level Services?
    - i. If we lost all funding, it would be \$5 million dollars.
    - ii. If we keep all the funding, we are still looking for \$2.5 million (7% increase)
  - b. To view scenarios and budget presentation - [Budget Presentation - Context 2](#)
  - c. Nicole Mace asks about Attrition/Retirement that was offered to teachers.
    - i. Wilmer Chavarria confirms that there have been people who applied. Clarifying that this has not been added to the budget scenarios. It will be added when the board gives the direction to do so– that will give more flexibility. We offered a maximum of 9, we had 5 people replied by the deadline, there will probably be 4 takers.
    - ii. Discussion/Action: Board Budget Outreach

1. Robert Millar looks for options for outreach, lunch last year didn't seem like it went well, looking for new ideas.
  2. Nicole Mace shares that about having people come to the district and hear presentations. Those events take time and effort from staff and those who come. We have students who have access to making content and social media to maybe reach more.
  3. Robert Millar shares an idea of an Outreach Committee, maybe two board members.
    - a. Katie Livermore offers to be part of the committee and also to partner with the City events.
    - b. Robert Millar shares that we generally start going into the community after the board has passed a budget.
    - c. Joanne Davidson offers a suggestion of budget buddies hosting others for coffee to share. Get people invested in the process. Probably after December.
    - d. Katie Livermore- Look at a list of events to host pop-ups.
    - e. Emily Bowers- Willing to be part of the meetings, but works weekends.
      - i. Robert Millar offers to go to events.
      - ii. Kathleen Walsh- Willing to be Katie Livermore's support person.
      - iii. Elom Essiba offered to help on this committee as well.
    - f. Natalie Dzessou is interested in helping with the committee. Suggests reaching out to other students in the community.
    - g. Nicole Mace suggests bringing a plan to the next meeting.
  4. **To hear the full discussion regarding SY '27 Budget:** [Winooski School District - Board Meeting 11.13.25](#)
- c. Policy Title: 2.8 Communication and Support to the Board
- i. Discussion/Action: November's Superintendent's Report to the Board
    1. Wilmer Chavarria states that the date this month is based on the indicator of compliance number two; That is what your board planning document asks for. Reached out to partners in the Winooski Partners for Prevention, because they had done their own survey. We also had the ARSC survey from last time and we took some of the highlights from the survey– good insight. Food insecurity, physical assault, that was not from their survey, it came from the YRBS 2023-2024 data, still wanting to highlight it, mental health highlights. The perceptions of student substance abuse from one year to the next; One that connects to the ARSC data, whether students believe they matter to people or not; They were similar questions but theirs came from the YRSB document, which was used with a grain of salt because it is relatively old and it is not as local so we don't have much control about what we are seeking. The Winooski Prevention survey can localize some of the questions and also the insight.
    2. Nicole Mace asks for clarity regarding the chart on page 10. People risk harming themselves... There are two 64.36% who agree that if they use cannabis they

are at risk of harming themselves and then 64% of our students are not using cannabis everyday; Clarification that they agree that is a problem, and can harm them. The two numbers below some numbers have a gray bar and others have colored bars.

- a. Wilmer Chavarria states the gray bar is 2024 data. The colors are 2025 data. The ones that only have one color, means the question wasn't asked the year before.
3. Robert Millar states that there is a lot of data here, but the one that stood out was that 1 in 4 students have gone hungry within the last 30 days. Also, 1 in 4, stated that their mental health is not good. Why is there a mental health increase, mental health crisis? Is it because of the increase of poverty, not getting food? Why is education cost increasing when schools have to take on more problems?
4. Emily Bowers Thinking back to last month's report, asking students if they feel seen and understood in class? This could be contributing, it all connects. Not to say that it is the school's fault, but it's amazing how it all connects.
5. Nicole Mace It would be interesting to see if any of the trends improve with the cell phone ban. Prolonged use of social media has been linked to decline in mental health, especially adolescents.
6. Wilmer Chavarria shares that he was invited to go testify on the US Senate panel in reaction to what he went through regarding warrantless searches. There are problems with electronic devices being searched without a warrant and even more so a district issued device. There will be a lawsuit filed against Homeland Security and a press release has not gone out yet.
7. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the Superintendent's November Report to the Board.
8. Emily Bowers- "So Moved."
9. **Passed Unanimously.**

9. **Governance Processes (Policy Section IV):** (60 Minutes)

- a. Policy Title: 4.2 Board Job Description
  - i. Action: 2025 Internal Monitoring Report
    1. Nicole Mace shares she built off a report from last year that Robert did, so the interpretations did not change, but did update the evidence. Updated one that was partial compliance to compliant.
    2. Robert Millar looks for a motion to accept the 2025 Internal Monitoring Report on 4.2
    3. Elom Essiba "So Moved."
    4. **Passed Unanimously.**
  - ii. Discussion: December 10 Meeting with Legislators

1. Robert Millar shares that we will discuss this more on December 3rd, but the legislatures have been invited to join the school board on December 10th.
  2. Wilmer Chavarria confirms that only one has committed to coming, two others have other commitments that day (one of those being a maybe), and one hasn't responded.
  3. Robert Millar asks if it's worth offering another date, Wilmer agrees.
  4. Robert Millar asks Wilmer to offer December 17th to the legislators.
- b. Policy Title: 4.2.2 Create Written Governing Policies
- i. Action: Public Hearing and Adoption of Policies
    1. PG.2.1 Treatment of Students, Parents/Guardians & Community
    2. Robert Millar opens and closes public hearing after no comments.
    3. Robert Millar shares that the only change was in formatting, fixing a typo.
    4. Robert Millar looks for a motion to adopt PG.2.1 Treatment of Students, Parents/Guardians & Community.
    5. Nicole Mace- "So Moved."
    6. **Passed Unanimously.**
  - ii. Discussion/Action: Policy Second Read and Approval for Adoption
    1. PG.2.2 Treatment of Staff
    2. Robert Millar This is the one where we changed the word discriminate back to retaliate.
    3. Robert Millar looks for a motion to approve second read PG.2.2 Treatment of Staff and move for approval to adopt at the next meeting.
    4. Emily Bowers- "So Moved."
    5. **Passed Unanimously.**
  - iii. Discussion: Policy First Read
    1. PG.2.3 Financial Conditions and Activities
    2. Wilmer Chavarria states there were no changes.
    3. Robert Millar shares that this is straight forward, no changes from the board requested, no discussion.
    4. B3 Alcohol & Drug Free Workplace
    5. Robert Millar shares that there were only minor edits, this is a new policy within the last year or so. No questions, comments or changes from the board.
- c. Policy Title: 4.2.1 Community Engagement
- i. Discussion: Recent Community Activities by the Board
  - ii. Nicole Mace serves on the Champlain Housing Trust board and has been following the effort to develop affordable family housing on the old armory land. There is a hearing next Thursday, November 20th at 6pm, City Hall. You can attend remotely. Neighbors in the area are vocal and opposing the project. Importantly the DBP hears from us. What it sounds like is both home owners and rental properties– a mix of three and four bedrooms. Exactly the kind of housing Winooski needs. Help spread the word and attend if you can, it will be virtual as well.

- iii. Robert Millar had the VSBA Resolutions meeting, they all passed as recommended. The policy governance meeting, reminder we have VSBA professional development every month. This one was very helpful. Robert also attended Chittenden Chairs meeting, nothing to report from that. Redistricting meeting- listened in on that, it was interesting.
- iv. Robert Millar and Nicole Mace met with Burlington over redistricting, hence why we were able to make a statement. Burlington said they are not willing to combine.
- v. Discussion: Report out on VSBA/VSA Conference Attendance
  - 1. **To hear the full discussion regarding VSBA Conference** [Winooski School District - Board Meeting 11.13.25](#)
- vi. Discussion/Action: Position of the Board on Redistricting
  - 1. Nicole Mace drafted a statement. She shares sentiments.
  - 2. Robert Millar looks for a motion to move forward with statement on redistricting as written
  - 3. Emily Bowers "So Moved."
  - 4. **Passed Unanimously.**
  - 5. Nicole Mace requests that it is shared with our families.
- d. Policy Title: 4.4 Board Linkage with Ownership
  - i. Discussion: Take New Board Photo
    - 1. **Completed.**
- e. Policy Title: 4.8 Governance Investment
  - i. Discussion: Board DQS Governance Self-Assessment
  - ii. Robert Millar shares that it was developed over the years with the AOE and the board. It has been developing for years. Now they want to implement it. This is just practice, not real yet (BETA test). Going to put together Google Form, assess ourselves per their standards.
  - iii. Nicole Mace in the self evaluation you have here, there are four standards to report on. Go to the rubric and find those standards.

#### 10. Proposed Executive Session:

- a. Premature general public knowledge: Labor relations agreements with employees. 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B).
- b. Robert Millar looks for a motion to find that premature general public knowledge regarding labor relations agreements with employees, places the board at substantial disadvantage because the board risks disclosing its negotiation strategy if it discusses this in public.
- c. Nicole Mace "So Moved."
- d. **Passed Unanimously**
- e. Robert Millar looks for a motion to enter executive session for the purpose of discussing labor relations agreements with employees and include Wilmer Chavarria
- f. Emily Bowers- "So Moved."
- g. **Passed Unanimously.**

- i. Entered Executive Session @ 9:33pm*
- ii. Returning from Executive Session @ 9:44pm*
- h. Robert Millar looks for a motion to approve the new side letter as presented and authorize the Chair to sign on the Board's behalf
- i. Nicole Mace- "So Moved."
- j. Passed Unanimously.*

**11. Adjourn**

- a. Robert Millar looks for a motion to adjourn.
- b. Emily Bowers- "So Moved."
- c. Passed Unanimously.*
- d. Meeting adjourned @ **9:45pm**

**Upcoming Important Dates:**

- November 13 & November 14: JFK Teacher & Family Conferences, Early Release at 11:00 AM
- November 20: WMHS Fall Concert at 7:00 PM
- November 21: Veggie Van Go
- November 22: PTO Holiday Craft and Vendor Fair from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
- November 24-November 28: November Break