

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON APRIL 21, 2022 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary; Samantha Rosenberg, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli

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

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.

2. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. **School Partnership Award – Norton School**

Mr. White, Board member liaison to Norton School, presented the school's recipients, Elizabeth and Brian Montgomery, who were nominated by Norton Principal, Kelly Grillo.

The Montgomery family generously donated their time and the materials to renovate Norton's front entrance last summer. The gardens were overgrown and did not offer an inviting entrance to their vibrant school. The work they did far exceeded simply "cleaning up" the beds, as they offered to do. The removal of the overgrown shrubs and trees and the addition of rock beds not only aesthetically replaced what was there, but instead completely revived the energy our students, staff, and family members are greeted with as they enter the school each day. Norton is so grateful for the care, time, and resources they gave to supporting Norton! The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Elizabeth and Brian Montgomery for going above and beyond for Cheshire Public Schools. They were presented with a small gift and certificate of recognition.

3. **AUDIENCE**

None.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held April 18, 2022.**

In Ms. Ham's absence, Ms. Harrigan reported on the meeting held April 18, 2022. The Committee reviewed the 2022 Smarter Balanced and Next Generation Science Standards Assessment parent communication that was

sent to families in the beginning of April. The State assessments begin at Dodd Middle School next week with the NGSS Assessment, continue during the first two weeks of May with Math and ELA in Grades 3-8, and conclude toward the end of May with NGSS in Grade 11.

Ms. Silano presented draft policy language concerning the reconsideration of instructional resources. The Committee voted to forward the draft Reconsideration of Instructional Materials policy to the Board of Education Policy Committee for review.

B. **FINANCE**

I. **Finance Report**

Mr. Grippo asked Mr. Masciana to provide this report. Mr. Masciana noted Board members have the updated report in their packets. The Town Council and Board of Education took formal action to increase the operating budget by \$1,500,000 from \$77,001,052 to \$78,501,052. The entire \$1,500,000 was allocated to the Medical Benefits Reserve fund.

Mr. Masciana reported that we are still in good shape with 91.7% of the budget either expended or encumbered. They are actively in the process of reviewing all accounts, making final entries for purchases and maintenance items, and discussing summer projects for completion this summer. Mr. Masciana said he expects a successful year-end close on June 30th.

II. **Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reported that this month's claims made a significant jump to \$1.2 million. As previously reported, January and February claims were lower due to the new HSA plan year and employees meeting their deductibles. He said they have some significant claims, which is the reason for the spike this month. The net change to the fund balance decreased by \$257,000. As of March 31, 2022 the Medical Benefits Reserve balance is \$1,204,757.

Mr. Masciana added that the CT Prime Board met that morning. CT Prime is the stop-loss carrier for the Town and the Board of Education, as well as several other municipalities. Our stop-loss reimbursements reflected in the report are \$361,000, but we will receive a total of \$520,000. With the additional \$160,000, that would take our reserve balance up to about \$1.36 million. Mr. Masciana said that even if this trend continues for the next three months of the year, we still will have a reserve balance available. He explained that, unfortunately, the more we receive in stop-loss reimbursement, the more it affects next year's renewal.

Dr. Solan added that a Finance Committee meeting has been scheduled for May 3rd at 6 p.m. He said Mr. Grippo had recommended having at least quarterly Finance Committee meetings to examine future trends, looking to align our financial planning for the operating budget in future years. He will also be reviewing the Department of Justice Stop Grant, which is funding for students, teachers, and officers to prevent school violence.

C. **PLANNING**

I. **Approval of Educational Specifications.**

In Mr. Martelli's absence, Chairman Perugini reported that they held a joint Board of Education and Town Council meeting this past Tuesday to discuss the Next Generation Modernization Plan. He said there was a lot of great information shared and a lot of great dialogue exchanged. Tonight, they hope to approve the Educational Specifications.

MOTION by Ms. Rosenberg, seconded by Ms. Harrigan.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New North End Elementary School and the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New Norton Elementary School, as approved by the Planning Committee of the Board on April 7, 2022, and amended by the Board of Education on April 21, 2022.*

Discussion:

Mr. Masciana noted that the Educational Specifications for the new Norton and the new North End Elementary Schools were approved by the Planning Committee. He said they are recommending that both specifications under the section on Environmental Systems and Equipment, specifically, under the heading Building Systems, be amended to read:

*"The building systems incorporated into the new construction will be designed in accordance with Connecticut High Performance Building standards, equivalent in performance to a LEED Silver rating. In addition, utilizing energy sources including solar and geothermal as well as net zero **energy and/or** emissions will be considered in the building design in the context of a 50 year estimated useful life. This should include cost estimates of energy—and other known, direct—costs over that time span for all energy sources."*

Mr. Masciana said the revision is to add the words "energy and/or" after net zero. The change allows more options and reduces the limitation of having buildings that are net-zero buildings. The way it is worded

currently, they would be limited to only having buildings that are net-zero emissions. With the change in wording, they can have a building that is net-zero energy, meaning the energy net is produced at the site using solar or geothermal, which will be fully used at the site, or you would never have less energy produced than you use. If we say just “net-zero emissions,” that means, essentially, our carbon footprint would be zero. I’m not sure we could achieve that, but with this language change, we have the option of potentially doing both or one or the other.

Dr. Solan added this was a change that was discussed with Colliers and the Executive Steering Committee after review by a specialist.

As a Point of Order, Mr. Grippo noted that the motion should be amended because the changes to the Specifications have not yet been approved.

MOTION TO AMEND by Mr. Grippo, seconded by Ms. Rosenberg.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve a revision in language in the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New North End Elementary School and the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New Norton Elementary School, from net zero emissions to net zero energy and/or emissions.”*

VOTE: The Amended Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Discussion:

Mr. White thanked Dr. Solan and Mr. Masciana for making this happen. He would like to see sustainable construction and it is a great thing for the Town to be considering.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New North End Elementary School and the Elementary Educational Specifications for the New Norton Elementary School, as approved by the Planning Committee of the Board on April 7, 2022, and amended by the Board of Education on April 21, 2022 to include the language net zero energy and/or emissions.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously, 5-0.

Mr. White asked for a brief update on referendum timing. Dr. Solan answered that both schools would be open to students in the fall of 2026. He said they have been operating on the idea that the referendum would occur on November 4, 2022, which is Election Day. He said a proposal

was made that we consider an earlier referendum date, and that will be considered by our Town Attorney and Colliers, but it is unlikely.

D. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held April 20, 2022.

Mr. Grippo reported that the Committee met the prior evening and reviewed policies for second and third readings.

II. Second Reading of Policy

Policy #4118.11 – Personnel – Non-Discrimination was reviewed for a second reading with no changes made since the first reading. In regard to age discrimination, the following language will be added to our current policy: “The District recognizes that it is a discriminatory practice to request or require a prospective employee’s age, date of birth, dates of attendance at or date of graduation from an educational institution on an initial employment application, unless requesting or requiring such information is based on a bona fide occupational qualification or need, or when such information is required to comply with any provision of state or federal law.”

III. Third Reading and Approval of Policies

Mr. Grippo brought forward five policies for a third reading and approval. There have been no changes to any of these policies since the second reading.

1101.1 Community Relations – Parent Involvement. State statute requires boards of education to adopt and implement policies and procedures to encourage parent-teacher communication.

6146 Instruction – Graduation Requirements

Changes to this policy regard creating student success plans for each student beginning in Grade 6. The plan must include career and academic choices in Grades 6 to 12 and should be made in collaboration with the student’s parent or guardian.

6146.1 Instruction – Grading Systems

Changes in legislation require that Boards update, as necessary, the written weighted grading policy for honors and advanced placement classes that they must have under existing law. This policy must address the manner in which students’ grade point averages are calculated.

6148 Instruction – FAFSA Completion Program

This new policy is required by law. Legislation requires boards of education to adopt a policy to improve the completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) among Grade 12 students or

students in Adult Education programs. This policy requires the district to share FAFSA information with students.

6159 Instruction – Individualized Education Program/Special Education Program. Existing law prohibits boards of education from disciplining, suspending, terminating, or otherwise punishing any PPT member employed by the board who discusses or makes recommendations about providing Special Education and related services for a child during a PPT meeting. The legislation extends this protection to Birth-to-Three Service Coordinators or qualified personnel concerning PPT meetings or transition plans. In addition, under transition services, the age of the student is changed from sixteen to fourteen.

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

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policies:*

1101.1 Community Relations – Parent Involvement

6146 Instruction – Graduation Requirements

6146.1 Instruction – Grading Systems

6148 Instruction – FAFSA Completion Program

6159 Instruction – IEP/Special Education Program and direct the Superintendent to put said policies into immediate effect.

Discussion:

Ms. Harrigan noted that sixth grade is too young for a student to have to choose a career path. Dr. Solan explained that we start introducing students to different career paths in sixth grade but they do not need to make a choice at that time.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Minutes from meetings held on March 17, 2022 and April 7, 2022.*

Correction: Ms. Harrigan noted that the location of the April 7th Showcase Meeting should list Dodd as the location, not Town Council Chambers.

VOTE: The Amended Minutes were approved unanimously by those present.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Ms. Harrigan read a letter from Mr. John Bestor into the record. Mr. Bestor is against standardized testing and urged the Board of Education to speak out against mandated standardized testing.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan thanked the Board of Education for approving the Educational Specifications. He reported that the Town is going through their budget process. He said, right now it is expected that they will cut \$450,000 from our very lean budget. He said there will be a Finance Committee meeting held to determine from which accounts the reductions will be taken. Dr. Solan said he has been focusing on school modernization and strategic planning. Over the last several months, he has attended PTO meetings at many of our schools. He noted Ms. Silano and he will be hosting preschool parent meetings to talk about school modernization and to answer questions that they may have. Dr. Solan reminded parents to register their children for Kindergarten.

Dr. Solan said we have 4,300 students in our district with very diverse backgrounds and stories. He said he thinks everybody on this Board believes that we embrace all 4,300 students and understands that kids are exposed to a lot of different stories, but there is a very narrow swath of backgrounds and diversity within our own community. We respect all students who come to our schools with passion and feeling and we encourage that among students and staff. Dr. Solan said there is a small group of students in the Middle School who are recognizing tomorrow as a Day of Silence to acknowledge the silence that had been imposed on students who were gay, transgender, lesbian, etc. He said this has caused some stir with some people on the internet. He noted that while it is good to review these matters, *Tinker vs. Des Moines*, a very famous Supreme Court ruling, cemented students' rights to free speech in public schools, stating that students don't leave their political opinions and freedom of speech at the schoolhouse gate. He said we embrace all kids, but we just need to be able to do so respectfully. If families have questions, we encourage them to first reach out to their teacher, then their principal, and lastly Central Office Administrators or the Board.

Regarding COVID, numbers are increasing in the community. We have eight positive students at Highland. Norton, Cheshire High, and Dodd all have less than six. Chapman, Darcey, Humiston and Doolittle all had zero cases as of this morning. Dr. Solan said we are still in a really good place.

Dr. Solan said he wanted to recognize our Birth-to-Three leadership team, particularly Jennifer Buffington and Donna Notti, for their work with Circle of Security, a program about attachment between children and their parents. The work that they have done over the last several years is so meaningful and so powerful that the State has actually decided that the training that our people do with these families will now be reimbursed. Moreover, they have asked Donna and Jen to be responsible for training all Birth-to-Three programs in Connecticut. It is something to really be proud of in our community.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson's Update**

Mr. Perugini said that he will be attending a CABA Board Meeting next week and hopes to get some information on current legislative items such as ECS Funding.

Mr. Perugini announced the upcoming meetings.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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