

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY JULY 29, 2020 AT 6:30 PM**

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@cheshire.k12.ct.us .
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1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:30 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.

2. AUDIENCE

Dr. Solan reported that he received an email from the Cheshire Coalition for Change, a group of Cheshire High School graduates who are committed to supporting the district's efforts to build diversity and an understanding of multiculturalism. He explained he was scheduled to meet with the group today but unfortunately he could not, as he was called into an emergency meeting. Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator was able to meet with the group. The group asked the following questions:

In what specific ways will your reopening plan address racial and environmental disparities of underserved communities?

The plan does not necessarily address those disparities.

How will you account for working class families that may not be able to work from home or hire help to supervise children participating in remote learning?

In March, that was potentially an issue but the vast majority of families were mostly working from home. If we go to a fully remote scenario, unfortunately, we will probably be looking at the same situation.

How does your plan specifically support or assist families that may not be able to afford proper/required technology for remote learning?

We provide a 1:1 device for every student in the district. In addition, we reached out to families to provide hotspots and technologies if they needed them. Dr. Solan said they go above and beyond to be sure that economic conditions do not hinder the educational experience.

3. **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

4. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan reported that this week has been a bit of a roller coaster. On Monday the Governor announced plans to allow districts more flexibility around planning for the fall, particularly at the high school level, because it is difficult to integrate some of the mitigating interventions for the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Social distancing is a challenge with older students. Cohorting is also very difficult at the high school level. In addition, getting students through lunch while trying to social distance would be very difficult. Then on Tuesday, the Commissioner reiterated the Governor's message. Today, the Superintendent was on an emergency conference call and was told that the State has not defined what flexibility means and there is no definitive plan yet. The Superintendent said he is concerned with being able to mitigate risk while still being able to deliver a high quality educational experience at the high school level with all students attending all day. His preference would be for all students to attend all day, every day, but he is worried that without taking precautions, they will be back to only remote learning. Dr. Solan said he asked Principal Gadd to examine various options for schedules, should they move to a hybrid model. Some models have half of the students attending in the first half of the day and the other half of the students attending in the afternoon. Although it would be good that all students go every day, but they would be attending four abbreviated periods. The cost associated with this plan is also astronomical. Transportation costs alone would be \$5,000 per day. In addition, we have a number of shared staff members, such as World Languages teachers who would not be able to teach all of the classes they normally do. This means the district would need to hire more staff.

Another option could be all students attending every other day. The benefits to this plan are limited conflicts, zero change in costs and an expanded class period length. This is a collegiate model where, on their off days students are doing assigned work from home. Dr. Solan said either way they have to institute a plan for a short period of time until early October and then analyze it to be sure it is working. He noted that this may be a moot point if the Governor says we don't have flexibility.

Mr. Perugini asked whether safe is distancing is considered 3 or 6 feet. The Superintendent responded that the State just says just to maximize social distancing but they do not give any guidance on the distance to keep students apart. The 3 to 6 feet distance is how far people should be distanced for mask wearing. He said they will be keeping students as far away from each other as possible, even exploring the use of tents outside of our buildings.

Regarding disinfecting, Mr. Masciana explained that there will be disinfecting every night. Bathrooms and high touch surfaces will also be sanitized and wiped-down throughout the day.

Mr. Martelli asked when we will be able to finalize our plan so they can be sent to the parents as they are trying to plan. The Superintendent agreed that this has been a great source of frustration for everyone. The hope is for our principals to send out a “A Day in the Life” video to their parents. At that point, they will ask parents to commit to which plan they would like for their children.

Regarding technology, Mr. Masciana said it is progressing and they expect installations to be complete before the start of school. They are installing the microphones and speakers in 5 or 6 classrooms per day, but will have to go back and install the cameras and wiring.

Ms. Ham asked, with this schedule, if there will there be electives at Cheshire High School. Dr. Solan said they are very much committed to providing a well-rounded experience for the students. While core classes are important, some of the electives are very important to students. He said it is important that all students receive all classes. The Superintendent added that CIAC has not made a decision on fall sports yet.

Mr. Grippo asked if students at the high school level can still go remote with the hybrid model. The Superintendent answered, yes absolutely, there will be the option to go remote or in-person at all levels.

Mr. Grippo asked if there been any commentary from teachers regarding in person or hybrid models. Dr. Solan said there has been anxiety among some people with different concerns. He said he has met with 75 teachers so far this week to try to provide clarity around concerns

Mr. White inquired about open houses and parent-teacher conferences and if they should be delayed. Dr. Solan said open houses are a generic overview whereas parent-teacher conferences address individual student needs and progress. Both will likely be held remotely this year. Mr. White questioned lunch, specials, etc. Ms. Silano said the principals have told her they will be able to teach the specials in their classrooms to keep the cohorts together.

Ms. Ham asked why we are only equipping 56 rooms with the remote technology. Dr. Solan said the goal is to be very conscientious and judicious on purchases. He said he thinks it is prudent to wait a few weeks to see where they district stands.

Mr. Perugini asked about the budget and our costs. He would like to notify the Town Council if we need help. Dr. Solan said they look at the numbers every day. It is too early to know, but he would expect to have a better idea in the next few weeks. Mr. Masciana added that they are operating under extreme caution this year. A 40% expenditure cap is in place until further notice. Significant overages are expected for:

- Cost of Disposing, Moving and Storage of Classroom Furniture and Other Items

- Intra-day Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Services-hiring a vendor
- PPE-wipes, paper towels, sanitizing and cleaning products
- Additional staff and/or staff hours
- Student transportation if we move away from standard schedules
- Classroom Broadcasting Capability
- Court ruling requiring special education services to continue for students until age 22
- Tents to provide sheltered outdoor space for mask breaks/social distancing during lunch

Mr. Masciana said he will continue to provide more updates as the process moves forward.

A. AUDIENCE via CPSCOV19@cheshire.k12.ct.us

Dr. Solan answered a number of email questions. He said that the questions and answers will be available on our district website. The webpage will be updated as questions are received and information becomes available.

5. OLD BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A. Approval of Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar

Superintendent Solan said information concerning changing the calendar was shared with the community last week. He had a few families asking for a later start date and a few looking for the earliest possible start date. The Superintendent presented three options for a revised calendar.

Version A is most similar to our current calendar, with the addition of three State Professional Development days moving the start date to September 1st. The last day of school would be June 9th.

Version B included three State Professional Development days and three student orientation days where one-third of the students attend in-person on each day, with a student start date of September 8th and the last day of school would be June 9th.

Version C has the school year starting later with three State Professional Development days and three student orientation days. Students would start school on September 11th. The last day of school would be June 14th.

Dr. Solan noted that if the State does not approve the three orientation days to be counted as school days, the start date will have to be moved up 3 days to reach 180 days. Unfortunately we will not know the state's decision until the middle of August. After discussion, the Board agreed that Version C was the best option.

MOTION by Ms. Hallen and seconded by Mr. Grippo.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the revised 2020-2021 School Calendar marked as Version C.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Public Comment – a parent emailed and asked if this could be left to a parent vote. The Superintendent said no, at this point we need to move forward with this. This information has been available publically for a while now, and he has only received a few emails.

B. Chairperson’s Update

Mr. Perugini said the Commissioner was asked, through CABE, to present his guidance in writing to school districts so that the Governor can act upon it and districts can solidify their plans. Mr. Perugini also reported that the Board has started their meetings with the unions.

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Perugini, and seconded by Ms. Harrigan, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session to discuss union negotiations to include Superintendent Solan, Mr. Masciana and Ms. Silano at 9:15 p.m. with no action to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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