

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY DECEMBER 17, 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/channel/UCULDbVCqppiY_3egBVDA-mw. 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.

MOTION by Ms. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Hallen.

MOVED to amend the agenda to move Item 8B to follow Item 2.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

- C. Student Representatives. Lucy Helene and Josh Goldstein, student representatives for the 2020/2021 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School. Their report included information on athletics, a food drive to benefit the Cheshire Food Pantry, PSATs, VIPs holiday caroling, and student senate activities.

2. AUDIENCE

Dr. Solan shared an email received from Kristin Melitt (on file) who wanted to express how grateful her family is that Cheshire has made safely keeping kids in school, in person, a priority. When she looks around the country and even our State, she feels so fortunate to live where she does. Everyone involved is to be commended, from the administrators, to the teachers and staff, to the students.

8. NEW BUSINESS

- B. Appointment of Special Education Supervisor K-8.
Dr. Solan stated that tonight he is recommending that Christina Sherwood be appointed to the position of K-8 Special Education Supervisor. He said Christina has spent 11 years in Special Education and has served the Cheshire Public Schools since 2015 in the role of a Special Education Teacher at Highland

Elementary School. Christina is a critical component of our Intensive Education Program and has a strong grasp on many facets of special education. Prior to joining Cheshire Public Schools, Christina was a Special Education Teacher in Ansonia for 6 years. She also has experience as an instructional assistant in her background, which has given her tremendous insight as to the needs and benefits of those supports.

MOTION by Mr. Grillo, seconded by Ms. Hallen.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education appoint Christina Sherwood to the position of Special Education Supervisor K-6 effective February 17, 2021. Further, that Ms. Sherwood be compensated in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement between the Cheshire Board of Education and the Cheshire Administrative Personnel.*

Board members congratulated Christina on her appointment. Ms. Sherwood thanked the Board for approving her appointment and said she looks forward to the opportunity.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

3. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held December 15, 2020.**

At the meeting, the committee received a textbook recommendation from Ms. Leslie Paier, Business Department Chair. Dr. Mary Gadd, Principal of Cheshire High School, gave an update on the hybrid learning plan at Cheshire High School. Dr. Gadd shared information on a series of five parent forums held between October 27 and November 11. The topics included the structure of the collegiate hybrid model, student support at Cheshire High School, student expectations and attendance, social emotional learning, and student activities.

Dr. Gadd shared three samples of course communications/expectations that were sent out at the beginning of the year, as well as email and video updates that were sent by all teachers to parents the week of November 9th. Regarding professional development in November, Cheshire High School teachers worked collaboratively to improve synchronous learning instruction. This included the use of a variety of technology tools to support instruction, assessment, and feedback.

Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator, provided a brief professional development update. The professional development focus this year, across the district, remains related to the strategy of Acceleration and the use of technology tools to support learning. The annual English Learners (EL) Parent Information night was held on November 10th. Similar to most school-related events this school year, the evening was conducted via Google Meet. In addition to the regular topics of the support process for EL students, this year’s presentation also included ways the district is supporting remote EL students.

II. Notice of Textbooks for Public Review.

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 December 17, 2020 through approval and adoption at the Board of Education meeting on January 21, 2021. She noted that 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	Grades
College Accounting: A Practical Approach, 14th Edition	Pearson	10-12

III. Approval of Textbooks

The following textbooks are being brought forward to the Board of Education for approval:

Textbook	Publisher	Grades
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

MOTION by Ms. Ham, seconded by Ms. Hallen.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the purchase of the following textbooks: Personal Finance: Turning Money into Wealth; BUSN 11 Introduction to Business; and Paradigm Benchmark Series - Microsoft Word 2013 or 2016 Levels 1 and 2.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Grippo said he watched the meeting online and it seems as though there is an improvement in synchronous teaching. Ms. Ham answered yes, she has heard from many parents that there has been a vast improvement.

B. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Mr. Grippo, Chair of the Finance Committee asked Mr. Masciana to give the Finance Report. Mr. Masciana said not much has changed in the forecast for the year end. Our 2020-21 fiscal year budget is \$74,593,926. We have expended and encumbered \$60,355,266, or 80.9% of our budget through the first five months of the year, including the encumbrances for our largest account categories, namely the payroll and transportation accounts. As reported previously, the major budget variances identified thus far this fiscal year are costs related to the pandemic. He noted that they have reduced staff from one isolation room monitor in each school to having 4 monitors who are shared throughout the district. He said this strategy will save approximately \$30,000 through year end, helping to mitigate the costs related to COVID-19. Mr. Masciana reported that the State did approve the \$706,075 in COVID relief funds.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Mr. Masciana said he put a cautionary note in the report regarding medical benefits. Medical benefit claims through October are unfortunately averaging \$1,078,024 per month versus the \$724,100 monthly budgeted contribution to pay for claims, resulting in a year-to-date reduction of the Medical Benefits Reserve Fund of \$1,183,621. As of October 31, the Reserve Fund, which began the year at \$2,817,007, has a balance of \$1.2 million or 1.49 months of reserves. He said they have not yet received any stop-loss reimbursements. He expects to receive about \$150,000. We will need to substantially increase our 2021-22 budget to ensure that our monthly contributions will cover expected monthly claims. He is estimating a \$2 million increase in next year's budget.

Ms. Hallen said that this is what was predicted would happen after a few years of underfunding medical benefits. She asked Mr. Masciana if we are on par with other districts as far as stop-loss claims. Mr. Masciana said that both the Town and Board have had high-cost claims this year. This a double hit for CT Prime, our stop loss insurance carrier. Cheshire's claims were twice as much as their premiums last year. He noted that if we did not have the stop-loss insurance, our premiums would be significantly higher.

Mr. Perugini asked if the Town is aware of our situation with medical benefits as well as the deficit from the school lunch program. Mr. Masciana said they had a call with the USI broker, which included Donna Ouellette from the Town Finance Department. He noted that it is unnerving and he thinks it would be a good idea to speak with the Town Manager to give him an idea of where we stand now, if we need to go to the Town Council. Mr. Perugini said we are looking at a minimum of \$2 million increase in our budget just to cover medical benefits.

C. **PERSONNEL**

I. **Report on Meeting Held December 16, 2020.**

Mr. White, Chair of the Personnel Committee reported that the Committee met virtually on December 16th to discuss the Superintendent's annual goals. He said there typically is no vote on the Superintendent's goals, although he feels in the future there should be. Mr. White said he thinks the Superintendent's goal this year should be equity across years and to get as many students to 100 percent learning this year, as would be in a typical year. Mr. White said everyone in the district is working very hard and doing a very good job. Mr. Perugini said the Superintendent's main goal is to continue delivering quality education through COVID.

Mr. Grippo said this time period is like a war time stance where you put normal evaluations on the back burner. He asked about the strategic plan. Dr. Solan explained the history of our strategic plan and said as we revisit this, they have begun to look at what students will need in 2050. When it is safer to do so, he will begin the process of engaging the community to go through the process of developing the long-term plan.

Ms. Hallen said she thinks the Superintendent's goals should be a function of the entire Board not just the Personnel Committee. Mr. Perugini said it is the function of the Personnel Committee to review the goals and then to bring them to the full Board for discussion. He said this started back in October. They have not changed the Superintendent's goals since then.

D. **PLANNING**

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

Mr. Martelli, Chair of the Planning Committee, reported on the Meeting of the Whole held virtually on December 10th. He said Colliers was there to discuss the options for the School Modernization Committee. He encouraged the public to visit and follow the School Modernization Committee's Facebook page.

E. POLICY**I. Report on Meeting Held December 1, 2020.**

Mr. Grippo, Chair of the Policy Committee, reported that they examined a new Title IX policy. Dr. Solan provided a high-level overview. They also reviewed a policy on Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco which would prohibit employees from using CBD products. He said they are still awaiting legal advice regarding this policy. In addition to the policies being brought forward for a first and second reading, the Committee also discussed Bylaw 9325.43 which would allow Board Members to attend a meeting virtually if they are unable to attend in person. Mr. Grippo asked Board members to review this policy and provide feedback to the Committee. He said there is some interest in putting this policy in place, should a member not be able to attend in person. In addition, regarding employee status notifications, the Committee agreed the information that the Superintendent is providing is adequate. Lastly, at the meeting, the Superintendent provided information to the Policy Committee regarding certification of coaches.

II. First Reading of Policies

After an initial review by the Committee, Mr. Grippo brought forward policies 4000.1 Personnel Certified/Non-Certified - Title IX and 5145.44 Students–Title IX for a first reading. He noted that these policies are very long and very detailed.

III. Second Reading of Policies

Mr. Grippo brought forward Bylaw 9321.2 - Time, Place, Notification, Type of Meetings - Electronic Board of Education Meetings for a second reading. This Bylaw allows the Board to hold electronic meeting during the Governor's Executive Order. Once the Executive Order ends, the Board will no longer be allowed to hold virtual meetings.

Mr. Perugini noted the Title IX policy from CAGE is very lengthy. He asked if it has been reviewed by legal counsel and asked if it is ready for a first reading. Dr. Solan answered, yes, he has read it and our attorney has reviewed the policy.

F. CALENDAR COMMITTEE**I. Formation of Calendar Committee.**

Policy 6111 states that the school calendar shall be drawn up by a Committee composed of the Superintendent of Schools or his designee, the Chairman of the Board of Education, a member of the Board of Education chosen by the Chairman, a teacher who may be chosen by the president of the Education Association of Cheshire, an administrator who may be chosen by the president of the Cheshire Administrative Personnel,

and a parent who may be chosen by the president of the Townwide PTA Council.

Mr. Perugini announced that Ms. Harrigan will be the Board of Education member who is appointed to serve on the Calendar Committee. A first meeting of the committee will also be set in the next few weeks and held either virtually, or in a location to be determined. At that meeting, the 2021/2022 proposed calendar will be discussed and formally recommended for adoption and the 2022/2023 proposed calendar will be drafted.

G. SCHOOL MODERNIZATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Martelli reported on two recent meetings of the School Modernization Committee. At the first meeting, they reviewed the proposal that was discussed at the Planning Committee Meeting. The committee agreed to hire an outside firm to poll up to 400 community members. Uniform questions will be asked to get a sampling of community opinion. The cost of this project will be \$17,000. At the next meeting, they reviewed a matrix of various components including enrollment, etc. This matrix will be finalized at the next SMC meeting. Mr. Grippo said the presentation by the South Windsor school district was very informative.

H. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes of the Board of Education Meeting held November 19, 2020.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Hallen reported that Mr. Perugini received a letter from Ms. Eileen Wildermann (on file) in support of Mr. Steve Trifone, Athletic Director, regarding a recent newspaper article that stated there is a lack of trust in Mr. Trifone by Board of Education members. She said as a teacher and coach at Cheshire High School, Mr. Trifone is her boss and colleague and is an unconditionally committed member of Cheshire Public Schools and the community as a whole. She said first and most importantly, Mr. Trifone's main priority is the health and wellbeing of our student athletes. He asks his coaches to be strong communicators, good people, positive, and forthright so that the student-athletes are strong communicators, good people, positive, and forthright. She went on to praise

Mr. Trifone for his support of female sports, his skills as a teacher and his ability to lead with kindness. She said on top of his already strenuous workload, on a daily basis Mr. Trifone quietly completes dozens of small tasks, favors, and work simply to help people around Cheshire High School. The only way one would ever know this is by observing him, because he does this without a need for recognition. This is the Mr. Trifone that no paperwork review will ever show. Ms. Wildermann said another teaching colleague said, "Respect is too weak of a word to describe the way that we feel about Mr. Trifone. Admire is a much better fit." Mr. Trifone is not just a temporary figure at CHS; bettering this community has been his life's work, and for that and much more I throw my full confidence behind him.

Mr. Perugini said there was no investigation by anyone on the Board of Education but by the newspaper through an FOI request. He said his quote regarding a lack of confidence was not about Mr. Trifone but about the process. No one has lost confidence in Mr. Trifone. Mr. Perugini thanked Ms. Wildermann for her letter.

6. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan reported that he attended an awards ceremony for Vincent Cai, a junior at CHS who won a Coding App Building Competition sponsored by the local congressional district. His work will be demonstrated in Washington D.C. His app takes a look at all of the different socioeconomic and racial conditions to determine if gerrymandering has occurred in voting lines. He reported that the Cheshire Education Foundation turns 25 years old this year. He said this year, CEF purchased \$30,000 worth of classroom equipment to outfit some of our classrooms with audio equipment. He noted that Marty Rausch has been active in that organization since the start. He said he would like to recognize the foundation but will wait until we can do that in person.

The Superintendent noted that the COVID-19 Overview, is available on our district website and is updated every day. He said we have very few staff or students who have tested positive. Most of the cases that we do have are from students being infected by family members who are positive. He also reviewed the CDC Control considerations. With the vaccine rolling out, his hope is to start to safely bring back more students to Cheshire High School.

The Superintendent reported that, recently, they solicited recent graduates to become substitutes to help during this pandemic. Forty past students have signed up to be substitutes. He shared a video of the Governor recognizing Dr. Solan and the district for the innovative idea to solicit recent graduates to be substitutes.

Dr. Solan shared revised guidelines from the CDC regarding a reduction in quarantining times. He said he discussed the change with our Nursing Coordinator and together they decided to implement a 10 day quarantining period. He said they reserve the right to hold a person to a 14 day quarantine depending on the circumstances.

Board Members congratulated Dr. Solan and his staff on the accolades from the Governor and for their handling of the pandemic and keeping our students safely in-school. Dr. Solan thanked the Board for their support of him and his staff.

7. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Change of January Board Meeting.**

Dr. Solan said it is recommended that the Board of Education Budget Presentation Meeting, currently scheduled for January 7, 2021, be changed to January 14, 2021. There are so many variables impacting this budget and this will allow additional time for the preparation of budget materials.

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

***MOVED** that the January 7, 2021 Budget Presentation meeting be changed to January 14, 2021.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

B. **Chairperson's Update.**

Mr. Perugini said the 2021-22 Budget process is coming up. He urged Board members to give any ideas to the Superintendent prior to the January 14th budget presentation.

Mr. Perugini reviewed the upcoming meetings and thanked everyone in the district for their hard work this past year. He noted they Board will be going into a non-meeting to discuss union contract negotiations.

9. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Ms. Hallen, 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: 1/15/21.