

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL MEETING
HELD SEPTEMBER 9 2020 AT 7:30 PM IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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/CheshirePublicSchools. Public comments were accepted at CPSCovid19@chshire.k12.ct.us.

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. Mr. Perugini noted that this was our first in-person meeting in six months. He invited any members of the public who are watching via livestream to send questions to the dedicated email address.

2. AUDIENCE

Emails will be answered during the Superintendent's report.

3. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

4. SUPERINTENDENT'S Update

A. Update on Fall Opening 2020

Dr. Solan reported that students are back. They have had their first two orientation days. It has been quality time with smaller groups of students with their teachers. The Superintendent noted that he rode on a high school and middle school bus and each had only had a few students on each. There are monitors on almost all of the buses. Only two masks had to be handed out, not because they didn't have them, but because they broke. Students and teachers have all been very good about wearing their masks. He noted that there are tents at the schools. This allows for a great deal of physical distance outside for dining and mask breaks.

Enrollment over the first few days has been consistent with what they committed to in July. There are 15% remote learners, 627 students throughout the district. He noted that there have been questions regarding attendance. He said they do

not want to encourage students to come to school if they are feeling ill. On those days that the child is sick, they should stay home. If they have COVID-19 symptoms, it should be reported to their doctor and school nurse. If the child will be out for a few days, they would stay on the in-person plan. If they will be out for an extended period, they can discuss switching to remote learning. Attendance will continue to be taken as it has been in the past, but as these are unique times, it will be reviewed later in the school year, particularly at the high school level.

In the last several weeks and months, there were 40-50 staff members who expressed concern about returning due to their health. He said they have been creative in attempting to solve these issues. During professional development days, the Cheshire High School child development class held a daycare for our staff members, earning them credit while providing the service to the teachers. In addition, we had two teachers who were not able to come back and we did not have a need for additional remote teachers. We were able to “trade” these teachers with Meriden where they will provide remote instruction. We received back an in-person teacher. Meriden also provided additional remote classes in which our students can participate. They also have a grant-funded program called Equity Leaders and the Infinity Group. They will be working with our teachers to provide guidance.

B. [Audience via CPSCOVID19@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:CPSCOVID19@cheshire.k12.ct.us)

Dr. Solan said that there was a great deal of talk on the forum today regarding a situation where a person said their spouse had been exposed to someone who was believed to be COVID-19 positive, but we allowed their child to come to school. He said this is the Department of Public Health Guidance. If you are in contact with a confirmed positive (within 6 feet of an individual for 15 minutes or longer within two days of their being symptomatic or positive), then you are considered a contact and have to self-isolate. If that contact has not tested positive and you come in contact with the contact, you are considered a contact of a contact and don't have to self-isolate. He said the Decision Tree is on our website. If you have a question as a parent or individual, the first person you should call is your doctor. You can also contact a school nurse or Chesprocott.

He received an email stating the desire to make the high school a full-day, every day learning. Dr. Solan said this is a desire that he shares. He said they hope to move in that direction and will as soon as it is recommended.

Regarding the thermometers that were distributed to CPS families, when temperatures are taken they are uploaded to a state database. There was a question if the data collected is available to the public. The data is shared and can be viewed through their app which will show “hotspots.” Only Chesprocott and the State Department of Health are receiving the information; no one in our district receives the data.

Dr. Solan read a lengthy email with many questions concerning positive cases and school closings. What are our plans if Cheshire has to close and what is the threshold? Dr. Solan said it is not a magic number. It will all depend on the circumstances. We will continue to work with and follow the guidance of the health department. School and district closings will be determined on a case by case basis. Chesprocott will do the contact tracing for any positive cases. If there is a positive case in a building; the people in that building will be notified.

Dr. Solan said we received emails from parents who are happy that the students are back in school.

An email was received asking if we can set up an anonymous website where individuals can express concerns and compliance issues. Dr. Solan said he will work on that.

Will the individual school plans be posted to the website? Yes, we are working on that.

Mr. White asked if parents can get attendance reports. Dr. Solan, answered yes, parents can log onto PowerSchool and get the attendance and grade reports.

Mr. White asked about extracurricular activities and when they may start up again. He said he would like the Board to be involved in the decision to begin activities. Dr. Solan said he will rely on the guidance from the health officials. He said we will be re-evaluating in October.

Mr. Martelli asked if there was an outbreak and the district had to close, how long before we would be able to go fully remote. The Superintendent answered as soon as possible. Unless it is a significant sickness among teachers, they could institute remote learning within a day. Ms. Ham asked how long they would stay out. The Superintendent replied we would need to follow health official guidance on when the students would return to school.

Mr. Perugini asked if there are any other ADA requests being processed. Superintendent Solan answered there is still one outstanding that they are working to complete.

5. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Petition Regarding Diversity**

Mr. Perugini noted that in July, Board Members received a letter and petition from Arati Rajeevan, a 2015 graduate, regarding systemic change around the

topic of racism and diversity in Cheshire schools. Mr. Perugini noted that he and Dr. Solan both responded to her and told her we would discuss it after school starts. He asked Dr. Solan to provide an update.

Dr. Solan stated that this has been a process starting with ethnic and social isolation, and we have built on that over the last several years. This year we are working with the state to continue that a process. He said it is very important to identify key priorities and stay focused on them like we did with complex thinking and social emotional learning. He said he and Kevin Hanlon have both met with the group, and they shared a list of items that we have reviewed and shared with curriculum leaders. He said Marlene Silano has done an incredible amount of work on this with SERC to get us where we need to be, not only today, but in the next few years.

Ms. Silano said we want to make a long term commitment to the process of what we can provide here in Cheshire Public Schools. They reached out to SERC because of the work they are doing on the inclusion of African American studies in the public schools curriculum. She noted that Ms. Ham has attended some of the meetings around that area. She said we are partnering with SERC to receive training in our Cheshire Strategic Planning Committee, which consists of not only staff, but members of the town community as well. They will also be providing the administrative team with professional learning around these topics. Their hope that both groups we can bring the information to the schools and find our weaknesses. She also shared that they have been partnering with SCSU in the enrollment of students of color in a teaching track since 2017. We have published our employment opportunities in the National Minority Report for a number of years. We send students to the NAACP Great Debate, which is a debate among historically black colleges and universities. We have a transgender task force that was formed in our community in 2019. She said we would like to look deeper into our curriculum and become more inclusive. She said a lot has changed in our curriculum since 2015. There are many topics now covered that weren't when those graduates were in our system. She reviewed some of those topics.

Mr. Perugini asked if this information can be shared at an upcoming Curriculum Committee meeting. Dr. Solan said he sits on a committee with SCSU to encourage students of color to go into the teaching profession. He added that, many times, these students graduate and want to go to the areas that they grew up in to give back to their communities.

Mr. Grippo suggest we encourage our graduates to explore other areas of the country and other cultures. Ms. Ham said there are a number of community groups in our neighboring towns that could benefit from interacting with our students as well as our students benefiting from interacting with them. Dr. Solan added that we are working on that as well.

B. Chairperson's Update

None.

7. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Perugini, and seconded by Ms. Ham, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session to discuss union negotiations with no action to follow, including Superintendent Solan, Mr. Masciana and Ms. Silano at 9:00 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: _____.