

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY ON MAY 21, 2020 AT 7:30 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary; Faith Ham, Anne Harrigan, Andrew Martelli, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: None

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

Public access made available through live streaming the Cheshire Public School's YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/channel/UCULDbVCqppiY_3egBVDA-mw . Public comments were accepted at CPSCovid19@chshire.k12.ct.us .
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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. Perugini led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- C. Student Representatives. Isabel Orozco and R.J. Streater, student representatives for the 2019/2020 school year, reported on recent events, including Cards Against Corona, CT Kids Against Corona, Link Crew support of incoming freshmen, and students and staff participating in Poetry in Your Pocket. Seniors have been discussing end of year events; a survey was sent to parents and students to submit their thoughts and opinions. PE and Health classes are encouraging students to get outside and exercise. The Drama Department has been recording rehearsals. Students are taking AP Exams. The reps said remote learning has been a major learning transition. The staff has been very supportive during this unprecedented time. The reps thanked the Board for supporting the students

2. AUDIENCE

None.

(Ms. Silano reported on Grants Reports – See Finance)

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the consent calendar as presented.

VOTE: The Motion passed 6-1. (Mr. White Opposed)

A. Approval of Grants Resolution

Ms. Silano explained that in accordance with Board Policy 3290 Business and Non-Instructional Operations - Grants and Other Revenue, the Board of Education, by resolution, shall authorize the Superintendent to apply for and accept any and all grants as may be determined appropriate by the administration. Therefore, the Superintendent shall:

1. Investigate new sources of revenue whether local, state, or federal;
2. Propose new revenue sources and associated programs to the Board of Education for approval;
3. Implement measures necessary to apply for/receive additional revenues.

In accordance with this policy, the Superintendent or his designee is authorized to sign all required forms for state and federal programs. In addition, the Superintendent shall inform the Board of the activity of all grants applied for and received with the exception of those pursuant to Chapter 1973 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education, pursuant to Board Policy 3290, authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to approve any and all grant applications he deems in the best interest of the Cheshire Public Schools and is authorized to sign all required forms for state and federal programs for the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.*

Discussion: Mr. White asked for clarification regarding this policy, and he asked if this means that if the Superintendent applies for a grant that the majority of the Board doesn't agree upon, does the Board vote on it? Dr. Solan said this policy gives him authority to apply for grants. He said it would be unlikely for him to find a grant that would be applicable to the Cheshire Public School's mission and vision with which the Board would disagree. Generally, they are the same grants that Ms. Silano just reviewed. At times, there are grants that come up that need to be approved in a short window.

4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM

I. Report on Meeting Held May 11, 2020.

Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator, reviewed the results of the Grade 3 Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT). Data from this test are used to support decisions regarding an individual student's need for additional learning support or increased rigor.

Kevin Hanlon reviewed information regarding the annual administration of the LAS Links Assessment. The LAS Links is administered to all

English Learners in grades K-12. The report reviewed the total number of students who took part in the assessment, the number of students who will exit from EL services based on the results of this year's assessment, the matched cohort growth from last year to this year, and information regarding parent communication. Marlene Silano shared summary data from the Remote Learning student survey given to all students in grades 4-12.

John Kuhner, Music Department Chair, shared a plan to conduct a Memorial Day performance in lieu of the traditional Memorial Day Parade. The performance is scheduled Sunday, May 24 at 1:30 p.m. Students will perform in front of their homes.

A video series will continue to be shared on Cheshire Public Schools social media. The clips, approximately thirty seconds in length, are of Cheshire Public Schools faculty and staff giving the public some insight to "the behind the scenes" efforts, successes, struggles, and realities of Remote Learning during the COVID-19 campus closure.

II. Notice of Textbooks for Public Review Prior to Approval

In accordance with Board Policy, the following textbook will be available for public viewing* at the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at 29 Main Street from April 23, 2020 through approval and adoption.

Textbook	Publisher	Grade
Essentials of Comparative Politics with Cases, 6th AP Edition	W. W. Norton & Company	11-12

B. FINANCE

I. Report on Meeting Held April 27, 2020

Mr. Grippo reported that the Committee met and received a report from Dr. Solan that reviewed the operating budget and budget scenarios. Mr. Masciana will be discussing this later in the meeting.

II. Financial Report

Mr. Grippo reported that the projected year-end total reflects an ending balance of \$1,047,600 which incorporates estimated savings and expenditure reductions resulting from the closure of our school buildings and migration to remote learning due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The remote learning period effectively began after our schools dismissed on March 13th and will continue through the end of the school year in line with the Governor's Executive Orders. It is important to note that the ending balance is still an estimate and may need to be adjusted as we continue through the rest of May and the month of June. The Board of Education will need to pass a motion at its fiscal year end meeting

scheduled for 7:30 a.m. on June 30, 2020 to request that the Town Council allocate the remaining balance to either an Unexpended Education Funds Account or back to the Town's General Fund or a combination of both.

The \$1,047,600 ending balance is a result of an estimated net expenditure reduction of \$756,317 directly attributable to moving to a remote learning model in response to COVID-19 with the largest reductions in our transportation costs of \$315,840, cancellation of spring sports - \$100,000, reduction of contracted cleaning services - \$80,000, net reduction of substitute teacher costs - \$75,000 and reduction of staff hours - \$58,000.

The remaining net expenditure reduction of \$291,283 is expected to come primarily by placing an 80% expenditure cap of non-payroll accounts for our schools and departments. The net reduction includes a \$200,000 increase required to provide services for special education students due to potential loss of skills during the remote learning period.

The timeline of key past and tentative future events related to the Covid-19 Pandemic are as follows:

- Friday, March 13, 2020 - last day of classes with students in our school buildings.
- Wednesday, March 18, 2020 - remote teaching and learning begins for students.
- Wednesday, March 18, 2020 – Grab and Go Program for student meals begins.
- Tuesday, March 25, 2020 – Governor's Stay Safe, Stay Home executive order takes effect and most district employees begin working from home. (Excluded from remote work are our Facilities management and staff, as well as the staff working in the Grab and Go Program which includes food service, nurses, instructional assistants, bus drivers and our building maintainers.
- Thursday, June 11, 2020 – Scheduled last day of remote school for students.
- Tuesday, June 16, 2020 – Scheduled last work day for teachers.
- Monday, July 6, 2020 – Scheduled start date of Extended School Year services for Special Education students (subject to change).

Mr. Masciana added that Board members have the detail of how they reached the total \$1,047,600 budget reduction. This amount is \$100,000 higher than last month's report because they settled the bus contract and an additional month of contracted cleaning for which they will not be paying. He said normally they close the school year with a zero balance but because of COVID-19, the Board will need to make a recommendation at the June 30th meeting how they will allocate the funds.

Mr. Perugini noted that Mr. Masciana, Mr. Solan and he attended a meeting with the Town Council where this information was shared. Mr. Masciana said Connecticut State Law allows for unexpended educational funds to be deposited into a non-lapsing account, subject to approval by the Town Council. The Council passed a resolution setting up the account but technically the Board has to pass a motion and recommendation to the Council with the amount to be deposited. He said they will not know that amount until the close of the fiscal year. The Council has the authority to approve, the initial deposit and rollover if not spent. They also have the authority to take the funds in the non-lapsing account and transfer them into the general fund if they choose. Whatever goes into that account is for Board of Education funding.

Mr. Perugini said he received clarification from Town Council Chair, Rob Oris, that because the Town Council is responsible for the opening of the account they are also responsible for the closing of the account. Once the money is in the account it is used for educational purposes. He said they will be discussing this further in Finance.

Ms. Hallen asked if we decide to put funds in the account this year, can the Town Council take that money back? She said she thought that when the money went into the account it remained Board funds.

Mr. Masciana said there are two options at the end of the fiscal year if there are funds left, they can keep the funds in that account, or the other option would be to put the money into the General Fund. It is the Council's decision.

Mr. Masciana said it is a very good thing to be able to use some of this year's funds next year. He said he would be surprised if we don't use it.

Ms. Ham said this is preserving the funds for the Board to use through 2020-2021, otherwise the money would go back into the General Fund and we would lose those funds. Mr. Masciana said that they are discussing the \$200,000 for special education, but the Board could make a recommendation to deposit the entire \$1,047,600 and it would be up to the Council to decide if they would accept the full amount or a partial amount.

Mr. Perugini said this savings should help our budget next year, and they would be discussing this matter in the Finance Committee.

Mr. Masciana next shared information from E-Rate, a program that is sponsored by the federal government. We use it to offset some costs related to technology. We have received a total of \$837,296 over the life

of the program from which we have been requesting the E-Rate funding since 1999.

Mr. Masciana provided an update on the Grab and Go Meal Program. There have been 118,366 meals served to date. The program is going very well. The program will end on June 8th. They will notify families of food distribution plans that will continue through the summer. In addition, any families that qualify for free and reduced lunches will receive a debit card from the state for meals.

Mr. Grippo said he was shocked by the number of meals served. He gave kudos to all of the staff for putting the meals together. It shows how the community is depending on this service, and it is great that we have been able to do this.

Mr. Martelli asked about reimbursements for the meals. Mr. Masciana explained that we are reimbursed \$1.84 for breakfasts and \$3.41 for lunches. The reimbursement goes to the food service department. He said if the reimbursement does not cover all of the labor and food, we would have to reimburse the food service department.

III. Medical Benefits Report

Mr. Masciana reported that claims were high in April at \$931,037. This is due to a few large claims. We received stop loss reimbursements in the amount of \$475,644. The trust fund balance is currently \$2,691,555, about 3.11 claim months in reserve. He reported that our rates will probably increase next year, along with the Town's, due to high claims this year. He noted the high claims are not due to COVID-19.

IV. Report on Grant Activity for the 2019/2020 School Year

Ms. Silano reported on grants for 2019-2020 which totaled \$1,591,276. This includes a \$49,718 grant that was presented to the Board a few months back from the Cheshire High School Tech Ed department. A copy of the report is on file.

Ms. Harrigan asked if the grants are in line with what we have received in the past. Ms. Silano said they are in line with what we have received in the past.

Mr. Perugini noted that all of the details for these grants are in the budget book.

C. SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Martelli reported that there were two meetings in May. The first meeting on May 4th was a Zoom call, where two firms who responded to the RFP presented for the Owners Manager position. He said while both firms were highly qualified

and knowledgeable, the consensus of the Committee after the presentation was to move forward with Colliers, and to authorize negotiation with them on their proposal. Last night, there was a meeting where the committee unanimously moved forward with Colliers. Also, the proposal they agreed to move forward with is for Phase I work for \$41,000. He said they were initially going to submit in November, but the Committee decided they will not be ready to do that due to COVID-19. Mr. Gusenberg put together a great presentation on all of the schools visited. The common theme is lack of space and aging facilities, as well as some maintenance issues.

Board members discussed possible future timeline, referendums and voter turnout. Mr. Perugini said no one on the committee wants to push this out any further than we have to.

D. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

Mr. White noted that they will be convening the Personnel Committee to discuss the Superintendent's review. He asked Mr. Solan if there have been any recent separations of teachers. Mr. Solan answered; yes the art teacher at Doolittle has resigned.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes of the Board of Education Meetings Held April 23, 2020 and May 7, 2020.

MOTION by Mr. Grippo seconded by Ms. Hallen.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes of the Board of Education Business Meetings held April 23, 2020 and May 7, 2020.*

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously 7-0.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Solan reported that he and Ms. Silano have been discussing parent survey responses. He said the primary feedback from parents and seniors regarding graduation reflected a hope for a traditional ceremony in August. The number one priority for the fall, if they are still doing remote learning, is connecting with the students. They have started collecting library books from students. They will be collecting other classroom and locker items in the near future. He noted the State has asked students to engage in a survey called "Thought Exchange." There is no personal information collected. They will take the information regarding remote learning and use it to improve the plan for the

fall. There was no objection from the Board. Finally, Dr. Solan reported that they are down to two finalists for the Darcey Principal position. He said they hope to appoint the new Principal in June.

Mr. Grippo said, if there is remote learning next year, perhaps there could be some training for the students to more effectively use Google technology. Dr. Solan said since COVID-19 happened, there have been a tremendous number of extensions on the Google platform. Today, they had a meeting with technology and instructional leaders who provided feedback, and they learned they need to provide more coaching to our staff. Some will be done in June and some in August. Part of that training will be how to support students in understanding the extensions and resources in Google.

Ms. Ham asked if there is a way that the public can access the meeting the Superintendent is attending. Mr. Solan said he believes it is a closed meeting, but he will look into it. She asked if there will be a localized meeting involving teachers and parents and board members regarding the opening of school. Mr. Solan said decisions have to be driven by medical guidance that we will have to adhere to and plan around. Right now, they are just trying to determine their options. Ms. Ham strongly suggested that parents be involved in the decision.

Mr. Martelli asked who was responsible for the surveys. He said that he has received very positive feedback about the surveys. Mr. Solan noted that it was a collective effort and Ms. Silano drafted most of the questions. They decided early it was important to get feedback from all constituents. He noted they have been cited in national publications twice in the last few months and they are very proud of that.

Ms. Harrigan said she thinks that the debriefing meetings Dr. Solan mentioned are very important. It is very valuable to share ideas of what worked and what didn't.

Mr. Grippo asked, in regard to the plan to reopen in the fall, does Chesprocott have a say in it or is it only the state? Dr. Solan said the Governor can issue an executive order, but when it is more relaxed, they would consult with the local health districts.

Mr. Perugini said the reason the district does as well as it does, is because of our staff. He said the fact they could get remote learning up and running in five days speaks to the staff. He said he wanted to give kudos to all the staff of Cheshire Public Schools. He said he does worry about learning development with younger students only working online.

Mr. Grippo said it is not only the devoted staff, but also the dedicated and committed parents. He thinks there should be a debriefing of both staff and parents. Dr. Solan said there will be a parent debriefing as well.

8. OLD BUSINESS

None.

9. **Audience – Public Q & A’s via CPSCovid19@cheshire.k12.ct.us**

Mary Burnham emailed to say she is concerned the budget does not take into account the additional needs when schools reopen in the fall due to COVID-19, especially the need for smaller class sizes. The Superintendent said he agrees and it is a real concern. Just to supply face masks once a week to students would cost \$200,000.

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson’s Update**

Mr. Perugini said that over the last four or five weeks, they have been looking at the budget to try to trim it down to help the Town achieve a potential zero mill rate increase going into the 2020-2021 year because of the COVID-19 impacts. He said that is the goal not only for this year, but for next year and the year after. He said all of the Town Council budget meetings are on the Town’s site. The Council will be voting on their budget next Thursday. He asked that they let the Town Council know about the possible PPE costs. He said they have identified close to \$1 million to reduce from the budget. He said they could have a budget number on June 4th.

B. **Announcement of Upcoming Meetings/Events**

Mr. Perugini asked the Committee chairs to schedule their meetings prior to June 30th.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Grippo, and seconded by Ms. Ham, the meeting was adjourned into an Executive Session including Superintendent Solan, Assistant Superintendent Silano and Chief Operating Officer Masciana to discuss collective bargaining agreements and the Superintendent’s review at 9:30 p.m. Executive Session adjourned at approximately 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: _____.