

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 AT 7:30 P.M. AT TOWN HALL-COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Board Members Present: Anne Harrigan -Vice Chair; Anthony Perugini-Secretary; Adam Grippo; Richard Gusenburg; Marléna Soble; Neeta Vatti

Board Members Absent: Kathryn Hallen-Chair

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Superintendent of Schools, Marlene Silano Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Mary Joscelyn-Gadd, Principal-Cheshire High School; Kristin Pelz, Assistant Principal-Cheshire High School; Daniel Tartarelli, Assistant Principal-Cheshire High School; Michael Woods, Principal-Dodd Middle School; John Perosino, Assistant Principal-Dodd Middle School; Diana Burns, Principal-Chapman Elementary School; Ann Donnery, Principal-Darcey School; Amy O'Brien, Principal-Doolittle Elementary School; Kristin Lopa, Assistant Principal-Doolittle and Norton Schools; Scott Jeffrey, Principal-Highland Elementary School; Marlene Silano, Curriculum Coordinator K-8; Robin-Anne Carey, Supervisor of Elementary Special Education; Marie Broadway, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:30 P.M.

- A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum determined.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.
In Ms. Hallen's absence, Ms. Harrigan led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- C. Student Representatives. *Cheshire High School Principal, Mary Gadd, introduced Isabel Orozco and RJ Streater, student representatives for the 2019/2020 school year and read brief statements about the students.*

Isabel Orozco is an active and involved student and at the same time maintains a stellar academic record. She has been honing her leadership skills through many school, town and worldly activities and committees. She is a Senator in the Student Senate, a Link Crew Leader, the President of two Cheshire High School clubs, and was the junior class vice-president last year. She is also an active member of other clubs, plays rugby, has a part-time job, and is very much dedicated to equality and global issues. She is enrolled in a rigorous mix of AP and CCP coursework and loves to challenge herself and stay busy. Isabel has also volunteered and fund-raised for many different causes both at home and abroad.

RJ Streater is an intelligent, compassionate, and committed student at Cheshire High School. Academically, RJ has always challenged himself by taking multiple CCP and AP level courses. RJ puts forth 100% effort to all of those classes, often times staying after school with teachers to not only learn the material, but also to make connections and relationships with our school staff. RJ is well known for his

kindness and compassion; he regularly volunteers his time in the community at Yale New Haven Health, Elim Park, and St. Bridget Summer Camp. RJ was even featured in the Yale New Haven Hospital newsletter as a role model and leader for volunteers at Yale New Haven Health. Outside of his service, RJ is part of countless clubs including the National Honor Society, Link Crew, Young Democrats, JSA, Mock Trial, Model UN, Best Buddies, and Marching Band. He holds various leadership positions in many of these organizations, and is an active participant. We are so proud to have RJ represent Cheshire High School as he demonstrates all the qualities of a model student.

The new student representatives to the Board gave a brief report on recent events at the school. They reported on the pep rally, freshman orientation for link crew, and the exchange program for students. They reported on two new clubs, Aid for Others, focusing on immigration as well as a spike ball club.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. 2019-20 Teacher of the Year

Superintendent Solan said it is his honor to recognize one of our teachers, Gina Corrado, Spanish teacher at Cheshire High School, as the 2019-2020 Cheshire Teacher of the Year. Mr. Solan shared the letter of recommendation that he wrote to the State of Connecticut for Gina.

It is with pride and enthusiasm that I recommend Gina Corrado for the incredible honor and responsibility that comes with being named Connecticut State Teacher of the Year! Being in Gina's Spanish classroom is like stepping into the educational fast lane. She is so full of enthusiasm and talent that you walk out feeling compelled to become fluent in Spanish after just one lesson. It is almost impossible, but her enthusiasm is matched by her talent. She embraced mastery-based learning years ago and she and her students believe that even if the student hasn't mastered Spanish yet, they certainly will. She creates an environment where students can safely push beyond their comfort zone ensuring growth and nearly guaranteeing learning. As a native of Ecuador, Gina is the personification of the American dream. Immigrating to the United States as a young girl, she is a proud graduate of the Connecticut public schools and the Connecticut State University system. She emphatically gives back to public education every day to support this generation. I had the pleasure of working very closely with Gina prior to my appointment as Superintendent. I spent four years serving as the Principal of Cheshire High School where she has taught Spanish since 2011. Over that period, I gained tremendous respect for her as a person and an educator. Cheshire High School and our school community hold itself to the highest of educational expectations. Gina smashes those expectations. The Connecticut State Teacher of the Year represents the thousands of educators across our incredible State. Gina Corrado is

humble, articulate, passionate, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable. She is a leader at Cheshire High School and a leader in the field of education. She is the embodiment of excellent teaching and an inspiration to our students and staff. Gina Corrado is not only worthy of this tremendous honor but special enough to resonate and be respected by educators and those outside of our calling.

Ms. Corrado was presented with a plaque and recognized and congratulated by the Board of Education.

B. Opening of School Presentation

Superintendent Solan gave his opening of school presentation. He noted that our graduates this year are the class of 2020 and the kindergarten students will be graduating in 2032. He introduced Vincent Masciana, the Chief Operating Officer to review summer projects. Mr. Masciana reported on Capital Budget improvements and also summer projects completed with operating budget funds. He also reported on the transition from Anthem to Cigna as health care provider for employees. Mr. Masciana reported on the implementation of the Safe Schools online training platform for all employees.

Next, the Superintendent reported on the opening of school, reviewing convocation and enrollment by school and by district. Overall, the district enrollment was 58 students less than projected.

Mr. Solan reviewed the Cheshire Strategic Initiatives. He explained the process of narrowing down the focus from 16 initiatives to 2 – social emotional learning and complex thinking. Mr. Solan said that focusing on those two initiatives for three year has paid very large dividends. He noted that according to niche.com we are in the top 500 districts in America, 17th top district in Connecticut, 12th best teachers in Connecticut, Chapman and Highland are ranked #1 and #2 Elementary Schools in New Haven County, and Cheshire High School is ranked 4th in New Haven County. Also, there was a 33 point gain in the average Cheshire High School SAT score, 154 students were recognized through the AP Scholars Program and 11 students were recognized through the National Merit Scholarship Program. He said we have never had achievement this good in our district's history and it is a testament to our teachers, students and families.

Ms. Harrigan thanked Mr. Solan and Mr. Masciana and congratulated the Superintendent on the results.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes of the Board of Education (Business) Meeting Held August 22, 2019.

MOTION by Ms. Soble; seconded by Mr. Grippo.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes of the Board of Education Business Meeting held August 22, 2019.*

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously, 6-0.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Perugini reported there was no correspondence to the Board but he did receive an anonymous letter. He cannot verify that it is from a Cheshire resident as it was signed Silence Do-good. He said he would be happy to meet with the individual and keep the name confidential.

5. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Solan reported on the increase in vaping. He said he will be meeting with some of the department leaders in the town to discuss different strategies in dealing with this dangerous issue.

Regarding the Personalized Learning Task Force, he acknowledged Mr. Larry Schaeffer who was the facilitator of the task force. He said the group came to conclusions that were shared with the Curriculum Committee and are available on the website. The group will now work with the Cheshire Strategic Planning Committee to address the recommendations.

Ms. Vatti asked for an update on the hiring of the School Security Officer. Mr. Solan responded that the position has been posted and it closes soon. A screening committee has been formed, so they will be moving forward with interviewing those candidates.

6. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM

I. Report on Meeting Held November 9, 2019.

Ms. Harrigan reported on the meeting held November 9th. At the meeting; they received a presentation on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Results and the Personalized Learning Task Force recommendations. Also, Cheshire High School Assistant Principal, Maureen Reed shared the status of the new mastery based performance assessment. The Committee also heard from Dr. Ginsburg who spoke about TAPES (Teacher Anxiety Program for Elementary Students) and CALM (Enhancing the Capacity of Student Nurses to Reduce Child Anxiety.)

II. Approval of Out of Country Field Trip

Ms. Harrigan reported that Board of Education policy requires that out-of-country field trips receive permission from the Board of Education. Cheshire High School teacher, Tina Ocone has requested permission to

take students to Rennes and Paris France from June 29, 2020 through July 15, 2020. Superintendent Solan recommends approval of this, but also reserves the right to cancel the trip should national security issues warrant.

MOTION by Mr. Perugini, seconded by Mr. Gusenburg.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the participation of Cheshire High School students in the educational field trip to Rennes and Paris, France from June 29, 2020 through July 15, 2020, with the understanding that there is no cost to the Cheshire Board of Education."*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0

Mr. Grippo asked Ms. Silano to speak about the committee that will be working on the recommendations of the Personalized Learning Task Force. Ms. Silano answered that it is the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiatives Committee which is comprised of K-12 teachers, parents, and administrators. This committee will be tasked with recommendations from the Personalized Learning Task Force and report back to the Board.

B. FINANCE

I. Financial Report – Ms. Soble

Ms. Soble reported as it is the start of the new fiscal year, there are no major budget concerns to report.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Mr. Masciana gave an estimated claims report due to changeover to CIGNA. Currently, the estimated balance in the trust fund as of August 31st is \$3,505,218. This is approximately 4.8 months of claims reserves.

C. PERSONNEL

I. This Agenda item is postponed until the October business meeting.

D. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held September 3, 2019

Ms. Vatti reported the Committee discussed a number of policies and are bringing forward three for a first reading and one for a third reading. In addition, Policy # 6146 Graduation Requirements was incorrectly listed on the policy agenda as a first reading although it previously had two readings on 12/6/2018 and 1/17/2019 before being put on hold until this month. The policy will be brought forward for a third reading at the next business meeting. Mr. Perugini asked if policies being read could be listed

on the business meeting agenda going forward for transparency purposes. Mrs. Vatti said there was no reason they could not do that.

II. First Reading of Policies

Ms. Vatti reported the following policies are being brought forward for a first reading:

1331 Community Relations Smoke Free Environment.

This policy is being updated per state statute. Our current policy states there is no smoking in all facilities and revised language will include “all school property both inside and outside”. In addition, the definition for “Electric cigarette liquid” has been included.

4112.51/4212.51 Personnel-Certified/Non-Certified Employment Reference Checks

Due to numerous changes to law (P.A. 19-91) covering criminal history checks for school personnel, the Superintendent has recommended replacing our current policy with the current CABA policy.

5114 Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process.

This policy is being revised to add the following language: “*To be expelled, the student’s conduct must be found to be both violative of a Board policy and either seriously disruptive of the educational process or endangering persons or property.*”

III. Third Reading and Approval of Policy

After a comprehensive review, the Committee voted unanimously to bring forward policy #5156 Research Involving Students for a third reading and approval. There were no changes since the second reading

MOTION by Ms. Vatti, seconded by Ms. Soble.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to policy #5156 Students – Research Involving Students and direct the Superintendent to put said policies into immediate effect.”

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no other committee reports.

7. AUDIENCE

Jami Ferguson, 105 Copper Beach Drive. Regarding the Town Council’s Resolution to create a joint task force, Ms. Ferguson asked about the member composition, reporting

authority and the vision of the working Committee. Ms. Harrigan replied that the Board will be discussing this under New Business this evening.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Affirmation of Strategic Goals**

Superintendent Solan reviewed that Board of Education Policy 0025 reflects the approved Strategic Goals of the Cheshire Board of Education. These goals are an integral part of the Cheshire Public Schools Strategic Planning Initiative. They have been developed by a large community based group of stakeholders including Board members, staff, parents, Town Councilors, local officials and local business persons. State law requires local Boards to set annual goals and objectives each year. Because the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiative reflects the vision and beliefs of the Cheshire Community it has traditionally served as the Board of Education goals each year.

MOTION by Ms. Soble, seconded by Mr. Perugini.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education reaffirms the Cheshire Public Schools Strategic Objectives and Goals for 2019/20.*

Mr. Gusenburg congratulated the superintendent and school district on narrowing their initiatives. The fact that they have been able to focus in on the areas of focus is one of the reasons the scores have improved. It allows the staff to focus energy and attention.

VOTE: the motion passed unanimously 6-0.

B. **Discussion Regarding Establishment of a School Modernization Plan Study Group.**

Ms. Harrigan read into record a statement from Kathryn Hallen, Board Chair, who could not be in attendance this evening. Ms. Hallen fully and enthusiastically supports the establishment by the Town Council of the collaborative joint study group to develop a school modernization plan for the Town of Cheshire. The Board has worked very hard on this issue over the last few years. While she remains in support of 6-8 Middle School, they must all keep an open mind.

Mr. Grippo stated he is in full support and is enthusiastic about the formation of this joint commission and hopes they can solve this generational problem.

Mr. Perugini stated he and Ms. Hallen met with members of the Board of Education and Town Council to discuss this joint study group. The Town Charter states that if money will be spent the group must be formed by the Council, not

the Board of Education. He said the group will elect a chair and vice chair and operate under Roberts Rules of Order. The group will report to the Town Council. He said he enthusiastically supports this and feels it is a good way to work together with the Town Council and with the public.

Mr. Solan said he fully supports this project. He agrees with Mr. Grippo that it is a generational problem and appreciates the Board and Town leadership working together for me students, community and future.

Ms. Vatti asked to confirm that this is not a Board of Education committee so there will be no vote this evening or in the future. Mr. Solan responded that there may come a point where the board may have to vote on something, but the Town Council will be the lead on this Committee and the entity to appoint the members.

Mr. Perugini read the Resolution from the Town Council. There was discussion about a timeline. Mr. Perugini said he understands the urgency but does not want to rush this project.

Ms. Soble said she is glad the Town Council and Board of Education are willing to work together on this project. She noted the longer we wait on a project the more the expenses go up, so getting this started is a good step.

Mr. Grippo asked if the Board could vote to affirm their support on this project. Mr. Solan responded that action was not listed on this evening's agenda. Mr. Perugini noted that they could possibly have a resolution at a future meeting.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ms. Soble, and seconded by Ms. Vatti, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: 10-15-19.