

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING  
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON OCTOBER 21, 2021 AT 7:30 PM**

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Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Faith Ham, Anne Harrigan, Andrew Martelli, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Kathryn Hallen-Secretary

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer

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**1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:30 P.M.**

- A. Roll for Quorum. The roll was called and a quorum was 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 announced that there are technical issues this evening preventing the meeting from being broadcast.
- C. Student Representatives. Annabelle Kailan and Rowan Scassellati, student representatives for the 2021/22 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School including Music in Motion and a recent football game where pink-out shirts were sold to benefit mobile mammograms for Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The representatives reported that October is Bullying Prevention month. Students saw a presentation on how to recognize cyber bullying and bullying in relationships. They learned about the difference between being an upstander and a bystander. Annabelle reported that yesterday, 34 students including herself and Rowan, were inducted into the National Honor Society. The culinary classes prepared a great breakfast for students and parents at the event. The representatives also reported on sports standings and upcoming events such as the Cheshire Food Drive. Rowan reported that a program called Lunch Buddies, run by Mr. Lee and the Peer Educator Class, will be taking place this year after a two year hiatus. CHS students visit elementary schools during lunch and recess, and they mentor the students reinforcing sportsmanship and kindness. Other upcoming events include the Halloween parade and Lights of Hope.

Board members discussed the bullying presentation in further detail with the students. Board members thanked the students for their thorough report.

**2. PRESENTATIONS**

- A. School Partnership Award – Highland School  
Mr. Martelli, the Board of Education Representative to Highland School, presented Shelly Kelly, the School Partnership recipient for Highland Elementary School, to the Board. He said that Ms. Kelly has been an exceptional volunteer and community contributor to Highland for many years. Over the past five years, Shelly has served as the President of the Highland PTO.

She was instrumental in expanding PTO-sponsored after-school clubs to Highland students. These clubs include Chess Club, Brick/LEGO Club, and STEM Club to name a few. In addition, Shelly worked tirelessly with a core team of volunteers to plan a variety of family events including the Ice Cream Social, Family Dinner Night, and the Winter Ball. Ms. Kelly worked closely with administration over the year to guide the PTO in supporting teachers and school-based initiatives focusing on kindness, gratitude, and inclusion. Ms. Kelly's son, Jonathan, graduated Highland in June 2021, and has moved up to Dodd Middle School ending her time as Co-President of the Highland PTO. He said on behalf of the Cheshire Board of Education and entire Highland community, they would like to thank Shelly for her service and for going above and beyond for the students of Cheshire.

3. **AUDIENCE**

None.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held October 18, 2021**

The Committee received proposed changes to the Cheshire High School Program of Study. The Committee heard from the Cheshire High School Science Department Chair, Julie Baker, and the CTE Department Chair, Sean McKeown, who recommended two new textbooks.

Under Informational Items, the Committee learned that this year's eighth grade class is taking their Washington DC field trip from May 25th through 27th. They will follow whatever protocols are in place at the time.

She reported that thirteen teacher-leaders, five building administrators, Kevin Hanlon, and Marlene Silano attended a three-day Coaching Institute with Partners for Educational Leadership. The emphasis on coaching is part of the district plan to reinvest back in our own professionals. All of the coaches are current teachers/teacher-leaders in the school district from elementary, middle and high school levels. The team that attended the institute will meet monthly as a community of practice throughout the year.

The Committee heard an overview of this year's English Learner (EL) enrollment, which has increased to 93 students, which is up from 38 six years ago. The primary non-english languages in our district are Spanish, Mandarin, Albanian, Korean, and Arabic. Ms. Ham added that there are 22 languages in our school system.

It was reported that the Flexibilities for Teacher/Administrator Evaluation that were passed by the full Board of Education at a recent meeting were accepted/approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

The Connecticut Science Center has provided professional development to the district this year. Consultants have met with the Elementary RAMs once, as well as with the entire middle school Science Division, to continue to support the shifts to Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). The next sessions for both elementary and middle school groups will be during the week of October 25, 2021. Marlene Silano added that the CT Science Center will begin a lesson study with the Cheshire High School Science Department on November 2nd.

Dr. Gadd presented Five-Year Cheshire High School SAT data. It shows how the 11th grade students performed last year against state benchmarks, and how those results compared to years dating back to 2017. She noted that 2019-2020 was an odd year for SATs and College Board scheduling and test administration. She said the data shows just over 73% of last year's 11th graders scored 480 or above state benchmarks for English, Reading and Writing, placing us 15th out of 18 schools in DRG-B, and 40% scored 530 or above in Math which places us 17th out of 18 in DRG-B. She said they discussed some of the ongoing efforts in the school. Dr. Gadd said this does not reflect what they are seeing in the student's day-to-day lessons.

Dr. Solan said it is tricky to compare year over year because it is a different group of students. That is why we often use cohort data and look for trends over time. He said they are focused on coaching and had a Curriculum Writing Institute over the summer to look at our curriculum. He said part of the bounce forward plan was to bring in math support at the middle and high school levels. In addition, they have spent much time training our current staff to support student learning. They are focused on making sure our students have overall success, not just on the tests. Ms. Silano reviewed some initiatives that have already begun. The Math Interventionist is providing direct student support and the Math Coach is supporting both teachers and students.

Mr. White said he is hearing that there are many strategies being put into place. He said the lower scores are concerning.

Mr. Perugini said he understands SAT's are optional for some schools, so students may not give it their all. Ms. Silano said yes, and some students are taking it multiple times. Dr. Solan said there is no question that we need to improve. We are taking steps and implementing strategies to support our students differently. Ms. Ham said this is discouraging.

They will be looking at PSAT's to try to better understand the scores. She asked Ms. Silano to report back when we get that data.

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

In accordance with Board Policy, it was announced that the following textbooks will be available for public viewing in the Cheshire Public Library and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction through approval and adoption at the Board of Education meeting on November 18, 2021.

Textbook	Publisher	Grades
Inspire Earth Science	McGraw Hill	9
Precision Machining Technology	Cengage	10-12

**B. FINANCE**

**I. Finance Report**

Mr. Masciana reported that we are three months into the 2021-2022 fiscal year and there are no concerns at this point in the year. He said they do have ESSER funding as a backstop if needed, as it relates to the pandemic. Mr. Masciana reported that, as board knows, they have engaged with CLA for the Student Accounts review. The auditors were scheduling appointments with principals and staff who manage student activity accounts. There will be some testing in terms of student activity and a balance report will be issued at the conclusion of the review and shared with the Board.

Mr. Masciana also reported that they are well along with the development of the 2022-2023 budget. They have been working on it since September; all the input has been completed from the schools and the departments.

**II. Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reported that medical benefits claims did come down to \$918,002.51. This is in line with the anticipated \$900,000 per month. Year-to-date, claims have been \$3.19 million. He said that so far, we have 15 claims that hit the \$25,000 or higher threshold, totaling about \$890,000. Roughly, 28% of the \$3.19 million in claims are from claims over \$25,000. That is a little bit higher than what we have seen historically, and definitely lower than what we saw at the high point last year, which was when around 46% of our claims were over the \$25,000 threshold. One of the 15 claims has now exceeded the \$175,000 Stop-Loss threshold and is currently at \$205,000. We know that we will be getting \$35,000 back in stop-loss reimbursement. He said there is a Cigna annual review scheduled for November 9th for the prior fiscal year claims. He added that they provide a tremendous amount of detail for

both the Board and the Town and he will be reporting updates from that report at a future meeting.

Mr. White asked if this audit covers coaching certifications. Dr. Solan said no; a few months before each new season starts, Mr. Trifone reviews every coach and their certification with Dr. Gadd. They send the report to Mr. Masciana and/or me to review and confirm that everything is in order. Dr. Solan said they have been doing this for a year and a half. Dr. Solan added that they had talked, pre COVID, about a review of the high school athletic program. He said they could explore that with CIAC again, if the Board wishes.

**C. PLANNING**

**I. Report on Meeting Held October 13, 2021**

Mr. Martelli reported that a Planning Committee Meeting of the Whole was held at Dodd Middle School on October 13<sup>th</sup>, and the meeting is available online. He said there were many people from the community in attendance and they heard from seven different speakers on both the middle school and the two elementary school plan. He said that Dr. Solan gave a great presentation as to the history of school modernization, the steps that we have been going through, and where we are today with the test fit of the elementary school at the Marion Road parcel and then also about the alternative high school and Central Office potential locations. He said the meeting went really well and they received a lot of great feedback from the community.

**D. POLICY**

**I. Policy Report**

Mr. Grippo reported on the meeting held October 13, 2021 and said that each of the policies being discussed can be found on the district website.

**II. First Reading of Policy**

Mr. Grippo will give a first reading to Policy #5131.911 – Students/Hazing/Bullying. This is a large policy that will need further review. He said there were many changes to the law, but most importantly, there was a change to the definition of bullying itself. Dr. Solan said our attorney is also reviewing this policy.

**III. Second Reading of Policy**

Mr. Grippo reported that the Committee moved Policy #4118.11/4218.11 Nondiscrimination forward for a second reading. There were no changes since the first reading.

**IV. Third Reading and Approval of Policies**

Mr. Grippo reported that Policies #4000.1 Personnel Certified/Non Certified – Title IX and #5145.44 Students – Title IX are being brought forward for a third reading and approval. There have been no changes since the first and second readings.

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

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policies 4000.1 Personnel Certified/Non Certified – Title IX and 5145.44 Students – Title IX and direct the Superintendent to put said policies into immediate effect.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

**E. SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE**

Mr. Martelli reported that the Council held a special meeting focusing only on school modernization on October 14th. At the meeting, presentations were made on the test fits of the Marion Road site with four different layouts of the elementary school on the property, with both the Central Office and alternative high school integrated either into the building or as a standalone structure on the property. He said the Town Manager presented a great app to calculate the overall cost to the average taxpayer. You can input the assessed value of your home or your appraised value of your home as well as your vehicles, and figure out what the implications will be for the elementary school option. The Town Council is focused solely on the elementary school option. He said there were some folks from the public who came and spoke both in favor of, and against, the two plans. Mr. Martelli said his takeaway from the meeting is that they are going to be continuing to look at the different layouts on Marion Road and the overall cost of Central Office being located on Marion Road, or possibly somewhere else in the center of town, and deciding what to do with the Humiston Building and its ADA issues.

Dr. Solan said the original proposal accounts for Darcey closing and the students moving into Highland. That calculation was based on a generic square footage calculator, where they use the number of students divided into the square feet of the building. The challenge is that Highland has several locations that are identified for intensive special education support. You may have five students and eight adults in one room, which throws off the space calculator. The other issue is, when we overlay Birth-to-Three and PreK into that same situation, the square footage changes for some of those specialized programs. Dr. Solan said it is a high priority to develop Educational Specifications (Ed Specs) where a specialist reviews all of the programs that exist for each of the two buildings now, and reviews the space at Highland, to determine if we can fit the Darcey program there. If we cannot, we need to know this now, so costs can be

configured into either the new north-end elementary school or a modification to Highland. Dr. Solan said they will be meeting with Darcey School Principal, Kim Dessert, and Scott Jeffrey, Highland Principal. Another question is Humiston, Central Office and the alternative high school. He said at the suggestion of the Town Council, they will meet with the Economic Development Coordinator to look at various options that might exist locally. Suggestions range everywhere from building a new alternative high school on the grounds of Cheshire High, moving Central Office into leased space, or building a new alternative school and Central Office at the north end site. He added that they are working as expeditiously as possible to gather the right information to help make a good decision.

Mr. Perugini said this is not the first priority of these plans. He said he does not think they should wait for the details of Darcey and Humiston to be fully worked out, they should at least know the cost. He wer are already running into November and the cost and Ed Specs need to be given to the Board soon so we can set a date for a Planning Committee Meeting of the Whole.

Ms. Harrigan said she agreed that they had a lot of information and a lot of community support for the grade 6 to 8 middle School option at the Planning Committee Meeting last week. She said it was quite heartening to hear the discussion because the community clearly wants to be involved in the decision-making process. However, at the Town Council meeting on school modernization the next evening, they were back to discussing only the preferred option of the two elementary schools. She said we are ignoring the community input at our own peril. She said they have no consensus about these two projects. There was no consensus on the School Modernization Committee and they have no consensus on the Board of Education and no consensus on the Town Council. She said four years ago, the Board went through a two-year process very similar to what the School Modernization Committee went through these past two years. She said they hired a consulting firm, went through enrollment projections, and came up with four different proposals to modernize our schools, all to the tune of \$400 million over 20 years, and the Board at that time came to a consensus, complete agreement, that the proposal that we wanted to put forth was to begin with a 6 - 8 middle School. There is no consensus from any of these groups. What scares her, quite frankly, is, that they are not going to be able to get this passed through referendum. She asked how they can make decisions for the people without finding out first, what our community will back and what they will stand behind. She said they represent the voices of the people of Cheshire, and we got an earful last Wednesday night about people wanting to be heard. She said she would like to put forth a motion tonight.

Mr. Perugini said as a Point of Order, there is no motion on tonight's agenda. The proper procedure would be to amend the agenda at the beginning of a meeting. He said he did not know about this before the meeting. He told Ms.

Harrigan that they can discuss this for the next meeting. Ms. Harrigan withdrew her request.

Mr. Perugini said Ms. Harrigan was on the School Modernization Committee for two years, along with Mr. Martelli and himself and there was consensus; it was a 9 to 3 vote in favor of the two elementary school plan. He added that on the Board of Education, there are at least five people who are in favor of the two elementary school plan.

He said they will put this to a vote when the information is back from the Council. He said he is tired of people on this Board and on the Town Council who are making a mockery of the School Modernization Committee's work for two years. He said this plan stands by itself and has been tested repeatedly, and just because some of us do not like the results, it does not mean it is a bad plan. He agreed there was some good feedback last week from the public and some folks have some very compelling cases. He added that people are not looking at all the facts. The Board is elected to make these decisions and put the best plan forward for the public. Mr. Perugini said he is tired of people lying and saying that there has been no public input. He said it is up to everyone to tell the public the truth about what is going on. The lies and the partisanship have taken away from the good work that they are all doing. He noted that a Town Councilor tried to have him and Ms. Harrigan removed from the School Modernization Committee. He also shared that a Town Council member went around the Board and presented an alternate plan. Mr. Perugini added that the public can be assured that when this Board votes on this, they will to have all the facts and they are going to talk about it. He said he knows the seven Board members, including Ms. Hallen, who is absent tonight, are going to do what is right for Cheshire. He said if folks do not like that, they could vote the referendum down. He said they have been getting public input for two years. He said, unfortunately, he has been talking to many residents and there are a large number of folks who do not even know what school modernization is. They are confused; they hear one thing and then see another. They hear \$200 million then \$400 million. Mr. Perugini said he is hearing that the community is concerned about the cost of this project. He said personally, his taxes will go up to \$24,000 a year when all is said and done. He said he is still very invested in the plan, but if the Board can't explain to the average voter the value of what they are getting, nothing is going to pass. He said we also have to get factual information out to the community. He recommends that the Planning Committee meet again in the couple of weeks when they have more information from the Town Council. He is concerned because they still do not have a commitment from the Town Council on Phase I. He apologized to Ms. Harrigan and said this is not about her, and he knows they all want what is best for the Town, but he is tired of people saying there is no public input.

Ms. Harrigan said she has to take issue because she feels she has just been accused of lying, and she does not lie and has never lied on this Board. She said



she is not pushing for one plan over the other when she says she wants to know what the community wants. If we do not find out what the community wants, a plan will not pass referendum. Mr. Perugini said he is not accusing her of lying, but there are people lying about the plan. Ms. Harrigan asked if they could at least look at the 6-8 middle school plan. Mr. Perugini answered that the Town Council is only looking at the two elementary school plan and there is no consensus on this Board to look at other plans. Mr. Grippo and Mr. White both said that they agree with the plan that was chosen by the School Modernization Committee.

After more discussion, Chairman Perugini said he would like to emphasize one more time that it is incumbent upon Board members to communicate the facts of the plan, not opinions. He said the more we confuse the public, the worse is going to be when it comes to referendum.

**F. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES**

None.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** by Mr. Grippo, seconded by Mr. Martelli

***MOVED** that the Board of Education approve the Minutes from meetings held on September 23, 2021 and October 13, 2021.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed 6-0.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence. Mr. Perugini noted that all the correspondence received for the last meeting on school modernization was shared with the town council.

**7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

**A. Strategic Plan.**

Dr. Solan said the Board focused on this in their retreat late this summer. He said they have already begun connecting with the Administrative team, reviewing everything that they are doing and getting great feedback. Unfortunately, we still have a number of PTOs that are virtual, so he is hopeful to attend some of those meetings in person in the near future.

Dr. Solan next reported that pre-COVID, the Darcey School Program was slated to be visited for accreditation by NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The visit had been perpetually postponed throughout the pandemic, but took place two days ago. He said the Darcey team did a phenomenal job and we look forward to presenting the results in the not too distant future.

**B. Audience via [CPSCOV19@cheshire.k12.ct.us](mailto:CPSCOV19@cheshire.k12.ct.us)**

Regarding CPS COVID-19 emails, we received three emails this evening about what is happening with the livestream.

Ms. Ham asked about the recent TikTok challenges and if there has been damage done to the schools or reports of bullying. Dr. Solan said that there was about \$2,000 worth of damage from vandalism. He said the October TikTok challenge was to “hit a teacher” and they had zero reports of that happening and no reports of bullying. He said he will continue to share the school climate information quarterly.

Mr. White asked how many students have left Cheshire Schools because of the masking policy. Dr. Solan answered that people do not have to report why they are leaving the district and he knows of only one family.

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Chairperson’s Update**

No update.

**B. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings**

Mr. Perugini announced the upcoming meetings including the Open Forum that will be held on October 25<sup>th</sup> at Dodd Middle School.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Ms. Ham, the meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

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Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: November 4, 2021.