

# The Natick Comets Hockey Club

## Board of Directors

January 19, 2026

Natick Police Station 7:00 pm

### MEETING MINUTES

Bob Michaud, Alicia Dieg, Bob Klane, Andrea Smith, Michael Byrum, Lauren Thomson, Aaron Souza, Kristian Efstathiou, Teddy Efstathiou, Dave Mangan, Andrew Reid, Aaron Souza, Russell Webber, Mike Balcom; John Smutko; Jeff Schneller (arrived at 8:24)

**I. Call to Order**

**II. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the December meeting were approved.

**III. Financial Update**

Mr. Mangan reported that no unusual expenses coming through or anticipated Mr.

Mangan distributed monthly bank statements

**IV. Survey Discussion**

Mr. Ballow reported out on his assessment of the results of the Club survey that was conducted. Community According to Mr. Ballow, the parent satisfaction at the 10U and 12U is negative and will require a lot of work by the Board and Club to address. Mr. Ballow reported that respondents are very satisfied with program communication. Parents expressed concerns over placement and on ice development. Game cancellations are a major concern. Coach satisfaction was reported as somewhat satisfactory. Although the parents reported being satisfied with the travel coaches, only 40% of the coaches were satisfied that their feedback is heard and some coaches recognized that they need mentoring. There was an observation that it is difficult to manage practices with varying skill levels on the ice at the same time. With regard to goalies, one observation was that the players and parents were not aware of the Stop It program. Other observations that were shared: 1) Hockey Think Tank is not being used; 2) Natick High School Skill Sessions are well received.

After presenting the slides, Mr. Ballow described his proposed Executive Summary Action Plan that he broke into three categories: 1. What can be done immediately; 2. what to do to set the Club up for next season; 3) long-term issues that need to be addressed. Mr. Ballow's Executive Summary Action Plan is attached.

#### **V. Financial Recovery Update**

Mr. Mangan led a discussion regarding a proposed financial recovery for the Club. Mr. Mangan begin with a discussion of proposed tuition for the 2026-2027 season. Mr. Mangan also described the Club's reduced cash on hand and stated that the target should be 6 months of expenses on hand. Mr. Mangan reported that the biggest driver in the shortfall is reduced enrollment. It is anticipated that will continue next season. After lengthy and robust discussion regarding a number of options to address the financial issues facing the Club, the Board approved the action plan as represented on Slide 3 of the attached powerpoint presentation. The approved recommendations include purchasing less ice and a 2.5% tuition increase. It was noted that tuition was not raised last year. As part of the discussion, Mr. Byrum led a discussion regarding options for ice use and where the Club could use less ice. Examples that were discussed include eliminating Northstar sheets, reducing ice at Babson, eliminating August ice.

#### **VI. High School Ice Donation**

Mr. Mangan reported that the request from a Natick High School student to use Club ice for a fundraiser had been delayed. Apparently, the logistics of the event were not sufficiently ironed out to select a date to donate the ice.

#### **VII. Purchase of Pinnies**

Mr. Souza made a motion to approve up to \$2,000 for Purchase pinnies for older players to use during tryouts. The Board further approved a \$50 penalty if a player does not return a pinnie.

#### **VIII. Tryout Process - 2026/2026**

Mr. Souza led a discussion and made a motion to change the tryout process to use internal evaluators rather than an independent third-party. One of the goals is to address the perception that the tryout process is not fair or impartial. Mr. Souza also proposed purchasing "tryout" software that the evaluators could use on their phones to better handle the player

ratings. Both topics generated a lot of discussion and divergent points of view. Ultimately, the Board approved using internal evaluators for the upcoming season with a commitment of at least 6 evaluators outside the Board.

**IX. Board**

Mr. Souza led a discussion regarding Board conduct and the behavior of Board members. Mr. Souza expressed that Board members should hold themselves and others accountable. He further emphasized that communication is a problem and that he feels Board members are not getting information. Mr. Souza expressed that Board members doing things “in the dark” and that the Board needs more “checks and balances.” There was also a discussion that the Board should not permit email voting except in the case of emergencies.

**X. Practice Schedule Replacement**

After years of exemplary service, Mr. Byrum is stepping down as scheduler for the Club at the end of the season. Mr. Byrum would like to send a message to the Comets community to solicit potential replacements. The Board supported this action.

**XI. Next Meeting: February 9, 2026**

The Board approved moving the meeting from February 16, 2026 to February 9, 2026.

**XII. Adjournment**