

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING  
HELD MARCH 16, 2020 AT 6:00 P.M. AT TOWN HALL-COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Faith Ham, Anne Harrigan, Andrew Martelli, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Tracy Hussey, Director, Pupil Personnel Services; Kevin Hanlon, Curriculum Coordinator K-8

**1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:00 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. Perugini led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Perugini explained that due to the Coronavirus, the Superintendent and his team have been diligently working to put together a remote learning program. The Board is meeting this evening to review this option. He explained this meeting is being live-streamed on our YouTube Channel and the community can email questions during the meeting.

**2. Review, Discussion and Possible Approval of the State of Connecticut Department of Education COVID 19 Remote Learning Waiver Application**

The Superintendent said he appreciates the patience of our community as we navigate this unprecedented event. He acknowledged the enormous amount of work done by his staff getting the district to this point. He reviewed the latest information including the Governor making a proclamation that Connecticut Schools will be closed until at least March 31<sup>st</sup>, with the return date to be determined. This morning he received information from the Connecticut Commission of Education that all districts should engage students in a remote learning environment. The Superintendent shared the district's plan.

**Remote Learning**

Remote learning is not a replacement for traditional schooling but is designed as a best effort to continue education for all learners to the greatest extent possible under the circumstances.

- Students in grades K-3 were provided Learning Tool Kits on 3/13/2020. Those Tool Kits provide developmentally appropriate activities on paper for math, reading, writing, and other activities. They also included developmentally appropriate web resources for parents.
- Students in grades 4-12 will be provided learning experiences through remote learning accessible online. We will be using tools such as Google Classroom, Screencastify, and teacher-selected videos to facilitate their curriculum to the greatest extent possible.

- Remote learning will occur on a 2-hour delay schedule each day to support teacher preparation of quality instruction and limit the amount of time our students are engaged online each day.
- We plan to retain the April Break at this time. The transition to online schooling may well last several weeks. If that is the case, we feel it is in the best interest of our students and staff to experience a week away from the online environment, understanding that we will continue to plan to end school on June 18, 2020.
- We will continue to implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), for students who currently have them, to the greatest extent possible. This may look different in a remote learning environment, but we will give our best effort to meet those plans creatively under these unprecedented circumstances. Ultimately, the Planning and Placement Teams (PPTs) will meet upon our return to school. Those teams will consider the degree to which this time out of school created a significant regression in learning, any compensatory services needed, and what those services may look like.
- Our website will house information on how to access supports for instruction or technology.
- The Education Association of Cheshire (our teacher union) has been instrumental in facilitating remote learning and has agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding as was recommended by the State.
- Continuity of learning expectation plans have been designed for teachers across the district to support what teachers are doing with their students.
- Information is being translated into different languages to support our English Language Learners.

### Discussion

Mr. Perugini asked what a typical day would be for a grade 4-12 student. The Superintendent answered that the student should be engaging in activities for different content areas. He said they will survey students and parents in about a week and build on the programs going forward.

Ms. Ham asked about web accessibility for families. Mr. Solan said they solicited families to determine which families may need Chromebooks or internet service. He said they have already distributed 40 Chromebooks to grades 4-6 students before school was dismissed and more will be distributed tomorrow. Access to wireless internet is an issue for only a few families and they have ordered hotspots for those families.

Mr. Solan answered some emails that were sent in during the meeting. Yes, they will remain on remote learning if they do not return to school on March 31<sup>st</sup>. AP exams, state testing, SAT's, etc. are being monitored to possibly provide alternate dates. Mr. Solan noted that spring concerts, the play, proms, etc. will be reviewed and they will do their best to consider these events at a different time, but that will be dictated by health officials. Students will not be attending school until June 30<sup>th</sup> because they are doing

remote learning. As of today, the last day is scheduled for June 18<sup>th</sup>. K-3 teachers will be emailing parents and parents can email them as well. If there are concerns, parents should not hesitate to reach out. Grading and GPA's are still being discussed.

Mr. Perugini received an email asking if parents will have access to Google Classroom. Ms. Silano answered that they can follow along with their students but they cannot have their own sign-in.

Mr. White thanked Mr. Solan for all he has done. He asked if he was getting enough support from the Health Department. Solan responded that at the local level, Maura Esposito and Chesprocott have been extremely responsive. They have also been collaborating with town, fire and police officials.

Ms. Harrigan thanked the administrators for all they have done, she said everyone is anxious about this, but we will get through it together.

Mr. Perugini noted he received calls from parents with special needs students. He asked if there are concerns with remote learning not being equitable for these students. Mr. Solan answered that the guidance from the federal level is that these are uncharted times. They recognize remote learning is not conducive for teaching the skills these students need, but right now, they have no choice because of the virus. They plan to communicate with families and provide supports for the students when they return. He said they are providing their best faith efforts to provide education for all of our students.

Ms. Ham commended the administration for having the foresight to get this started. She said she believes we will come out on top. She asked if they will be able to have virtual learning walks and what kind of interaction is going on with teachers on a daily basis. Mr. Solan said teacher meetings started before school ended, and part of the two-hour delay provides for collaboration with teachers.

Mr. White asked if they expect to see an impact on the budget. Mr. Masciana replied that they are beginning to review that now. He said the Board should start thinking about a non-lapsing account per CGS 10-248a, where with Town Council Approval, any unexpended funds from the Board's prior fiscal year general operating budget, provided it does not exceed 2% of the total budgeted appropriation for education can be carried over into a non-lapsing account. With so many unknowns, it allows them to not encumber funds when we don't know where there may be a need over the summer.

### **Access to School Meals**

- School meals will be available beginning Wednesday, March 18th. We will be serving grab and go breakfast and lunches through Dodd Middle School on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. These meals are provided free to all Cheshire Public Schools' students who are age 18 and under. Meals are also provided to siblings of students who are not yet school age. This program is provided through federal

funding. More details on this program will be available on our website.

### **Miscellaneous Information**

- [CPSCOVID19@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:CPSCOVID19@cheshire.k12.ct.us) is available for community members to ask questions about how Cheshire Public Schools is addressing the Coronavirus.
- Planning and Placement Team meetings will continue for students with special needs and participants may engage remotely.
- Building maintenance will continue in addition to more regular and detailed cleaning and disinfecting of school offices.
- We continue to encourage our employees and everyone in the community to follow CDC guidelines on precautions such as social distancing and hand washing.
  - The State Department of Education is evaluating state testing timelines and is supporting flexibility in testing dates. The College Board is doing the same for Advanced Placement. UCONN is also supporting our schools for Early College Experience courses.

Mr. Perugini thanked everyone at Cheshire Public Schools for what they have accomplished. He knows how much work went into the launch of remote learning and said he has received a great deal of praise from the community.

Mr. Solan noted that teachers are the most important piece of whether or not we can do remote learning and they have been wonderful, as have all of the administrators. He said the hardest thing is the hourly employees. He said they must be experiencing a great deal of anxiety wondering if they will get paid. From a humanistic perspective, he wants to alleviate their anxiety as quickly as possible. They are trying to figure out where the state and federal government stand with this, whether we can continue to pay them or if there will be unemployment. As soon as they have a definitive plan, they will relay the information. They are committed to taking care of all employees.

Mr. White thanked the Superintendent and the Board Chair for leading during this crisis.

Mr. Solan said there is no official motion that needs to be approved, but there is a waiver that does need to be signed by both the Superintendent and Board Chair which expresses the Board's desire to engage in remote learning effective March 18, 2020. (A copy of the waiver is included in the meeting file).

Mr. Perugini stated that even though a motion is not required, he feels it is important that the Board show their support of remote learning.

**MOTION** by Ms. Ham, seconded by Mr. Martelli.

**MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education support the approval of the Connecticut State Department of Education COVID-19 Waiver for Cheshire Public Schools to engage in remote learning.

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 5-0.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Ms. Harrigan, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

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Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed electronically with the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: April 22, 2020.