

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY OCTOBER 15, 2020 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Kathryn Hallen-Secretary (joined remotely); 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@cheshire.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. He noted that Ms. Esposito, Chesprocott Health Director, who will be providing an update for the Board, is running late. He suggested the Board continue with agenda items until she arrives.

4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Mr. Masciana reported they have expended and encumbered \$53,375,485 or 71.6% of the budget. The only major encumbrances remaining to be entered are for our transportation accounts, which account for approximately 4% of our total budget. Other than buying supplies for the pandemic, there are no other major expenditures. Regarding the Coronavirus Relief Funds, a grant application was submitted to the State on 10-1-2020. We were allowed to apply for funds from those categories where the state approved \$706,075 in funding, as outlined below. We are awaiting some further guidance on whether we will be permitted to transfer funding between categories as expenses are incurred. Mr. Masciana said that if we receive the \$706,705, it will make the budget close to whole.

Elementary & Secondary Emergency School Relief Fund (ESSERF) *	\$85,264		
* 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).			
Coronavirus Relief Funds <i>(We submitted a grant application to the State on 10-1-2020 as updated in the table below. We are awaiting some further guidance on whether we will be permitted to transfer funding between categories as expenses are incurred.)</i>	Estimated Cost Provided to State on 8/11/2020	Amount Approved by State	Grant Application Submitted by CPS 10-1-2020
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	\$11,012
Personnel - Transportation	N/A	\$75,063	\$75,063
Personnel Costs - Total	\$640,000	\$86,075	\$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	
Contracted Services for Cleaning/Health/Safety		N/A	\$457,495
Supplies - Sanitizing, Disinfecting, FFE - School Buildings		N/A	\$100,654
Supplies - PPE - School Buildings		N/A	\$41,851
Supplies - Cleaning/Health/PPE - Transportation		N/A	\$20,000
Non-Personnel Costs - Total	\$1,045,000	\$620,000	\$620,000
Personnel and Non-Personnel Cost Total	\$1,685,000	\$706,075	\$706,075

II. Medical Benefits Update

Mr. Masciana reported that September had high claims of \$1,212,715 against expected claims of \$800,000. The trust fund decreased by \$459,048, leaving a balance in the account as of September 30, 2020 of \$1,916,267, which is 2.40 months of claims reserves.

Mr. Masciana said it is a disturbing trend this year; they are seeing high claims not hitting the stop-loss amount. There are quite a few employees who have had non-COVID illnesses and surgeries. He noted that when they put together the 2021-22 budget, they will need to increase the fund contribution.

2. PRESENTATIONS

Maura Esposito, the Health Director from Chesprocott reported that there have been 228 positive Coronavirus cases in Cheshire and the last fatality was reported on May 27th. She and her seven staff members who cover Cheshire, Wolcott and Region 16 have been very busy. The current age group of people testing positive are 20-40 year olds. They have been doing extensive contact tracing and are working very closely with all schools and nurses. Right now, Cheshire is experiencing an uptick in cases. She reviewed the few cases that have occurred in Cheshire Public Schools, and explained how they did the contact tracing and quarantine protocols. She noted that Cheshire Public Schools is very prepared and very organized which makes her job easier. She said she shares the Superintendent's goal to keep all of the students in school.

Ms. Esposito said, right now, communities are beginning to open up, and that is the culprit for increased cases. Most positive cases are the result of small events such as dinners or family get-togethers. She said she emphasizes wearing masks and social distancing. Transmission is also happening when people are asymptomatic. Common symptoms currently are runny nose, congestion and headache. She said all she can suggest is limiting time and exposure with people. She said health officials have been meeting twice per week in preparation for a vaccine. Dr. Solan noted that students are being very responsible in school have been incredible about wearing masks.

Mr. Grippo said he came to the meeting hoping to find that we could add students to the schools, but that does not seem to be the correct path right now. He asked if her recommendation would be to stay on the current course. Ms. Esposito said Cheshire has had a significant number of cases in the last few weeks. She also noted they are doing a great deal more testing now. She said she thinks it will be getting worse in the next few weeks.

Ms. Ham asked about Cheshire's hospitalization and severity of cases and what has to happen to get us back to "normal." Ms. Ham said she looks at the fallout of living behind masks for kids and wonders if we are still living by the events of the spring. She said she wonders if we are overdoing it right now because the numbers are lower. Ms. Esposito

said right now, fortunately, the symptoms are mild with runny nose and congestion, like allergies. Many students are out of school and being tested because they are exhibiting the mild symptoms. The policy is they can only come back if they have received a negative test. However, if they are quarantining because they were exposed, they still cannot return until after the 14-day quarantine time has expired, even with a negative test. She noted that she doesn't make the rules, she takes her direction from the Department of Public Health, who takes their direction from the CDC. She said, right now we are seeing cases going up, but not fatalities, but we do not know what the long term effects of this disease are. She understands that this is hard, but everyone has to follow the rules in order to get the numbers down.

Dr. Solan explained that state guidance states that the indicator for making decisions for reopening of schools is a low number of cases. Less than 10 new cases per 100,000 population, would favor in-person learning. The map being released by the state today shows Cheshire at 5-9 cases per 100,000. A moderate rate to move toward hybrid learning is 10-25 cases per 100,000 and we are moving in that direction. He said when they opened school they examined mitigation strategies and realized at the high school level, they could not spread out 1,400 students. Mrs. Esposito added that even when the schools are closed, there are still sporting events taking place, making this very challenging.

Ms. Harrigan asked if it is safe to have meetings in our schools. Ms. Esposito answered that it all depends on the spacing in the room. The safest place is outside and social distancing 6 feet apart. She said wearing and keeping a mask on is the most important thing that people can do to control this virus. She noted many people are catching the virus from being too close to others and taking their mask off to eat.

Mr. Masciana added that the tents are scheduled to remain in place through November 6th. The issue with the tents is the cold weather. They may be able to continue using them through Thanksgiving, but are now planning for what to do when they cannot go outside anymore. It will be a challenge.

Board members thanked Ms. Esposito for everything she and her staff of 7 have done from the very start of the pandemic.

Mr. White asked about winter sports. Dr. Solan said CIAC released a tentative schedule today but, CIAC also said no winter sport has been approved to date. Practices can begin on November 21st with contests beginning on December 7th. Mr. White asked if there is anything that can be done to minimize the risk in youth sports. Ms. Esposito said it is very challenging because they are run by volunteers. She has had several COVID positive coaches and several students who are out on quarantine because of sports. She said parents need to understand there is a risk if they allow their children to play.

Dr. Solan said we have 3 positive cases in the schools right now and are doing better than most communities. Mr. Grippo asked, if cases increase to the moderate level, can we

continue to use the mitigation strategies, or do we need to follow the positive case indicator. Dr. Solan said, no, we are not forced to follow the guidance. There are other variables that go into the decision. Ms. Esposito said that this is so contagious and they are finding once one family is positive, it goes through the entire family.

3. **AUDIENCE**

Dr. Solan reported that he received about four emails asking when we could get back full time learning. About eight emails were received from Cheshire High School parents, regarding the hybrid schedule. He said it is a challenging situation and they are switching to more synchronous instruction, meaning students who are home are watching more live instruction. At Monday's Curriculum Committee meeting, much time will be devoted to this topic. The Superintendent said they will be surveying parents and Dr. Gadd will be hosting calls to hear parent feedback. He thanked the parents who emailed and provided feedback.

4. **(Continued)**

B. **PERSONNEL**

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

Mr. White reported that the committee met the prior evening and discussed three topics - the Superintendent's goals and objectives, the administrators' union contract and the teachers' union contract.

The Superintendent reviewed his goals of social emotional learning including the work with SERC, communications around the district website, surveying the community and our district goal and vision setting.

Mr. White said they have developed SMART goals. Mr. Perugini discussed how he feels it is important to be able to see the analytics from the website. Mr. White said he would like one goal to be to give parents some idea or a guide of where their children are supposed to be at their grade level. Parents are concerned that their children are falling behind.

II. **Discussion/Approval of Contract between the Cheshire Board of Education and the Cheshire Administrative Personnel.**

He said they went through a lengthy process with this union with 5 formal and several informal meetings. This group's salaries are not as competitive as their peers, but their insurance benefits are favorable. They are recommending minor language adjustments that are grounded in legal updates. The wage increases for each of the three years are: 1.3% (21-22), 2.2% (22-23), and 2.58% (23-24). When you factor in the step, the total is 1.75% (21-22), 2.5% (22-23), and 2.65% (23-24). The insurance co-shares this year is 10%. It will increase over the next three years to 11%, 12.5% and 14%. After next year, the union will no longer be eligible for the HMO or PPO plans. CAP members will receive an additional \$1,000 toward their 403B retirement plan. The administrative

group has met and ratified this contract. After the Board of Education approves the contract, it will then go to the Town Council who can either approve, reject or take no action on the contract. If they do not act, the contract will go into effect after 30 days.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan, seconded by Mr. Grippo.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the collective bargaining agreement with the Cheshire Administrative Personnel for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Dr. Solan and Chairman Perugini thanked the administrators for working with the Board. Mr. Perugini added that it is a fair agreement for both administrators and the district.

B. PLANNING

I. Report on Meeting Held September 23, 2020.

Mr. Martelli, Chair of the Planning Committee, reported on the meeting held September 23, 2020. He said the bulk of the meeting revolved around the Humiston building and how it would be used in the future. Mr. Masciana said the maintenance costs have been about \$85,760 per year for the past 2 years (\$48,102 recurring and \$37,658 non-recurring). He said Humiston is seen as an important school building for the alternative high school and central offices for the Board of Education. Costs are not out of line for like buildings, but significant renovations would need to be made to bring it up to code compliance.

The Committee also discussed the District Solar Energy Project. The Planning Committee members met with Dave Newman from ECG Engineering at their meeting on February 24, 2020 and then received a proposal to conduct a review of possible energy projects including solar carport installations. The committee will plan to have a meeting with Michael Sahm of ECG in a few weeks. To date, no funds have been expended for this project.

C. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held October 6, 2020

Mr. Grippo explained that the Committee reviewed Policy #6141.328 which is being recommended to be rescinded. Dr. Solan explained that this policy was in effect for those students who were using their own device while on our Wi-Fi network. Currently, all students have been given district devices and are no longer allowed to use their own devices

on our network, making this policy obsolete. The Committee had an extensive discussion regarding Policy #4115.7 - Termination of Employment, which Mr. White asked to review. The Committee concluded they do not have enough information yet regarding the FOIA law, union hearing regulations and what is permissible to be released to the public. After Dr. Solan receives more information from our Board attorney, the Committee will continue discussions at their November meeting. Committee members began a review of two bylaws regarding electronic meetings and attendance at electronic meetings. Members previously discussed having virtual meetings going into the future, but Dr. Solan informed them that virtual meetings are allowed now, only by the Governor's Executive Order. Once the order expires, boards will be required to hold all meetings in-person. The other bylaw discussed voting and if a member's vote could be counted if they were not physically present. Mr. Grippo said these bylaws are only under consideration and discussions will continue at a future meeting.

Mr. White added that regarding the policy of terminations, his view is that separation agreements and suspensions should be publically shared. Mr. Perugini added that the Waterbury Board of Education does this. He said he was approached by a local reporter asking why we do not post the information.

II. Rescission of Policy #6141.328 – Bring Your Own Device.

MOTION by Mr. Grippo, seconded by Ms. Harrigan.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education rescind Policy #6141.328 – Bring Your Own Device."*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

D. SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Martelli reported they had a meeting on October 5th at Highland School. Colliers gave a presentation. At the time of the meeting they had not received the enrollment report from Milone and McBroom, but they did receive that last night. It will be discussed at their November meeting. The Committee discussed renovation versus new construction of buildings. He noted November will be a very busy month. The project schedule is still in flux, but they do have a deadline of June 30, 2021 to submit a project to the State of Connecticut. They would need to get this to the Town Council in March. He said there is a community outreach and communication plan subcommittee that is being co-chaired by Mr. Gusenburg. The Committee has asked the entire Board to attend the next School Modernization Committee meeting being held in November.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Mr. Perugini, seconded by Mr. Grippo.

***MOVED** that the Board of Education approve the minutes from the meeting held on September 17, 2020.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously, 7-0.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

- Dr. Solan gave highlights of events from the prior week. He reported that Cheshire High School Senior, Hailey Faulk, held a 100th birthday parade for three WWII Veterans from Cheshire. There was an escorted parade to each of our schools where students came out outside and waved flags for the Veterans.
- Tracy Hussey, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, will be leaving Cheshire on November 1st. They are in the process of interviewing for that position and will have an update for the Board soon.
- Highland School has been identified as a Special Olympics Unified Champion School. This is the first elementary school in Connecticut to receive this recognition. They were featured on the ESPN website for this recognition.
- The Cheshire High School Girls Swim Team won a special online competition through CIAC to name the greatest Connecticut sports dynasty of all time.
- Dr. Solan noted that this past week he shared a revision to the calendar adding some early dismissals for staff collaboration. He said teaching students in person and at home at the same time takes collaboration. Everyone is prepared up to this point, but to maintain quality and to sustain quality teaching, they need to provide additional planning time. He said he understands this is very challenging for parents. The Superintendent explained that if they are back in school full-time or all students are remotely learning full-time, they will not need the early dismissal days. They are needed if we are on the current system of some students who are attending in-person and some students who are remotely learning.

Audience via CPSCOV1D19@cheshire.k12.ct.us

Dr. Solan said he received about 12 emails regarding the hybrid schedule, mostly from freshman parents. He said they have increased their synchronous teaching. As he mentioned, this will be discussed in more detail at the upcoming Curriculum Committee Meeting. They will also be surveying parents to gain more perspective.

Another question received was regarding tents at Cheshire High School. He said the weather has been very cooperative. He said it does not make sense to put up more tents now, when we will have to take them down in early November.

Mr. Perugini said he received an email with a parent's concern regarding the early dismissals and less time in school. He asked where he should direct parents who have concerns. Dr. Solan said if a student is struggling in a particular class, reach out to the teacher, if it is multiple classes, they should reach out to the school counselor.

Mr. Grippo asked why there are study halls in this hybrid schedule. Dr. Solan said the schedule was built with study halls included. If they decided to do away with study halls, there are not enough teachers, or money to hire more teachers, to teach more classes. He added that even if they had the funding, there is a shortage of teachers right now because of COVID. Students can get support during those study hall periods.

Mr. Martelli said there are many unhappy families in Cheshire right now. He spoke to one woman who said her student has only 10 hours of in-classroom instruction each week. Dr. Solan agreed that this is not a good thing. He said this is the same scenario for every district, not just Cheshire. He noted some schools are worse. He said this is why they are trying to add more synchronous instruction. He did note that the 10 hours is in class. Beyond that, students are assigned work to be completed while they are out of the classroom.

Mr. White said he likes the idea of having a guide for parents, to provide parents with an idea of where their child should be throughout the year. Dr. Solan said that would be very challenging. Ms. Silano said they have parent conferences to discuss the student progress with parents, progress reports, report cards and the option to sign into PowerSchool to monitor their student's work progress.

Mr. White said students have missed so much school. He questioned how students can progress one year to the next without receiving a full schedule of instruction. Ms. Silano added they are using the acceleration strategy to be sure students are moving forward.

Ms. Ham said parents are concerned that with how Connecticut students will be able to compete with other states that are more "open".

Mr. Grippo said it appears we will be in this situation until we have a vaccine. He said he would like to hear a plan for going forward for the remainder of the year. He asked if we are ready should the K-8 classes have to go hybrid as well. Dr. Solan said yes, they are planning how they can evolve going forward.

8. OLD BUSINESS

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson's Update**

Mr. Perugini reported that he had a Zoom call with the Cheshire Coalition for Change a few weeks back. He praised the former students and said he walked them through our process and curriculum. He doesn't think we are as far apart on racism and equity as we thought. These students graduated in 2015 and we have made many changes since that time. He asked them to share their top three goals. He said they are also very much interested in hearing about the SERC presentation. He suggested that after the SERC presentation, there is a forum held with the Coalition and the Board.

B. **Announcement of Upcoming Meetings**

Mr. Perugini announced the upcoming committee meetings. There will be an Elementary School Showcase on November 5, 2020. Also he announced the next business meeting will be held virtually on November 19, 2020.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Perugini and seconded by Ms. Ham, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session including Superintendent Solan, Chief Operating Officer Vincent Masciana and Assistant Superintendent Silano to discuss union negotiations at 10:40 p.m. Executive Session adjourned at approximately 11:00 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: 10/30/2020.