

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY NOVEMBER 19, 2020 AT 7:30 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/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.

C. Student Representatives.

Superintendent Solan explained the student representatives are selected by their level of involvement at the high school in student activities or sports and on the basis of academic excellence. The Student Report is presented to the Board at its business meeting, the second meeting of the month, and includes information on academic, extra-curricular and social activities taking place at Cheshire High School. The Student Representatives for the 2020-2021 school year are Lucy Helene and Joshua Goldstein.

Lucy Helene is a dedicated student, hardworking employee and passionate volunteer. She is highly active in her school and community. Lucy has managed to balance her work, athletics, academic, and community service incredibly well. Throughout high school, she has pushed herself to take a rigorous curriculum in a wide range of subject areas. She will complete high school with multiple AP courses and an impressive 4.425 GPA. Her leadership ability and experience is inspiring and varied. Most notable is her volunteer efforts at the Benhaven School, a private school with children with autism and other disabilities. Since sixth grade, Lucy has volunteered at the school. She loves participating in activities with the students and helping to fundraise. Most importantly, she effortlessly instills the ideals of equality with her peers and the students at the school. Her impressive character continues into her roles as National Honor Society President, Student Liaison for Cheshire Education Foundation and others. This summer she was called upon to represent the student population in the discussion and planning for opening schools this year. Lucy is always willing to help out. She brings great ideas to the table regardless of the population sitting with her. The Cheshire

Community has relied upon her insight, compassion and dedication for years now. She will be missed when she leaves for college.

Joshua Goldstein is a wonderful young man who is responsible, dedicated, respectful and inclusive. Academically, Josh has done phenomenally well throughout high school. His impressive transcript shows his dedication to his academic success and to his love of learning. Josh is in the National Honor Society, Science National Honor Society, and he is in the top 5 percentile of his class! The majority of Josh's extracurricular activities are focused around connecting with peers with special needs through Best Buddies. Josh has an inspiring friendship with his buddy as their relationship has grown over the years and both students have gained so much from the friendship they share. Josh has also been involved in Unified Sports, Unified Theater, and volunteer work with the Therapeutic Recreation Summer Camp through Cheshire Park and Recreation, as a camp counselor. Throughout the school year, he is involved in numerous after school activities including afternoon therapeutic recreation: club, yard games, swimming, soccer, basketball, and upbeat athlete. These activities are meaningful to him because Josh believes that everybody should have the same opportunity to complete various activities, and a disability should not hold anyone back. In addition, Josh has volunteered at Yale New Haven Hospital as a patient aid, where he interacted with inpatients at Smilow Cancer Hospital. He loved the bonds that he was able to build during this life changing experience, which also helped to build his confidence in interacting with strangers. I know Josh will continue to do amazing things in his future.

The student reps gave their first report of the year, providing updates on the hybrid learning model, new technology in the classrooms, sports and current events. Board members welcomed the student representatives.

2. **AUDIENCE**

None.

3. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held October 19, 2020.**

Michelle Lebrun-Griffin and Michelle Weaver from SERC presented an overview of the district plans to engage in equity work over the course of this school year as part of the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiative. In this first phase of work, SERC will work the Strategic Planning Initiative Committee, Administrative Council, and begin Student Focus Groups. Embedded in the work of this phase will also be equity policy and plan development. Next, Marlene Silano (Assistant Superintendent), Kevin Hanlon (K-8 Curriculum Coordinator), Tom Lewoc (Technology

Integration Specialist), and Scott Conway (Technology Integration Specialist) described and demonstrated the set-up for the broadcasting classrooms. Some of the equipment noted included the wearable microphone by the teacher, the ceiling-mounted microphone, the ceiling speaker system, and the webcam.

Kevin Hanlon shared the results of this year's fall Reading Inventory. The report shared a side-by-side comparison of the 2019 fall results as compared to the 2020 fall results. Additionally, the report indicated the growth of students from the 2019 fall administration of the Reading Inventory to the fall 2020 administration of the reading inventory. Dr. Mary Gadd, Principal of Cheshire High School, provided details of the design and approach for the High School Collegiate Model currently being utilized at Cheshire High School. Some details included information regarding asynchronous/synchronous activities, regular/hybrid schedule, class period length and details, teacher/student surveys to take stock of and improve practice, and upcoming parent forums.

Dr. Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal of Cheshire High School, presented changes to the Program of Study for the 2021-2022 school year. Mrs. Leslie Paier, Business Department Chair, and Sean McKeown, Career and Technical Education Department Chair, shared in the presentation specific to their departments. The proposed changes to the 2021-22 Program of Study Changes include:

- New courses: AP Seminar Capstone, Introduction to Business, Manufacturing CAD/CAM, and Manufacturing Fundamentals
- Deleted courses: Business Ownership, International Business, and Research and Design
- Courses with level changes (all adding dual enrollment designations): Advanced Personal Finance, Accounting I, Computer Essentials/Word Processing

Mrs. Leslie Paier, Business Department Chair, reviewed recommendations for three textbooks to be utilized within the Business Department Curriculum. Specifically, each textbook is associated with the new courses: Paradigm Benchmark Series - Microsoft Word 2013 or 2016 Levels 1 and 2, by Nita Rutkoskuy; BUSN 11 - Introduction to Business, by Marce Kelly & Chuck Williams; and Personal Finance - Turning Money Into Wealth, by Arthur J. Keown.

II. **Notice of Textbooks for Public Review Prior to Approval.**

Ms. Ham reported that in accordance with Board Policy, the following textbooks will be available for public viewing* in the Office of Curriculum

and Instruction at 29 Main Street from October 20, 2020 through approval and adoption at the Board of Education meeting on December 17, 2020.

**Due to the closure of the Board of Education building to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic, public viewing of the textbooks in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction will be made available upon written or verbal request.*

Textbook	Publisher	Grade
Personal Finance: Turning Money into Wealth	Pearson	11-12
BUSN 11: Introduction to Business	Cengage Learning, Inc.	9-12
Paradigm Benchmark Series - Microsoft Word 2013 or 2016 Levels 1 and 2	Paradigm	9-12

III. Educator Evaluation and Support Plan – Flexibilities for Implementing the Guidelines for Educator Evaluation for the 2020-21 School Year.

Ms. Silano explained that all Superintendents received information from the Commissioner of Education about adopting flexibilities for the current teacher and administrator evaluation plan. In response to this, they pulled together their 19-member Educator Evaluation Plan and Professional Learning Council, consisting of 4 administrations and 15 teachers. The group held three meetings where people could drop in with questions and discussions. The intention of the flexibility is to respond to the new realities of school. Rather than having more formal observations, that require pre and post meetings, they were able to suggest limiting the formal observations in favor of more frequent informal observations and also getting rid of the summative evaluations at end of the year and focusing the evaluation system and some concrete feedback for teachers. The group met, discussed, looked at and reviewed the flexibilities that the Commissioner had recommended. The general consensus was that it seems like a workable and realistic model to use. She said they shared their findings with the Superintendent. The district applied for the flexibilities and it was granted by the State Department of Education. She said they wanted to be sure they were informing this Board of these changes. Ms. Silano explained various ways that staff will be engaging with parents and students.

B. FINANCE

I. Report on the Finance Committee meeting held November 9, 2020 Finance Report.

Mr. Masciana reported that as of October 31, 2020, the budget for the 20-21 fiscal year is \$74,593,926. \$57,689,015, or 77.3% of the budget has been expended and encumbered through the first four months of the year including the encumbrances for the largest account categories, namely

payroll and transportation accounts. They are projecting to end the year, in balance. Mr. Masciana reviewed extraordinary expenses and offsets.

2020-21 COVID Related Expenditures and Revenues as of 11-9-2020	
<i>Key Assumption - School remains in session for the full calendar year. CHS remains in Hybrid and all other schools operate on a full day schedule.</i>	
Description of Major Potential Costs due to Covid-19	Estimated Cost for Full Year
Contracted intra-day cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting for 10 months	\$300,000
Food Service Program - Revenue Loss (assumes participation increases over current low levels)	\$300,000
A/V Installation to enable 59 Broadcast Classrooms	\$191,994
Tent and Table rentals - September 8th through November 20th	\$159,000
Isolation Room Monitors (assumes \$15K per month ending in March)	\$135,000
PPE, Sanitizing, Disinfecting supplies for 8 additional months @ \$15K/month	\$120,000
Removal, 10 months storage, and return of classroom furniture and equipment	\$98,410
Bus Monitors (assumes no additional bus monitor costs for remainder of year)	\$40,000
Potential Cost Total	\$1,344,404
Revenue and Cost Variance Offsets	
<i>Less Coronavirus Relief Fund Reimbursements</i>	<i>-\$706,075</i>
<i>Less Elementary & Secondary Emergency School Relief Fund (ESSERF) (For Broadcast classrooms)</i>	<i>-\$85,264</i>
<i>Less Unexpended Education Funds Account from 2019-20 Budget Carryover</i>	<i>-\$200,000</i>
<i>Less Expected Transportation Savings</i>	<i>-\$50,000</i>
Potential Cost Offset Total	<u>-\$1,041,339</u>
Net Cost Overage to be offset through budget savings or additional funding	\$303,065

Regarding Food Services, Mr. Masciana explained that 79% of school districts are in the same situation as Cheshire, regarding food services losses. He said the Board will have to make up the difference, but we have already begun mitigation strategies. Mr. Masciana explained some of the mitigation strategies that have been put in place, as were discussed in the Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Masciana reported they should be able to cover the \$303,065 by reducing expenditures in other line items. He said they will continue to monitor the situation and update the Board.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Mr. Masciana reported October claims were \$1,045,000, noting that for three out of the four months of this fiscal year, claims exceeded

\$1,000,000. He said this is unprecedented. On a year-to-date basis, \$4,312,096 has been paid out in claims. As of October 31, 2020, the medical trust fund balance is \$1,633,387. This is about 2.04 months of claims reserves, basing it on the expected \$800,000 of monthly claims, not the year's average claims of \$1,078,024. Regarding COVID related claims, since the beginning of the pandemic, we spent approximately \$54,396 on claims related to COVID-19. Of this amount, \$53,800 was for testing and \$547 was for treatment. He said there have been about 700 tests and only about 10 positive cases of COVID-19.

Ms. Hallen asked if there will be any stop-loss reimbursement. Mr. Masciana answered, not yet, there are no claims that have risen to the \$175,000 level. He said normally those are seen in January.

C. **PLANNING**

I. **Report on Meeting Held October 22, 2020.**

Mr. Martelli reported that the meeting was focused on solar power. ECG Engineering, P.C., who was retained to look at our building for facilities and grounds, presented a report entitled *Cheshire PV Opportunities - Potential Incentives*. They reported on each property and where there could potentially be solar installation, as well as programs and grant submission deadlines. Mr. Martelli said they focused on the Zero Emissions Renewable Energy Program and how that can be utilized by the district. He said they were looking at an installation on property, not on a roof. Mr. White added that we will have schools that will require electricity, even with the School Modernization Plan.

D. **POLICY**

I. **Report on Meeting Held November 10, 2020.**

The Committee discussed the following policies and decided to continue discussions at a future meeting: #4118.231/4218.231 Personnel – Certified/Non-Certified – Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco and #5131.6 Students – Alcohol Use, Drugs, and Tobacco.

4117.5 Termination of Employment - Regarding the policy on termination, Mr. White said he would like the public to be notified if an employee is terminated or suspended. He said the Superintendent will provide an update to the Board which includes all hires and terminations. If there is discipline, the information would be anonymized.

II. **First Reading of Bylaws**

Mr. Grippo reported the Committee reviewed two bylaws and the Committee is bringing them forward for a first reading this evening.

Bylaw 9321.2 - Time, Place, Notification, Type of Meetings-Electronic Board of Education Meetings - This policy is provided by CABA to give guidance to Boards regarding holding Electronic Board meetings during the pandemic. Boards are only allowed to meet virtually while under the Governor's Executive Order. Once the Orders expire, we will no longer be able to hold electronic meetings.

Bylaw 9325.43 - Attendance at Meetings via Electronic Communications - If adopted, this optional bylaw would allow a Board member to attend a meeting electronically as long as the stated guidelines are followed, and the member has received permission from the Board Chair.

[Note: Ms. Harrigan was having technical difficulties and was disconnected at various points throughout this meeting]

E. SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE.

Mr. Martelli reported that the School Modernization Committee met November 18, 2020. He shared a presentation (on file) from Milone and McBroom. The presentation outlined enrollment figures and elementary building capacities. Mr. Martelli shared the four initial draft scenarios. Mr. Perugini added that these are just drafts, a place to start. Mr. Martelli agreed, noting the committee meets two times each month. Mr. Martelli shared some rough costs for a new elementary school with 90,000 square feet is \$37 - 45 million after State reimbursement. A new middle school would be \$75 - 90 million. He said they are still looking at renovation costs at Cheshire High School. Mr. Martelli shared the project timeline at this time, assuming a project is approved, it would go out to referendum in November of 2021, with a new school online around 2025.

Mr. Grippo said he watched the meeting in full. He said he was surprised to hear that he was quoted as saying a middle school was not necessary. He said those comments were taken out of context and added that anyone who is interested in what he actually said can watch the October 21st meeting. His comments about a middle school were whether or not it is feasible for the town. He said the work being done to date is great, but he wants to see more because he is not convinced about any project yet.

Mr. Perugini said the Board will be weighing in on any plan that comes out of the SMC Committee. Ms. Hallen said there is clearly a great deal of work still to be done. She added that this is reminiscent of their Master Facility Plan from a few years back. Whatever scenario is chosen, it is going to be a huge cost to the Town and costs will just continue to go up. Mr. Perugini and Mr. Martelli said that something will need to be done because elementary enrollment is growing beyond capacity. Mr. Martelli added that hopefully, after all of this work, all parties can agree to a project and it can be put to the public for a vote.

F. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Ms. Ham and seconded by Ms. Hallen

MOVED *that the Board of Education approve the minutes of the meetings held on October 15, 2020 and November 5, 2020.*

VOTE: The Motion passed 6-0-1 (Ms. Harrigan abstained due to technical issues).

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Hallen reported that correspondence was sent to the Board, Superintendent and Cheshire High School Principal, Mary Gadd. The correspondence was from a group of parents at Cheshire High School. Their concern is that students need to be in school more often, and the Wednesday that is “all-remote” for students could be better used for in-person learning.

Ms. Hallen said the Board also received correspondence from the teachers at Norton School requesting that schools be changed to fully remote learning between Thanksgiving and the Winter Break for safety reasons and staff shortages due to the pandemic.

6. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr. Solan reported that there were a few COVID-19 emails. The email topics included a suggestion to go fully remote in all grades; requests to keep schools open if numbers support that plan; a question about air purifiers, and a question regarding the maximum level of community spread of COVID-19 that allows for the safe operation of in-person education. He said he will discuss the majority of these questions items in his presentation. Regarding air purifiers, the Superintendent said the Department of Health does not support them.

Dr. Solan reviewed how a determination is made to go fully remote. He said they review the current district data, the CDC considerations along with guidance from the Health Department, will help to determine when a district will go fully remote learning. This past week, Cheshire had 34 positive cases per 100,000. This is a 5.1% positivity rate over the last 14 days. Using the CDC considerations we are considered low risk. He said maintaining in-school instruction is best for students. Other factors taken into account are staffing and the mental and wellbeing of our students and staff. He said they survey students and staff to see how everyone is doing. They also factor in that parents need to go to work. The first priority is to make sure our environment is safe. He said we have been working non-stop and are constantly monitoring the situation. He said he knows

other districts are making different decisions, but they are using their own community data, not Cheshire's data. He emphasized that our community needs to continue being safe during the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. He stressed that it is very important for anyone traveling to follow the state's travel and quarantine guidelines.

Dr. Solan next reviewed the parent and student survey results (on file). The surveys were given to students in grades 3-12 and all parents. He said the results are very important to help determine where they are doing well and where there is a need for improvement.

Dr. Solan noted that he is required to share the District Profile and Performance report. He shared the State website where the Board and public can view the report and reviewed what data is summarized. Reports for every district in Connecticut are available on that site.

Mr. Perugini said there is a group of over 100 high school parents who submitted a petition stating that they are not happy with the hybrid learning model at the high school. He said he thought that the negative comments on the surveys would have been larger. He said the responses were not reflective of the petition. Dr. Solan responded that Dr. Gadd had several parent meetings to address some of the parent concerns. He said they are always looking to improve. This year has certainly been a challenge. He encouraged any parent with a question or concern to reach out to their principal.

Mr. Perugini said that one of the parent letters had asked about changing the hybrid model to include Wednesday as a learning day instead of a "deep cleaning" day. Dr. Solan said Wednesday is not a cleaning day, it is a day where all classes meet remotely for a shorter period of time.

Mr. Perugini asked what is preventing students at the high school from having three in-person days and two remote. Dr. Solan said their goal is for every student to have a connection with each teacher 3 days a week. He said they can only do that if they are meeting for all of their classes on that Wednesday.

Mr. Grippo said, in regard to the survey results, that he was alarmed at the number of students who said they do not feel connected. Dr. Solan said they worry about that not only during the pandemic, but always, and they work with their mental health professionals and teachers to put programs in place to train staff to recognize when students need help.

Mr. Martelli asked if they could explore making Wednesday an in-person day per parent requests. Dr. Solan said they will evaluate that option to see if they could move in that direction.

Mr. White said, in regard to the Norton teacher letter, that he is glad that the teachers spoke up but he thinks the Superintendent has been making good decisions in

collaboration with the Health Department. He asked the Superintendent if he could survey parents to find out the percentage of parents who are working for home. Dr. Solan said absent of an entire State shutdown, parents will have problems. He said, unfortunately, he cannot make a decision based on parents and their schedules. It has to be based on what is safe for students and staff in our buildings. If we do go fully remote, we will have to determine how we can support our parents.

Ms. Ham said she is very concerned with the high school model and commented on the parents who signed the petition. Dr. Solan said he appreciates the comments but he has to look at what is best for the students and staff regarding cohort and mitigation strategies and also how they provide instruction.

Mr. Grippo asked what percentage of students are switching to remote learning through January 2nd. Dr. Solan replied that he does not know because parents have until the end of this week to make that decision. Dr. Solan said the numbers fluctuate but if he had to guess, it is trending towards the 15%.

Mr. Grippo asked if it would be possible to centralize all of the remote learners together. Dr. Solan said they have looked into that to see if it is possible. They would have to add teachers, so there is a fiscal impact. The other impact is that the students are no longer with the teacher they have had for 12 weeks. In August, there was only a small percentage of remote learners, and the thought at the time was that the entire district would be going remote by September. He said right now, it is not in the best interest of the children to switch unless we have to. Mr. Grippo complimented the teachers who are teaching both remote and in-person simultaneously. Dr. Solan agreed and said it is very challenging and said that he worries about the mental health of our teachers. He said they are looking for ways to support them. He said this is not just a Cheshire problem, it is all over the place.

Mr. White said regarding Wednesdays at the high school, he feels in-person is better than remote.

Mr. Perugini commented on the letter from the Norton teachers. He said the letter is very well written and he appreciates what the teachers are saying, but right now, the numbers at Norton are very good. He said the teachers are looking at the community and asked what CPS is doing to flatten the curve. Mr. Perugini said he thinks it is obvious what CPS is doing, but questions what the community is doing. He read a portion of the letter where the teachers say they are relying on the community to keep them healthy. Mr. Perugini said the Board commends and supports the teachers for their dedication and everything they do. He said right now, there is no plan to go fully remote. He told the Superintendent that he thinks he is doing a great job, this has not been easy.

Mr. Grippo asks if we will mandate people to get the vaccine. Dr. Solan answered, only if it is mandated by the State.

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

None.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ms. Hallen, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 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: December 10, 2020.