

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
HELD FEBRUARY 5, 2020 AT 7:30 P.M. AT TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Board Members Present: Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Faith Ham, Anne Harrigan (arr. 7:35), Andrew Martelli, Timothy White (arrived 7:35)

Board Members Absent: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer

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.*
Mr. Grippo led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. AUDIENCE:

None.

3. LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Grippo reported that the Committee met on January 21, 2020 to discuss current proposed legislation.

Education Cost Sharing (ECS) Grant. Mr. Solan explained that unfortunately on average, the state only reimburses about 72% of what districts are owed. Mr. Grippo said the Legislative Committee is recommending that the Board request our legislative representatives work to restore ECS funding to budgeted levels.

Youth Mental Health Act for Support of Social Emotional Resources. Mr. Grippo said this conversation is part of the anti-bullying bill regarding increased administrative burden for our school systems as well as discussion on suicide ideation. The Legislative Committee is recommending the Board respectfully request that our legislative representatives continue to learn more about youth mental health and work with medical insurance professionals to provide greater access to treatment. We respectfully request that legislators consider strategies for funding social emotional learning and mental health resources for school systems.

School Start Times. Mr. Grippo said they discussed the state of the State. Ms. Harrigan has been a great advocate for school start times. Mr. Grippo said as this Board has not reached consensus on this topic and at this time, the Committee is recommending the Board request that the legislators protect the local authority by not adopting a state law mandating districts to adhere to specific times, thereby leaving this Board the option to do our own homework and to decide when and where that would best fit our school system.

Ms. Harrigan said she is not sure that she agrees with the statement. Even if the legislature was going to be working towards this mandate, it would be done in a way that it would give us time to adhere to the mandate. She would like to consider this a little more before we send this statement, but does agree that it should be done on a community by community basis.

Mr. Grippo said they also discussed binding arbitration, as well as teacher pensions and underfunded pension liability. These items require more conversation in the Legislative Committee before a recommendation is made to legislators.

Prevailing Wage. Mr. Grippo said the Committee is recommending that the Board ask our legislators to consider pursuing an increase in the upper threshold of prevailing wage. Mr. Masciana explained that this applies to municipalities. If you have a renovation of \$100,000 or more, you must use prevailing wages which can increase costs by 20 to 25% on a project. For new construction, the threshold is \$400,000. The idea would be to raise the threshold, so we can complete the projects effectively, but at a lower cost to municipalities.

Mr. Grippo reported that finally, the Committee discussed vehicle to grid regarding electric school buses. Mr. White said when he requested this as a concept, he didn't fully understand it. There is no enabling legislation required and he withdraws his request.

The Board discussed the option of sending the information to the legislators now or to wait until they are further in the session. Ms. Harrigan said she would prefer to wait until the Board has discussed some of these legislation items. She does not support some of the statements presented this evening.

Mr. White commented in regard to pension reform; his preference would be to reorganize the way the pension is weighted. Some teachers stay on only for the pension. He also feels that the funding of the pensions should stay on the State level. In addition, Mr. White feels that Boards of Education should be local taxing authorities independent of Town Councils.

Mr. Grippo said the Superintendent can forward our support for Excess Cost, Youth Mental Health and Prevailing Wage.

Mr. Masciana corrected his earlier statement that the new construction threshold is \$1,000,000. Mr. Martelli asked Mr. Masciana what his suggestion would be for a threshold. Mr. Masciana responded that it is the renovations threshold that he would like to see raised. Mr. White noted that the Town Council just discussed this at their last meeting and suggested that the Board default to whatever the council voted for. Mr. Solan said he will research what the Town voted on and discuss it with Mr. Masciana to determine a suggested threshold.

4. **EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS PENDING LITIGATION OQUENDO-LOPEZ V. CHESHIRE BOE ET AL**

MOTION by Mr. Martelli, seconded by Ms. Harrigan. (8:02 p.m.)

MOVED that the Board of Education adjourn into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation Oquendo-Lopez v. Cheshire Board of Education et al to include Mr. Solan and Mr. Masciana.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

MOTION by Mr. Martelli, seconded by Ms. Harrigan (8:45 p.m.)

MOTION to reconvene the Special Board of Education Meeting.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

5. **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING LITIGATION SETTLEMENT OQUENDO-LOPEZ V CHESHIRE BOE ETAL**

MOTION by Mr. Grippo, seconded by Mr. Martelli.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education consents to the settlement reached by the Town's insurance company in the case of Oquendo-Lopez V Cheshire Board of Education/Russ Hinckley.

Discussion:

Mr. White said he will support the motion, but in general does not support settlements. He said he thinks to a certain extent there is non-disclosure here and this leaves him with great unease, but the information that led to this is publically available.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ms. Harrigan, and seconded by Ms. Ham, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Board Vice Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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