

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON OCTOBER 20, 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

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.
- C. Student Representatives. Monica Ghaly and Michael DeJoseph, student representatives for the 2022/2023 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School. The representatives reported on items such as team standings and schoolwide fundraisers. They also reported on recent National Honor Society induction ceremonies, the upcoming Superintendent’s Awards dinner, and the recently held Music In Motion.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. Teacher of the Year

Mary Gadd, Cheshire High School principal, introduced Dawn DeMeo, the 2022-2023 Cheshire Public Schools Teacher of the Year. Ms. Gadd said that Dawn is an English teacher at Cheshire High School where she teaches a variety of classes including AP Literature, Senior Literature, World Literature, and American Literature. She also teaches a Teen Leadership Course designed to push students to ‘grow in character and vision’ and develop the ability to collaborate, present themselves, and persevere through challenges. Dawn also works the full year to support all of the theater productions, and specifically directs the much anticipated annual Cheshire High School spring musical. Dawn makes every effort to create a safe, engaging and respectful environment for her students and in 2020, was invited by students to be an advisor for the student group, Rams Against Racism. Last year, Dawn co-taught the inaugural African American, Black and Puerto Rican, Latino Studies course and led a student trip to Puerto Rico with her co-teacher to help bring this curriculum to life. Her passion for her students and curriculum is a driving factor in the success of these programs.

Dawn brings a wealth of knowledge and a global mindset to her teaching. In addition to a Bachelor's degree from Bowdoin College, Dawn earned certificates from Southern Connecticut State University and the University of Phoenix, and

has completed additional coursework and intensive study at NYU and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. Most recently, Dawn was named a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms award. Fulbright alumni include 60 Nobel Prize laureates, 89 Pulitzer Prize recipients, and 40 who have served as a head of state or government. Dawn DeMeo is an extremely skilled and accomplished teacher. Cheshire High School Assistant Principal said, “Ms. DeMeo does not just expect excellence but creates an environment and provides the instruction that fosters the desire for her students to excel”. Dawn finds unique ways to connect to her students. For several years now, she has created a practice, upon the dismissal of class that allows her to make a one-to-one connection with each student upon exiting the room. This routine began with shaking each student's hand and has evolved into personalized styles specific to her students. Over the last 20 years as a professional educator, it is clear to all that Dawn is a natural at instilling the love of learning in her students and supporting them in the classroom and on stage. Ms. DeMeo was presented with a plaque and congratulated by the Board of Education.

B. Paraeducator of the Year

Unfortunately, the 2022 Paraeducator of the Year, Jodi Dudchysyn, was not available to attend and will be awarded her plaque at a later date.

C. Girls Cross Country Coach Recognition

Athletic Director, Steve Trifone, introduced Cheshire High School Girls Cross Country Coach, Robert Schaefer. He explained that Mr. Schaefer is being recognized for earning his 300th win as head coach. He said Mr. Schaefer is in his 34th year as Girls Cross Country coach. He has amassed a record to date of 309 wins and only 39 losses in those 34 years. To date, his teams have won two state championships, five league championships and fourteen division championships. He noted he taught English at Cheshire High School for 38 years before retiring in 2015. In addition, this year, Rob was named Coach of the Year by the Southern Connecticut Conference. Mr. Schaefer was congratulated by the Board of Education.

3. AUDIENCE

Sharon Hauck, 424 Cardinal Lane. Mrs. Hauck said she is against some of the books being offered in Dodd Middle School and feels the content is inappropriate for 7th graders.

Alicia Heapy, 1761 Tuttle Avenue. Ms. Heapy has two students in Cheshire Public Schools. She said she feels it is good that students are introduced to topics from the wider world.

Christina Ruddy, 168 Sloper Lane. Ms. Ruddy has three boys in the school system. She said she was made aware that there is a transgender person using the boys locker room

during gym. She said she was told there is no policy to deal with this situation and asked if there will be a policy written regarding transgender persons using a locker room of their currently opposite sex.

Stephanie Calo, 699 Country Wood Court. Ms. Calo has two students in the Cheshire school system. She is against some of the books on the 7th grade reading list and feels the topics of the books should be discussed at home, not in school. She is also uncomfortable with the transgender student using the boys' bathroom. Ms. Calo is also against the Dodd students watching CNN news clips in their classroom.

Mr. Perugini thanked the speakers and said some of their concerns will be addressed during the course of this meeting.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

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

At the meeting, Dr. Gadd shared that they have convened a schedule committee including nine teachers, seven students, two parents, and three administrators. The goals of the committee are to review the context for the current schedule (e.g. thirty-minute lunches, teacher collaboration time, drop-in support), identify what the committee is trying to accomplish through the schedule, consider school community feedback and research, and make a recommendation by February.

In addition, they learned of a Cheshire High School trip to Washington, DC - May 22-24, 2022. Dr. Gadd shared information regarding a planned spring trip to Washington D.C. for students in this year's AP US Government class. The students in this year's AP Government classes were not able to visit Washington during their 8th grade year due to COVID-19 closures so this trip will give them insight into this important location in our government.

Ms. Ham said the bulk of the meeting was spent discussing the 7th Grade Contemporary Fiction Book Club. The book club was a subject of discussion at the Board of Education open forum held on October 6th, 2022. The update included an overview of the process by which texts are selected and the considerations include connection to the standards, student interests/needs, developmental considerations, text complexity, book reviews/awards (Booksource), and a conscious effort to represent student groups. The update also included the standards that are associated with the unit, the types of questions asked to facilitate book club discussions, Common Sense Media as a resource for parents, the number of students who signed up for each book, and the addition of 2 books

based on feedback from some families. She said the books were not randomly selected. She said there are members of the community that are not happy with some of these books, but there was a method used to select them. When asked to change the list, the teachers were very agreeable and did add two uplifting books.

Mr. Perugini noted that the Curriculum meeting was taped and is available on our YouTube channel. Ms. Silano noted that information was added to the Dodd website and anyone with questions can contact her or come to the next Curriculum meeting.

Mr. Martelli said a concern for parents was that some parents did not know about the books before their students made their selection. Dr. Solan said there was inconsistency in the information that was given. In the future, it will be distributed sooner and be more consistent among teachers. Ms. Rosenberg added that she has raised black-Asian-Jewish children and is appreciative of what this school system has done to provide equity and inclusivity and appreciates the process and thoughtfulness that was used to make these book selections. Mr. White asked how they determine what makes them age appropriate. Ms. Silano said they make sure they are high-interest books, the diversity of the school, and the reading age from the publisher. In addition they use a rubric, which is included in the Board's packet that measures vocabulary complexity. Mr. Grippo inquired if the parent signs-off on the book selection. Ms. Silano said there is a google form that is sent out for the student to choose from. She said parents don't approve the books that student may choose to read from the library. Mr. Grippo said he thinks this is different because it is a list of only 7 books from which the student can select. He said the subject material is very heavy for 7th graders and parents felt they did not receive enough information.

Mr. Perugini said he would encourage Board members to attend the next Curriculum meeting if they would like to discuss this further. He thanked administrators for adding the two new books and noted students have already chosen them to read. Ms. Ham said she thinks it is important that we are not pushing a narrative on our students.

B. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Mr. Masciana reported that we have completed the entry of our initial encumbrances for our largest accounts, namely payroll and transportation, and therefore have expended and encumbered \$59,549,200, or 73.8% of our total budget. In order to mitigate the potential negative impact of the concerns noted above or any significant unexpected variances, we have

imposed and will maintain a 40% cap on non-payroll expenditures through at least November 2022 and will likely extend this 40% expenditure cap through December.

In September we were able to lock in the purchase price for the following commodities through the end of the fiscal year:

- Heating – Propane - \$2.53/gallon
- Heating - #2 Oil – \$3.81/gallon
- Transportation – Low Sulfur Diesel - \$3.66/gallon
- Transportation – Unleaded Gasoline - \$2.80/gallon
- Electricity prices are too high to lock in.
- Natural Gas - market base rates.

II. Report on Meeting Held September 21, 2022.

Mr. Grippo reported a Finance Committee meeting was held to review items before the budget season to get a better handle on things. At the meeting Mr. Masciana reviewed the grants and how they are being expended. In addition, they looked at support staff who are being funded through the grants and discussed how they would pay for the positions after the grant is expended. They discussed potential budget “wish list” items and discussed food service meal prices and the funding received from the state to cover the meals. Dr. Solan noted that we did not receive the Federal STOP grant that we applied for. The two items that would have been covered are teen mental health and a district security manager. Teen mental health was picked up by the Town through a grant and Mr. Masciana may discuss the district security manager position while reviewing “wish list” items at budget time.

III. Medical Benefits Update.

Mr. Masciana said that there is no medical benefits report this evening.

C. PLANNING

I. Report on Meeting Held October 19, 2022.

Mr. Martelli reported that they are beginning to plan for the state mandate for 2035 when all buses need to be alternative fuel and in 2040 need to be zero emissions. Dattco attended and explained where the industry is going and what other districts are doing. They shared a presentation entitled “Transitioning to Electric and Alternative Fuels”.

II. Approval of Ed Specs for HVAC Projects.

Mr. Martelli reported that the State recently released guidelines for a new HVAC Grant Program that was developed by and will be administered by

the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) - Office of School Construction and Grants Review (OSCGR). Grant parameters were provided by OSCGR on 9/30/2022 and with applications due by 12/1/2022, Mr. Masciana explained that the window to complete the application is tight but could be achieved. He stated that there are a total of 9 HVAC projects that he believes would meet the qualifications for the grant program, of which 3 are completed and 6 are to be completed. One of the key requirements for the grant application is for the Board of Education to approve the Educational Specifications for each of the projects and then for the Town Council to pass three required resolutions to: authorize the Superintendent to apply to DAS for the grant; to establish a building committee for each project; and to authorize the preparation of at least schematic drawings for each project.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Educational Specifications for each of the following 9 projects. Three of the grants – Highland School Boiler Replacement, Dodd Roof Top Unit Replacement and Doolittle Boiler Replacement have already been completed. The way that the grant parameters read allows us to include any HVAC dated back to March 2020. Those three total \$941,000. The reimbursement can be as much as 50%. The projects are as follows:

- Highland Elementary School Boiler Replacement Project numbers 01282 and 01370 with an appropriation totaling \$600,000.
- Dodd Middle School Replacement of Roof Top Units Project number 1347 with an appropriation totaling \$100,000
- Doolittle Elementary School Boiler replacement Project number 1369 with an appropriation totaling \$600,000
- CHS Systematic Replacement of Unit Ventilators Project numbers 01348 and 01359 with an appropriation totaling \$100,000
- CHS Energy Recovery Ventilator Installation 1417 with an appropriation totaling \$175,000
- CHS Mechanical Tunnel Improvements Project number 1418 with an appropriation totaling \$100,000
- Dodd Systematic Phase-in of Cooling Improvements Project number Project number 1455 with an appropriation totaling \$120,000
- CHS Systematic Replacement of Unit Ventilators Project number 1456 with an appropriation totaling \$225,000

- Dodd Middle School & Doolittle Elementary Schools Unit Ventilator Replacements Project number 1463 with an appropriation totaling \$300,000

MOTION by Mr. Martelli and seconded by Ms. Rosenberg.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the following 9 HVAC Improvement Projects as recommended by the Planning Committee of the Board at their meeting held on October 19, 2022:

- Project numbers 01282 and 01370 with an appropriation totaling \$600,000
- Project number 1347 with an appropriation totaling \$100,000
- Project number 1369 with an appropriation totaling \$600,000
- Project numbers 01348 and 01359 with an appropriation totaling \$410,000
- Project number 1417 with an appropriation totaling \$175,000
- Project number 1418 with an appropriation totaling \$100,000
- Project number 1455 with an appropriation totaling \$120,000
- Project number 1456 with an appropriation totaling \$225,000
- Project number 1463 with an appropriation totaling \$300,000

FURTHER MOVED that the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to apply to the HVAC Grant Program administered by the Office of School Construction and Grants Review (OSCGR) for the HVAC improvement projects and respectfully requests that the Cheshire Town Council passes the three resolutions required as part of the grant application to:

- 1) Authorize the Superintendent of Schools to apply to DAS for a grant for each project
- 2) Establish a building committee for each project
- 3) Authorize the preparation of at least schematic drawings for each project

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

III. RFP for Space Needs

Mr. Martelli noted they put in an RFP for Architectural Firms to look at our elementary schools and start planning for trailers. He said three of the four firms who submitted will be attending the November meeting to present what their plan is.

D. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held September 28, 2022.

Mr. Grippo said that in regard to issues that were brought up during public comment, we will be holding our next policy meeting on November 15th and it will be in person. He welcomes the public to attend the meeting. He noted that almost all policy is shaped by state law and because of that, our attorney will attend to discuss how state law applies to particular issues such as Trans rights and Title IX.

At the September 28th meeting, the committee reviewed several policies. Policy & Regulation 3543 School Activity Fund. There is only a small change to the policy itself, updating the title from Director of Management and Personnel to Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Changes to the Regulation were incorporated with the support of the auditing firm and recommendations for payment accounts.

Regarding Policies 4112.8 Nepotism and Policy 5145.44/4000.1 Title IX, we will be seeking direction from our attorneys in regard to revisions that need to be made.

Bylaw 9321.2 Electronic Board of Education Meetings. This bylaw outlines the requirements according to the Freedom of Information Act.

II. First Reading of Policies

The Committee agreed to move forward Policy 3543 and Bylaw 9321 for a first reading.

III. Second Reading of Policies

#3542.43 Food Service Charging Policy - Policy 3542.43 Food Service Charging Policy. There were no changes made to this policy since the first reading. The main revision to this policy states, "In order to sustain the District's food services program, the District cannot permit the excessive charging of student meals. Therefore, if a student's account reaches a balance equal to 30 days of a student charging negative, the balance and student information will be referred to the homeless liaison." The liaison will reach out to the family to be sure there is not an underlying concern.

IV. Third Reading and Approval of Policies

There have been no changes to these policies since the second reading. Revisions are being implemented due to changes in legislation.

Policy 1140 Distribution of Materials to and by Students. This policy provides guidance on the distribution of flyers to parents. It also prohibits, during the course of the normal school hours, the use of students in activities that are not part of the normal educational and planned curriculum process. While the policies are similar, the Committee agreed to add the following language to our current policy:

Advertising in the Schools

No advertising of materials used for commercial purposes shall be permitted in the school buildings or on the grounds of the District without prior approval of the Superintendent. Advertising in student publications shall be regulated by rules and regulations developed by the Superintendent. Ads concerning drug paraphernalia and any controlled substance are prohibited in any school-sponsored publication.

Policy 6141.51 – Instruction – Advanced Courses or Programs, Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment. Legislation passed requires each local and regional board of education to adopt a policy concerning the eligibility criteria for student enrollment in an advanced course or program. This policy refers to enrollment criteria for advanced courses or programs offered by a school district in grades nine through twelve. The policy states that the Board believes in the basic principle that academic rigor and the opportunity to accelerate learning are powerful motivators for students to meet intellectual challenges and excel in the academic environment. The Board supports advanced courses and programs that provide academic acceleration. All students at the high school level will have an opportunity to participate in a rigorous and academically challenging curriculum.

Policy 6141.52 – Instruction – Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8 and 9 Students. Legislation requires each Board of Education to adopt a challenging curriculum policy by July 1, 2022, that aligns with State Department of Education (SDE) guidance. The policy states that the Board of Education (Board) believes academically advanced courses and/or programs are designed to motivate students to understand rigorous content. The Board recognizes its responsibility to identify these students in grades 8 and 9, in compliance with Section 5 of P.A. 21-199, and to provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services.

The challenging curriculum policy shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. Criteria for the identification of students in grades eight and nine who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program; and
2. The requirement that these students have an academic plan.

Policy 6172.1 – Instruction – Gifted and Talented Students Program. Local and regional boards of education are required to develop a policy, not later than July 1, 2022, for the equitable identification of gifted and talented students. The legislation indicates that such policy shall require the use of multiple methods of identification of gifted and talented students that are in compliance with guidance provided by the State Department of Education (SDE).

The policy states, “The Cheshire Public Schools are committed to recognizing and promoting the individual strengths, gifts, and talents of all children. The Cheshire Public Schools, in conjunction with State of Connecticut regulations and requirements, will identify students demonstrating extraordinary ability academically, creatively, and artistically.” Dr. Solan noted that we currently have a process to identify students and already follow the procedures that are outlined in the policy.

MOTION by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Mr. White.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policies#1140 Distribution of Materials to and by Students, 6141.51 Advanced Courses or Programs, 6141.52 Challenging Curriculum Program, and 6172.1 Gifted & Talented Students and directs the Superintendent to put said policies into immediate effect.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Mr. Perugini asked if we are in compliance with the law that requires menstrual products to be in all bathrooms. Mr. Masciana said there was some confusion but the law actually states that we have to provide menstrual products in all female bathrooms, non-gender bathrooms and one male bathroom in grades 3 through 12 by September 2023. He said they are aware of the law and working on it.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no other standing committee reports.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Mr. Martelli.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the Minutes from meetings held on September 15, 2022.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0-1 (Ms. Harrigan abstained.)

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan reported on COVID19 protocols. He said the district COVID spreadsheet that is linked on our website is updated daily. Over the last three weeks, there have been less than one-half of a percent of cases. We will begin to send out weekly updates, but if the situation changes, we can increase the frequency of updates.

Darcey School was mentioned in Education Week for the work they have done through the pandemic to support students with different needs.

Dr. Gadd sent out a communication to families in regard to the recent shooting of the police officers in Bristol. Cheshire High School invited Cheshire Police Department law enforcement into the school to participate in activities with students.

Mr. White said about two weeks ago he went to Norton to pick up his son and waited outside. He said one of the things that came up in Curriculum a few weeks ago was parent pick up in the rain. He asked if now that we are moving post pandemic, if we can steer parents back to pre-pandemic restrictions.

Dr. Solan said he thinks there are still concerns regarding security post Uvalde. He said that administrators will be getting together collectively to try to strike a balance with security concerns and higher enrollment and re-opening the buildings.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

A. **CABE Board Recognition Award**

Dr. Solan said that as mentioned at the last Board of Education Business meeting, he and Ms. Silano completed the application and submission for a CABE Board of Distinction Award. The application requires a motion be made and approved at a Board of Education meeting. Because we did not have a business meeting prior to the application deadline, CABE approved our request to submit the application pending a formal vote.

MOTION by Mr. Perugini and seconded by Ms. Harrigan.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the application for submission for a CABE Board of Distinction Award.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Mr. Perugini said that he will be at the CABA Convention on November 18th. He said they had a very productive Open Forum meeting. Mr. Perugini announced the upcoming meetings.

10. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Ms. Ham, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 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: _____.