

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD VIRTUALLY VIA LIVESTREAM ON APRIL 27, 2020**

Committee Members Present: Adam Grippo, Chair; Kathryn Hallen; Faith Ham

Other Board Members: Anthony Perugini

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent; 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@chshire.k12.ct.us.

1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:30 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 and then turned the meeting over to Dr. Solan

2. PUBLIC COMMENT VIA CPSCOV19@CHESHIRE.K12.CT.US

None.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE 2019-2020 AND THE 2020-2021 BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGETS

Dr. Solan gave a presentation to the Board regarding the status of the operating budget. He noted we are six weeks into the pandemic which has created a monumental shift in how our district is providing instruction. He reminded the Board that they are a very efficient and lean organization.

The Superintendent discussed future orientation and said he does not believe students will return earlier than August. There will have to be certain considerations made for in-person learning: social distancing, personal protective equipment; general and high traffic sanitation, instructional design to support assessment and remediation and therapeutic supports to facilitate difficult transitions for some students. Should remote learning continue, assessments will be needed to gauge intervention points and instructional design will be required to capture greater breadth in curriculum.

Dr. Solan reviewed the fiscal considerations. Next year's Board of Education budget represents a \$2,146,043 (2.93%) increase over the 2019-2020 budget. The Board of Education has been asked to consider reductions that would retain an overall flat mill rate for Cheshire in 2020-2021. The Board would need to reduce their 2020-2021 budget by approximately \$1,800,000 to achieve a flat mill rate. This may be accomplished through a combination of 2019-2020 savings (carryover account) and 2020-2021 reductions. He clarified that it was not a directive to cut \$1.8 million but a conversation between members of the Board and Town Council about how they can achieve as flat a budget as possible.

The Superintendent reviewed anticipated costs and savings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The anticipated net savings is \$456,477 if students return on June 1st and an additional savings if the buildings are closed longer. He reviewed some potential reductions such as not hiring a security manager; reducing instructional supplies, curriculum materials, library/media supplies; and a reduction to the maintenance and repair accounts. These items add a potential reduction savings of \$491,283. He provided detail for the reductions (on file). He said these savings are predicated by what we are directed to do by health officials and the state.

Discussion:

Ms. Ham asked if it is safe to reduce maintenance. The Superintendent replied the funds being reduced are earmarked for repairs and updating. In regard to savings in the certified salaries account, she asked if that is dictated by the union contract. Mr. Solan said this reduction is for long-term substitutes and retirements in addition to those budgeted.

Dr. Solan next explained that the federal government has released money to all 50 states through the CARES Act. The states distribute money to individual districts based on Title I funding. He said we are going to receive about \$100,000 through this Act. The anticipated net impact is as follows:

| Item | Impact |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| 2019-2020 COVID Savings | (\$656,477) |
| 2019-2020 Reductions | (\$491,283) |
| CARES Act Money | (\$99,367) |
| COVID Impact Costs | \$200,000 |
| 2020-2021 Budget Reductions | TBD |
| Total | \$1,047,128 |

Dr. Solan said any reduction we make to our budget represents a sacrifice in programming and/or services that reflect the current circumstances. He shared a list of possible reductions to the 2020-2021 budget, labeled as high, medium or low impact on the students (on file).

Discussion:

Mr. Grippo noted that all three of the new special education positions are on this list of reductions.

Regarding increasing parking and student activity fees, Ms. Hallen feels that if the Town is trying to keep costs down for residents, we should take those items off the list.

Mr. Perugini agreed with Ms. Hallen regarding the fees. In addition, he said we will need the Special Education positions with all of the remediation that will be needed.

Ms. Ham asked the Superintendent what he recommends. Dr. Solan said everything that is on the list has a value, but he recommends reductions in the areas that have the lowest impact to the students.

Mr. Grippo asked if class size increases means staff reductions and the Superintendent responded yes. He asked if they will be filling the position of principal at Darcey as she retires. The Superintendent said it is a very unique skill set for that school. They want to be sure to hire someone with that specialized skill set.

Superintendent Solan gave some examples of class sizes should they reduce staff. The Board discussed the meeting that will take place with the Town Council later in the week and what the Superintendent will present. Mr. Perugini said the Board doesn't target specific items such as sports or music. He also noted that to date, there is no vaccine for the virus, meaning there will be state guidelines on how and when we open and whether or not we have fall sports. Mr. Masciana reported that the Capital Budget will also be on the agenda at the Town Council Meeting.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT VIA CPSCOV19@CHESHIRE.K12.CT.US**

Dr. Solan said an email was received from Mary Burnham stating that in her opinion, reducing class sizes and special education positions after the amount of learning that will have been lost due to distance learning, is a terrible idea. Students will need more support not less. Class size matters.

5. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a Motion by Ms. Ham and seconded by Ms. Hallen, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Finance Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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