

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON FEBRUARY 3, 2022 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary; Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli, Samantha Rosenberg, 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; Robin-Anne Carey, Director, Pupil Personnel Services; Mary Joscelyn-Gadd, Ed.D., Principal-Cheshire High School; Michael Woods, Principal-Dodd Middle School; John Perosino, Assistant Principal-Dodd Middle School; Kimberly Dessert, Principal-Darcey School; Amy O'Brien, Principal-Doolittle; Kelly Grillo, Principal-Norton School; Scott Jeffrey, Principal-Highland Elementary School; Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator; Ryan Murphy, Family & Community Engagement Coordinator

Public access was 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 – 7:30 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. Grippo led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

2. AUDIENCE

None

3. PRESENTATION

A. DISCUSSION/ACTION REGARDING THE 2022/2023 BOARD OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDED BUDGET.

Mr. Perugini noted that, prior to this meeting, the Finance Committee met to discuss and ultimately passed a motion to forward the Superintendent's Proposed Budget to the full Board of Education.

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

MOVED that the Board of Education submit to the Town Manager a budget for the 2022/2023 fiscal year, totaling \$1,114,420, which represents an increase of 5.34% or \$4,113,368 over the 2021/2022 budget.

Discussion:

Mr. White said he will support this motion. He reminded the Superintendent that in regards to facilities, we need to look at sustainable constructions throughout the school modernization process, as well as electrification of our vehicles. He also asked, in regard to education programming, that we remember that trades are important for some students and they should be weaved into the fabric of the school system.

Ms. Ham said she is conflicted on how she will vote. She said this is no reflection on our administrative team, as they run an incredibly lean district. She said she is proud to be on this Board and part of this school system, but if she votes no, it is a protest vote because the fixed costs of benefits, employee contracts, and mandates are eating up our budget. It is a message to say, we need to figure out how we're going to fix this problem, so our growth is in instruction.

Ms. Harrigan said she will be supporting this budget. She feels it is important to point out that the increase of 5.34% increase over last year's budget is really an artificial number due to the \$1.5 million that was infused into the budget for the Medical Benefits Reserve by the Town Council last year. She said if those funds were taken out of the budget, the increase is really just over 3%, which is really not a huge increase. Dr. Solan noted the increase would be just 2.44%

Mr. Grippo said he will be supporting this motion. He said it is a prudent and restrained budget request, which will get us through the pandemic and help us to grow a bit. He said, hopefully, once we can put the pandemic behind us, we need to look at prudent investments in our future and he hopes the Finance Committee can meet quarterly with the administration about the cost of those investments. He said, this year, there was only one public comment during the entire budget process.

Ms. Rosenberg said this budget positions us to stay in the game, but does prepare us to be ahead of the herd. She said she agrees with Mr. White that we should offer different pathways, especially in careers of need, such as nursing. She also agrees with having additional Finance Committee meetings.

Mr. White added to his previous comments that another reason for pursuing the trades is because of the college loan debt in this country. He commented on our large medical benefits costs and said one way to reduce the cost is to reduce headcount, but another way is through preventative care.

Chairman Perugini thanked everyone for their part in putting together this budget. He said he is happy to hear that the Finance Committee is planning to have follow-up meetings. He noted our enrollment is currently growing. In the past, people have asked why we did not decrease staff when the enrollment was lower, but, the answer is that we did. He would also like to see trades in our schools, such as a larger culinary program. He wants to come out of this pandemic

stronger, and reducing this budget will not allow that to happen. After all of the reductions to our budget, he added that we are still behind in our investment – he said was actually expecting a request for a larger increase. This could be worse if the district was not so prudent in cost saving. He said he will support this budget.

VOTE: The Motion passed 6-1 (Ms. Ham opposed).

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White and seconded by Ms. Rosenberg, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 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: 2/15/2022.