

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE WHOLE HELD VIRTUALLY ON JANUARY 25, 2022 AT 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary, Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli, Samantha Rosenberg, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Anthony Perugini

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer, Robin-Anne Carey, Director of Pupil Personnel

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 .
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1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 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. Grippo led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. AUDIENCE

None.

3. PUBLIC BUDGET REVIEW AND DISCUSSION REGARDING SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET.

Mr. Masciana noted that tonight is Session 2 of the Budget Review. They will be reviewing the Instructional Expense account including Special Education Services, Support Services, Maintenance and Operations including the Capital Budget.

Instructional Expense is 5.6% of the Operating Budget. The requested budget for 2022/23 is \$4,564,034, a 1.06% increase. The largest line item is Special Education - Tuition, 49% of the Instructional Expense budget, for students who are placed outside of our district for services we cannot offer. The second largest is Special Education-Pupil Services.

Next, Mr. Masciana reviewed total special education costs by year. He noted the number of special education students has been increasing.

Ms. Ham asked for the cost of educating special education students. Mr. Masciana said they will get that information to the Board.

Mr. Masciana introduced Robin-Anne Carey, Director of Pupil Personnel, who gave a thorough presentation on Special Education (on file). The presentation provided an overview of special education services in Cheshire Public Schools. She reviewed that the number of students with IEPs has been steadily increasing, possibly due to remote learning and lack of engagement during the pandemic. In addition, students with anxiety and depression have also suffered because of the pandemic. She noted they have become

much better at identifying students with dyslexia, which increases the number of identified students. In addition, there have been a number of new students moving into the district who require special education services. Ms. Carey explained the types and percentages of disability prevalence in our district and how those numbers have increased over the last few years; she also compared the disorders against the State's average numbers.

Ms. Carey explained the special education programs in our district. Our out-of-district placements have decreased because we can provide the resources in-district. Those students who are outplaced require services that Cheshire cannot provide.

Regarding Transition Services, Ms. Carey reviewed that pursuant to State statute, *“effective July 1, 2021, transition services are required for each child requiring special education beginning not later than the first individualized education program (IEP) to be in effect when such child turns 14 years of age, or younger if determined appropriate by the planning and placement team (PPT), and updated annually thereafter.”* Previously, we were required to provide transition services to students until their 21st birthday, but now we must extend those services through their 22nd birthday. This will increase the number of students receiving transition services by about 40 IEP students in Grade 8 (age 14) and 10 students currently in transition programs until 22 years of age.

She explained the transitions standards that must be incorporated into a student's IEP including training/education, employment, and if appropriate, independent living skills.

Ms. Carey said that the addition of a Transition Coordinator would provide support for Transition students aged 14 through 22 throughout the district (*258 student with IEPs). The Coordinator will support the teachers and be the liaison between families, students, state/local agencies and community partners. In addition, the position will support in the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives.

Board members asked Ms. Carey numerous questions regarding special education including staff workload and outplacement costs. Ms. Rosenberg asked for the cost of the extended-year program and the number of students who exit-out of the special education program. Mr. Masciana said they will compile that information for her.

Ms. Ham asked who will do this job if the position is not approved. Ms. Carey said the work is being done now, but the workload will increase for existing staff. Dr. Solan said the addition of services until the 22nd birthday requires a significant amount of work. Ms. Ham asked if it could be a half-time position. Dr. Solan said it is a challenge to get an employee with this specialized skill set to want to work only half-time.

Mr. Grippo asked how we stand with the number of IA's in our district. Ms. Carey said she has not requested any additional IA's. He asked if the Transition Coordinator is the only position being requested. Ms. Carey answered, yes. He asked if the Bridges

Program will move as part of the School Modernization Plan. Dr. Solan said no, that is not part of the Educational Specs.

The Board members thanked Ms. Carey for her informative presentation.

Mr. Masciana continued his review of Instructional Expense going over some noteworthy factors and initiatives:

- Curriculum Writing Institute - summer curriculum writing and revision to update units of instruction, align to new standards, and incorporate district focus areas.
- Curriculum Council Focus - Continuation of analysis and evaluation of areas of curriculum on a 5-year rotation. For 2022/23, Language Arts/English and Special Education Delivery K-12 will analyze the curriculum and make recommendations to the Cheshire Curriculum Council.
- Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) - Instructional Shifts and training needed to support alignment to the science standards.
- College, Career, & Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Curriculum Writing Revisions needed to align with the new Social Studies State standards.
- Support K-12 Math resource implementation at all levels
- Instructional Materials and Resources
 - Updates/Replacements of textbook resource materials
 - New textbook/resource for Earth Science CP and CCP
 - New textbook/resources for CTE – DE Manufacturing Fundamentals
- Professional Development
 - Provides for district-wide and building-based PD opportunities to support Cheshire Public School goals focused on complex thinking and social emotional learning, aligned with educator and student learning objectives.
 - PD to support teachers of English Learners due to the State's emphasis on the growth of students who are learning English as a second language. In class coaching sessions to implement strategies for English Learners.
 - Coaching and PD for teachers and staff for Social Emotional Learning
 - Coaching and PD to support instructional shifts necessary to deliver the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)

Ms. Ham said she is distressed by this budget, and we are beyond cutting to the bone. The accounts may be flat, but it is actually less than flat because of inflation. She said she doesn't want to take away from the special education program, but those services are taking away from the general education students. She mentioned Replacement Equipment as an example noting that it has not increased and equipment must be suffering from wear and tear. Mr. Masciana responded that we manage through the budget year. As we get into April, May and June, if we have accounts that are below their budget, and we can allocate funds to replace or buy new equipment. From a budget point of view, we are certainly trying to strike a balance between what we can afford to budget and what we would budget if we didn't have limitations. This budget request is being driven by

enrollment and medical benefits. He said we will prioritize as the year continues and then make expenditures accordingly.

Ms. Rosenberg said she agrees with Ms. Ham and asked for the top priorities that we cannot do without. Dr. Solan noted that the budget has been squeezed over time, but they have also worked very hard as a Board and as a Leadership Team to identify core priorities that yield a high return on investment. He said in doing so, they have been able to be that much more pinpointed, and our achievement is now dramatically improved. This budget is to sustain services. He said, at the next meeting, they can go through the list he had shared with the Board.

Mr. Masciana reviewed Support Services which accounts for 8.7% of the Operating Budget. The 2022/23 budget request is \$7,085,879, a 2.33% increase. The largest category in this account is Transportation/Fuel/Insurance at \$2,170,438, 57% of the Support Services Budget. The next largest section is Other Professional Services \$945,260.

Mr. Martelli noted that there are huge increases in the property and liability insurance premiums. Mr. Masciana said this is an industry and market increase, not specific to us, brought about by all of the natural disasters that have been occurring. He said HD Segur, our insurance agent, shops around for the best rates and did save us money on our workers' compensation policy.

Mr. Masciana shared some good news regarding the budget. He reported that we have had two grants approved in the last 60 days that are very significant. The first one is through the Emergency Connectivity Fund, which is basically an E-Rate Program through which we received \$649,407. It is used to replace student Chromebooks that either are, or will be, at end of life. This is a grant with which Michael Papa, Technology Director, works. We will be able to purchase roughly 1,800 Student Chromebooks with the funding. We have roughly 4200 Chromebooks either in student's hands that they take home, or that they leave in the school and use during the school day. This \$649,407 frees up money in our budget reserved for Chromebook replacements. We will now be able to use those funds for other things, such as to upgrade the Smart Boards from Smart Boards to Smart Flat Panels. The next grant that we applied for in June is round five of the School Security Competitive Grant, and we were awarded \$959,687. This grant is specifically for physical building security improvements. It is a reimbursement grant where we get 45% reimbursed, so to get the \$959,000, we have to spend \$2.1 million. Mr. Masciana said it is important to note that we do have funding allocated from our Capital Budget for some of the security improvements for which we applied. These funds will either relieve our operating budget in the case of the first grant, or provide reimbursement against capital expenditures as in the case of the school security grant. Board members congratulated Mr. Masciana and his team for securing the grants.

Mr. Masciana reviewed Maintenance and Operations, which is 5.0% of the Operating Budget. The requested budget amount is \$4,021,337, a 4.07% increase. The largest line item in this account is Utilities and Heating, accounting for 37.4% of the Maintenance and Operations budget. The next largest is Maintenance & Repair, which is 33% of the account budget. Other line items in this account are Cleaning Services, Maintenance Supply, and Equipment Maintenance and Repair.

Mr. Masciana reviewed the Capital Budget and the request for the 2022-23 through 2026-27 Five Year Plan.

Mr. Masciana said this completes the Administrative Review of Accounts. Mr. Grippo said the next meeting that calls for public comments will be held in person at Dodd Middle School at 7:00 pm.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Martelli, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Finance Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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