

**MINUTES OF BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON DECEMBER 15, 2022 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary; Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli, Samantha Rosenberg, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Adam Grippo-Vice Chair

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 students reported on sporting events and recognitions, fundraising activities, musical concerts and club activities at the high school.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. School Partnership Award – Chapman School

Dr. Harrigan, the Board of Education representative to Chapman School, introduced the school's recipient, Staci Miller. She reported that Chapman is fortunate to have Staci Miller as part of their school community. Staci has served as the PTSA President for several years at Chapman. She heads up the Yearbook Committee, organizes the annual Book Fair, schedules all of the cultural arts events, leads the 6th grade parent committee for Nature's Classroom and plans family events throughout the year. The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Staci Miller for going above and beyond for the students of Cheshire. Ms. Miller was presented with a certificate and small gift.

B. Student Recognitions

Dr. Mary Gadd, Principal of Cheshire High School, introduced Anna Pociu, Asya Tarabar, and Lily Watson, three Cheshire High School students who are being recognized for receiving German language awards. The American Association of Teachers of German (AATG) commends students and their teachers for their truly outstanding accomplishments. These students are among the Top 100 High School Students learning German in the United States and made the top 99 in the USA list. The students went on to take a rigorous online exam that tested all four skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Their German teacher, Kristin Haase, said that words could not describe how proud she is of these students. Dr. Solan recognized Ms. Haase for being an outstanding teacher of German.

C. **CHS Boys Soccer Recognition**

Athletic Director, Steve Trifone introduced the Cheshire High School Boys Soccer Team and their Coach, Artur Branco. He said they are being recognized for winning the Class L Boys Soccer title, the team's first state title since 1988. Mr. Trifone said this year they also won the State Sportsmanship Award. Their coach, Artur Branco has been coaching for 29 years, and his year, he also was awarded Coach of the Year. The Board of Education congratulated the soccer team and their coaches.

3. **AUDIENCE**

None.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held December 12, 2022.**

Ms. Ham reported that the Committee learned about the district's advanced placement, dual enrollment and early college experience courses. Maureen Reed, Assistant Principal, provided a breakdown of the enrollment noting 979 enrollments, some of which are dual enrollments. They will continue to add to these courses in the Program of Studies. The Committee learned of three out-of-country field trips that will take place in 2024. The trips will be to Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and Iceland. There was no action taken on the trips as they are waiting for the 2023-2024 calendar to be finalized. Dr. Gadd gave an overview of updates to course designations in the Program of Studies for next year. The updates include changing the level designations from College Prep and Competitive College Prep to Honors courses. Ms. Ham reported they will be discontinuing many of our subscriptions for online readers that were purchased during COVID. The research shows that having quality texts in hand are a far better tool for learning to read rather than a tablet. The plan is to revitalize the classroom libraries that suffered during COVID. This will start with Kindergarten through second grade and then continue through the remaining elementary grades. Lastly, Mr. Hanlon reported there is an ongoing review of the 6-8 grade math textbook at Dodd.

B. **FINANCE**

I. **Report on Meeting Held December 6, 2022.**

In Mr. Grippo's absence, Mr. Masciana reported on the meeting held December 6, 2022. The Committee discussed Food and Nutrition Services and the Smart Funds provided by the State. He said he is pleased to report we will be able to provide free meals through January 13, 2023. He noted we would supplement about two and a half days' worth of free meals through the food services budget, approximately \$25,000, so the free meals would end on a Friday. Parents will begin paying for meals on Tuesday,

January 17, which is the day after the Martin Luther King holiday. This ends the free meal program for all students in the district, although any student who is eligible for free and reduced meals will not have any interruption. If a need arises in a household, parents can apply at any time. He noted that about 15% of the students in Cheshire are eligible for free and reduced meals.

The next portion of the meeting was dedicated to the 2023/24 budget where they reviewed the items that are being built into the budget. They are projecting an additional 73 students in K-6 grades. After reviewing the numbers and looking at class sizes, in order to maintain a class size of 18.8 students, four elementary teachers will need to be added next year. They reviewed some of the new program requests that have been submitted. The last item discussed at the meeting was the staff who were hired for the bounce back initiative. He explained that all of the salaries will continue be paid with grant funds, so it is not an issue for the 2023/4 budget.

II. Finance Report

Mr. Masciana reported that the budget is still holding. He received an update from Eversource and their electricity rate is roughly 24 cents. He said we are currently at 8 cents, based on a long-term lock with Constellation Energy. He reported they were able to lock in an electricity rate for all schools at 12.94 cents and stay with Constellation. Mr. Masciana also reported that they raised the cap on non-payroll expenditures from 40% to 50%. They will continue to monitor and report on any changes in this year's budget.

C. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held December 13, 2022.

In Mr. Grippo's absence, Mr. White gave the policy report. The Committee reviewed policies for first, second and third readings.

II. First Reading of Policies

Policy #0025 Strategic Goals-Performance Standards. Mr. White said the Board adopted new Strategic Goals reflecting the district's focus on Social Emotional Learning and Complex Thinking, narrowing the goals from sixteen to two. Now that the Board has adopted the Strategic Goals, the policy must be updated.

#4112.8/4212.8 Nepotism: Employment of Relatives. Changes to this policy are the outcome of a discussion held with our attorney where we learned that the State law was slightly different from our understanding. We are able to revised our policy to maintain the Board's intent.

III. Second Reading of Policies

#5141.213 – Administering Medication - Opioid Overdose Prevention (Emergency Administration of Naloxone.) There were no changes since the first reading. Our district is directed through the State Department of Health, to have a policy regarding Narcan. This life-saving drug is in the schools for a number of years, for not only students and staff but also members of the community who may be in the buildings. In the Middle school and High school, the drug is stored with the AED's. Dr. Solan noted that the drug was purchase with grant funding.

IV. Third Reading and Approval of Policies

Policy #3543 School Activity Fund

There were no changes to this policy since the first reading. Revisions include a small change to the policy itself, updating the title from Director of Management and Personnel to Chief Operating Officer (COO).

Bylaw #9321.2 Electronic Board of Education Meetings

There were no changes to this policy since the first reading. The Bylaw outlines the requirements according to the Freedom of Information Act regarding holding Board of Education meetings remotely.

MOTION by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Martelli.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policy #3453 School Activity Fund and #9321.2 Electronic Board of Education Meetings and direct the Superintendent to put said policy and Bylaw into immediate effect.*

Discussion:

Dr. Harrigan asked if electronic meetings are dictated by the State. Dr. Solan answered yes, per the law; certain protocol must be followed to hold an electronic meeting. Board members agreed that there is no plan to begin holding business meetings remotely. Some subcommittee meetings are held remotely, as long as there is only routine business, but a member of the public wishes to attend, the meeting will be held in person.

Ms. Rosenberg asked if janitors are trained to administer the Narcan. Dr. Solan said he did not believe so, but it is a very easy process to administer the drug.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

D. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

Legislative Committee.

Mr. White reported on the meeting held on December 19, 2023. Before reporting, he asked Dr. Solan to schedule a meeting with our legislators. Dr. Solan agreed to do that.

Mr. White reviewed a list of items that the Superintendent shared with the Committee including Excess Cost Reimbursement, the Right to Read Act, Teacher Shortages, Teacher Evaluation, Virtual Learning, Educational Cost Sharing, and Unfunded Mandates.

Excess Cost Reimbursement is funding for special education students. We are requesting full funding of that program

The Right to Read Act, Dr. Solan explained the legislature passed a law through the implementer bill that indicated that the State must employ reading programs in grades K through addressing all facets of the science of reading. The State created a committee and that committee passed down five reading programs that they indicated districts must use. It was determined that only 11 districts in Connecticut are currently using only one of those five programs and those districts are not the highest achieving reading score districts in Connecticut. Tonight before the meeting, Dr. Solan said he received an email from the State about a waiver, due in February. Dr. Solan said it would be a great expense to purchase a new program and to train our staff to implement a new program. He said he would be reviewing this further with Ms. Silano, Mr. Hanlon and our reading specialists. Mr. Perugini noted that CABE, along with many Boards of Education, are against this legislation as well.

Teacher Evaluation - the intent is to change the way teachers are evaluated to make it more of a long-term process.

Virtual Learning. Dr. Solan noted this would allow districts to schedule a remote learning day, for specific reasons, if needed.

Education Cost Sharing - ECS is not generally fully funded. We would request that it be fully funded by the State.

In addition, the Committee reviewed a list of unfunded mandates. Mr. Perugini suggested that Board members contact Mr. White with any topics that they wish to discuss with our legislators.

Board members discussed the various items outlined by Mr. White. Ms. Ham voiced her concern with these items and mandates. She said we need to argue for

our autonomy. Dr. Harrigan said she shares Ms. Ham's frustration with the Right to Read bill. Dr. Solan said this was not necessarily the bill, but with the decision made by the Committee that was formed because of the bill. Ms. Rosenberg said that she thinks the state needs to differentiate between towns.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Ham.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the Minutes from the meeting held on November 17, 2022.

VOTE: The Motion passed 6-0-1 (Mr. Perugini abstained).

6. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

A. School Building Committee Update

Dr. Solan reported they toured the sites with OSCRG. He said they received notification today that the State approved both sites. The School Building Committee also toured the properties. At their next meeting on December 19, the Committee will be reviewing RFQ's.

8. OLD BUSINESS

None.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Mr. Perugini noted there are no other meetings until January. He wished everyone safe and happy holiday before reviewing January meetings.

10. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. White, the meeting was adjourned into Executive Session at 8:25 p.m. Executive Session ended approximately 9:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: _____.