

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION OPENING OF SCHOOL MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary; Faith Ham (arr. 7:40), 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 – 7:35 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.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan, seconded by Ms. Hallen.

MOVED to amend the agenda to add an Executive Session to discuss Union Negotiations to Agenda Item #10.

VOTE: 6-0

Mr. Perugini noted that Executive Session was not on the Agenda that was filed, but there is an update to be given to the Board.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. Opening of School

Mr. Perugini asked Superintendent Solan for his presentation on the Opening of School (presentation on file). Dr. Solan noted it has been an opening like no other due to the pandemic. He asked Mr. Masciana to provide an update on summer projects. Mr. Masciana reported on the capital budget projects such as the Darcey underground storage tank replacement, repaving and window replacement at Cheshire High School, the government freezer replacement at Highland, the new office trailer at the bus depot, and districtwide video surveillance camera installation. He also reported on the numerous routine summer maintenance and repair projects that were performed.

Mr. Masciana said there was a great deal of work that went into COVID-19 preparedness, including creating additional space by moving and storing furniture

and equipment. Tents were installed at schools for mask breaks and dining. He reviewed the steps taken to comply with guidance received from the state and local health departments. Some changes made included limiting students to 50 riders on a bus and disinfecting buses between runs. Day porters were hired to sanitize/disinfect intraday and additional nightly sanitizing/disinfecting is being done by our cleaning contractor. Signage, floor decals, and acrylic shields have been placed in high-traffic areas. HVAC has been inspected & repaired, filters upgraded to MERV 13, and HEPA filtration has been provided for nurses' offices and isolation rooms. Monitors have been added for isolation rooms and school meals have been streamlined and prepackaged, including a scan to purchase system. He reported the CEN bandwidth was increased to accommodate video streaming demand and the broadcast classrooms are up and running. Mr. Masciana also reviewed various PPE and cleaning products that have been delivered to our staff.

Next, Dr. Solan began his presentation by thanking all the parents, students and staff during this unprecedented opening. He reviewed the Convocation ceremony where Esther Harvey was recognized as Instructional Assistant of the Year and Deb Manke was recognized as Teacher of the Year.

The Superintendent reviewed enrollment figures for each of the schools and the district as a whole. While some of the schools actual enrollment deviated from projected enrollments, overall district numbers show a difference of only 19 less students than projected. He reported that there are approximately 32 students being homeschooled due to the Coronavirus. The number of remote learners remains at approximately 15% districtwide.

Dr. Solan presented on the districtwide Strategic Plan Initiative which was created in 2011 and designed to be applied through 2021. Many of the initiatives have been fulfilled. This plan was reviewed by the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiative (CSPI) Committee in 2016/2017, concluding to sharpen focus on complex thinking and social emotional learning. He reviewed the initiatives: Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, Assessment and Evaluation, Technology, and Personalized Learning. The Superintendent reviewed the performance standards that were adopted by the Board of Education in July of 2019; Complex Thinker, Collaborative/Cooperative Worker, Community Contributor, Creative Thinker, Effective Communicator, and Self-Directed Learner.

Assistant Superintendent, Marlene Silano discussed social emotional learning and complex thinking. She explained that the State Education Resource Center (SERC) will be presenting at the next Curriculum Committee meeting and they will more thoroughly address the comprehensive plan for social justice and equity work. For this year, they will continue to work on the building capacity of our K-12 support staff, supporting new teachers with SEL coaching, supporting elementary schools and strengthening responsive classroom practices, and

supporting the middle and high school by implementing restorative practices. She said at Darcey, they will be looking at behavior through the attachment lens and continue to use RULER. Ms. Silano reviewed complex thinking strategies developed through learning walks.

Dr. Solan reviewed the various accolades that the district and students have received, referring to them as the dividends of our hard work. He explained the acronym VUCA – Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous, developed post-cold war by West Point. It describes the situation of constant, unpredictable change that is now the norm. He said that is what they are doing right now. Ms. Silano discussed the challenges that teachers are confronting. She said teachers are frustrated because they have had to learn to teach all over again. She said they are benefiting from the technology they have and are grateful for the broadcast rooms. Things in the broadcasting rooms are going well. She said tomorrow, 2,000 devices and power cords are going home with students in Grades K-6. She said children should be using only Cheshire Public Schools devices.

Ms. Silano discussed the tracking of attendance. She said as a community, we want to continue in-person learning for as long as possible. They want to encourage students to stay home if they are not feeling well. If they are feeling well enough to join a Google Meet that has been pre-set, they should feel free to do so when available. For in-school, in-person learners, that might not always be possible. The message may not be able to get to the teacher in time to allow the teacher to add them to the Google Meet. For students with remote classes already available, they are welcome to join. She said it will not always be available for a student who is taking a sick day. Dr. Solan said, as much as is possible, they would like the students to participate, even if it is an absence day. The important thing is that students stay home if they are not feeling well and Dr. Solan joked there will be no awards for perfect attendance this year. Students are so good with their masks during the day, but he sees them out in the community without masks. He said he sent a video to students reminding them to wear their masks. The goal is to get every student back in school as much as possible. He said that mitigation strategies are the biggest stumbling block. Academically our kids are doing okay and we all have to remember this is a global issue, not just our students. Our students are lucky because they started off in a good place and they will be okay.

Dr. Solan discussed managing incidents. He explained again that a close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a period of 15 minutes or longer. If you are a close contact, you would have to quarantine. When there is an incident, we need to do contact tracing.

Mr. White asked if there are sports being played at Dodd yet. The Superintendent answered no, they will review again on October 1st. As for the high school level, CIAC released their fall sports schedule for low risk, safe sports. They are

looking at October 1st for most sports except football. Mr. White said he wants the students to be in school as much as possible and he thinks the contact sports might jeopardize that.

3. **AUDIENCE**

Dr. Solan answered some emails that were received. He noted that many of the questions sent via email were answered during the presentation. Dr. Solan said an email was received, asking if remote learners in K-2 can be assigned to one class together. Dr. Solan said they met with the teachers' union today, and they are exploring options. Right now, there are some teachers who have both remote and live learners. He said it is a concern when you have 15–17 all remote students in one class. He stressed that it is only day 4 back to school. They will review and determine the best option for both the teachers and the students.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held September 14, 2020.**

Ms. Ham reported on the meeting that was held virtually on September 14th. The Committee heard an overview of some of the district professional development that took place during the August and September professional development days prior to the start of school. Topics were linked to being able to proactively plan for in-person/on-campus, fully remote, and hybrid learning models that may be used during the year. Each class this year will be organized through a Learning Management System to help facilitate learning in each of the learning models. Google Classroom will continue to be used in Grades 4-12 and Seesaw is being introduced at Grades K-3. Professional development was provided for additional technology tools to help increase interactive, collaborative, and remote capabilities. Part of the professional development was also focused on helping teachers plan to “onboard students” to the use and expectations of these tools. One other key aspect of professional development centered around using “acceleration” as a strategy for addressing the loss of learning time and focusing on the most important areas of learning this year. Professional development sessions at the high school also included collaboration time for teachers to adjust to teaching in an 80-minute block. An overview of the professional development offerings around Social Emotional Learning was also highlighted.

The Committee also discussed the State Assessment Calendar that has published its annual assessment calendar for the year. It includes traditional dates for SBAC, CTAA, NGSS, LAS Links (EL), and SAT testing. At this time, state testing is proceeding as normal for the 2020-21 school year.

Mr. White asked if Ms. Silano knows what will transpire over this year and if she plans to communicate with other Curriculum Assistant Superintendents to get ideas to see if they have the same problems and to see where we compare to other districts. Ms. Silano said those conversations have been happening since last March. The team has attended numerous workshops over the summer and have done significant research on learning loss and how you plan for that. That is why they settled on the strategy of “acceleration.” They looked at the curriculum and identified the most important standards for the different grade levels, what they will provide for exposure and what they will delve deeper into.

Ms. Silano explained that “acceleration is not about going faster and beyond the grade level. It is continuing to move forward and not stopping to go back and reteach everything they may have missed, but teaching what is important and germane in the grade level and providing the “just in time” supports for the students who need them, not teaching “just in case” they missed it. They will be focusing on formative assessments to see what students already know.

B. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Mr. Grippo said he will be scheduling a Finance Committee meeting to discuss the current year’s financial situation. He asked Mr. Masciana to give the Finance Report. Mr. Masciana reported that the budget process for next year has begun. He reported that while we have expended and encumbered \$15,587,413 through the first two months of the year, we have not yet entered the full value of our encumbrances for our largest account categories, namely payroll and transportation. While it is too early to identify any singular major variance concern, we obviously expect that the 2020-21 fiscal year will present a variety of financial pressures and challenges, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The good news is that our schools have been open for students since September 8th, but there are still many variables and unknowns making it impossible to accurately forecast our expenditures at this point in time. As reported last month, they have identified below an initial estimate of the major costs that could potentially be incurred assuming that we were able to keep our school buildings open for students through June 2021, totaling about \$800,000.

Mr. Masciana reviewed sources of revenue to help defray the COVID related costs incurred in 2020-21.

Elementary & Secondary Emergency School Relief Fund (ESSERF) (*This funding was provided under the CARES Act. The total amount allocated to Cheshire totaled \$99,144 of which \$13,880 went to non-public schools.)		* \$85,264
Coronavirus Relief Funds <i>(Please note that we are awaiting guidance and details from the CT State Department of Education on the amounts shown in this table as being "Approved by the State").</i>	Estimated Cost Provided to State on 8/11/2020	Amount Approved by State
Personnel Costs		
Teachers	\$200,000	
Substitutes	\$100,000	
Paraprofessionals (IA's)	\$50,000	
Overtime	\$15,000	
Psychologists, Counselors, Social Workers	\$50,000	
School Nurses	\$25,000	
Bus Monitors	\$200,000	
Personnel - Cleaning/PPE/Health/Safety N/A		\$11,012
Personnel - Transportation N/A		\$75,063
Personnel Costs - Total	\$640,000	\$86,075
Non-Personnel Costs		
Online Academic Content	\$28,000	
Professional Development	\$8,000	
Health and Safety - Contracted Services	\$300,000	
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	\$200,000	
Cleaning Supplies	\$100,000	
Student Support - Contracted Services	\$50,000	
Student Support - Professional Development	\$5,000	
Technology Device Purchases	\$125,000	
Hot Spots	\$9,000	
Other Equipment (Broadcast Classrooms)	\$200,000	
Bus Cleaning Costs	\$20,000	
Non-Personnel Cleaning/PPE/Health/Safety	N/A	\$600,000
Non-Personnel - Transportation	N/A	\$20,000
Non-Personnel Costs - Total	\$1,045,000	\$620,000
Personnel and Non-Personal Cost Total	\$1,685,000	\$706,075

Mr. Masciana said they had to complete a survey for the state and estimated that personnel costs could be \$640,000 and non-personnel could be \$1,045,000 for a total of \$1,685,000. The State has approved a total of \$706,075. They are waiting for clarification from the State. The way the survey was written is not how the reimbursement is given. The State has not approved any funding for technology as of now. The \$706,075 will be

in the form of a reimbursement, so we would have to show receipts for the expenses.

Mr. Perugini said we have a potential \$706,075 reimbursement. He said we cannot spend more than we have in the budget. He said he doesn't know how we will pay for things without the reimbursement. He said we will have to work with the Town. Mr. Masciana said he agrees we will have expenditures and we don't know when or how the reimbursement will be received. He said we have a 40% expenditure freeze right now. He said we will keep the cap on until we have a better idea of expenditures. Mr. Masciana reminded the Board there is still the \$200,000 that was rolled over.

II. **Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reported it was a high claim month with \$1,207,789 in claims. They began the month with \$2,969,842 in the fund, added \$730,132 and after the claims, the balance is \$2,492,186 or 3.12 months in reserve. He said there were some very large claims, but none have been significant COVID claims.

C. **POLICY**

I. **Report on Meeting Held September 1, 2020.**

Mr. Grippo reported that the Committee met and first discussed the need for a coaching certification policy. He had asked the Superintendent if there was further conversation or action that was needed by the Policy Committee regarding the incident that occurred last year with the lapsed coaching certification. Dr. Solan responded, no, new procedures have been put into place to track certifications. The Superintendent stated he will supply the Board with the list of coaching certifications prior to the start of each sports season.

Next, the Committee discussed the Policy Committee Schedule for 2020-2021. Committee members agreed that they will meet virtually for the next few months. Meetings will be set for the first Tuesday of the month with the next meeting scheduled for October 6th. At the meeting, the Committee will discuss Bylaws #9325.43 and #9321.2 pertaining to electronic meetings and communications. In addition, the Committee will continue to review policy updates as recommended by CABE.

D. **SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE**

Mr. Martelli announced that Jim Jinx joined the Committee at their meeting. Elections were held for Chair and Vice Chair. Community member, Jennifer Bates was elected Chair and Chuck Neth, was elected as Vice Chair. Colliers gave an update. Colliers are managing Milone and McBroom who are doing the enrollment study. They Committee received a draft report that has not yet been

shared with the public. They learned that the average age in Cheshire is 48 years old. Birthrates are down to 230 births (2018) per year from 300 in the 1990's. Between 2010 and 2018, there have been 1376 new housing units, but the school age population has not increased.

Ms. Harrigan added that it was interesting that the enrollment study reported that people don't move to certain elementary districts within Cheshire. Our district is considered a solid district as a whole and there is not a perception of a variance in quality between the four elementary schools.

Mr. Perugini noted there were a lot of home sales this year, mostly a turnover of existing homes. Approximately 122 students came to our schools through the sales. Mr. Perugini also suggested we supply the Committee with our special needs enrollment numbers. Although it may be a small population, those students may have more space requirements for additional services. The Board discussed the population projections for the next five years.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Approval of Minutes for Meetings Held August 20 2020 and September 9, 2020.

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

MOVED that the Board of Education approve the Minutes from meetings held on August 20, 2020 and September 9, 2020.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. [Audience via CPSCOV1D19@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:CPSCOV1D19@cheshire.k12.ct.us)

Dr. Solan noted they received one more email specifically asking about Special Education and that the Special Education Office will get back to the sender privately.

Mr. Perugini thanked Ms. Silano for her presentation earlier. He said he thinks it is helpful for the parents to know that a student's absence will not be held against them. He said he knows it is not possible now, but he would like to find a way for any student who is absent to join the classroom remotely.

Mr. White asked if there will be another presentation by Chesprocott before we start sports again. He said he looked at the Reopening Connecticut Guidelines and does not understand the rationale for the high, medium and low risk sports. He said he would like to hear more before we start activities. He asked if band has started to which Dr. Solan replied that marching band season has been canceled because of the projection of aerosols. Dr. Solan said he doesn't have the expertise to make the decisions and will refer to the Department of Public Health and CIAC. He noted that many kids in our community are participating in athletics all of the time now and have been doing so safely. Most of youth football groups have canceled their programs. Mr. White said he worries about the asymptomatic students. Dr. Solan said he feels the students are being very vigilant about wearing their masks during sports.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Affirmation of Strategic Goals**

Dr. Solan explained that the Board of Education Policy 0025 reflects the approved Strategic Goals of the Cheshire Board of Education. These goals are an integral part of the Cheshire Public Schools Strategic Planning Initiative. They have been developed by a large community based group of stakeholders including Board members, staff, parents, Town Councilors, local officials and local business persons. The plan was developed initially with significant data collected from the entire community and has been reviewed and revised twice since the initial plan developed in 2000. The most recent goals were developed in 2011. In 2015, the Personalized Learning initiative was added. State law requires local Boards to set annual goals and objectives each year. Because the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiative reflects the vision and beliefs of the Cheshire Community it has traditionally served as the Board of Education goals each year.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Hallen

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education reaffirms the Cheshire Public Schools Strategic Objectives and Goals for 2020/21.*

Mr. Grippo noted the Policy Committee did review this policy last year.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

B. **Chairperson's Update**

The Chairman had no formal update. He noted that the Open Forum planned for October 3rd will not be possible because of the pandemic.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Perugini and seconded by Ms. Harrigan, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session including Dr. Solan, Ms. Silano and Mr. Masciana at 9:45 p.m. to discuss union negotiations 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: 10/9/2020.