

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING  
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON APRIL 20, 2023 AT 7:30 PM**

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Board Members Present: Anthony Perugini-Chair; Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary; Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli (7:31), Samantha Rosenberg, Timothy White (7:31)

Board Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer, Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Mary Jocelyn-Gadd, Principal-Cheshire High School; Kelly Grillo, Principal-Norton School; Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator

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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. Perugini led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

**2. PRESENTATIONS**

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

Mr. White, the Board of Education representative to Norton School, introduced the school's recipient, Denise Booker. He reported that Ms. Booker Denise Booker retired from Cheshire Public Schools in 2022 after being a speech language pathologist at Darcey and Highland Schools for 31 years. In her retirement, her passion for children brought her to Norton where she has graciously volunteered in Ms. Landisio's special education classroom. She joins primary students twice a week as a reading "buddy". The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Denise Booker for going above and beyond for the students of Norton.

**B. School Partnership Award – Cheshire High School**

Mr. Perugini, the Board of Education representative to Cheshire High School, introduced the school's recipients, members of the Quinnipiac Men's Soccer Team. The Quinnipiac Men's Soccer team recently partnered with Tom Manning's class, the OASIS Program. The OASIS program supports students with a variety of special needs and abilities, as they navigate CHS, to connect with the Community, and explore experiences that will prepare them for the future. Sam Hayden, a student in the program, has been the Team IMPACT member of the Quinnipiac Men's Soccer team for the last few years. The mission of Team IMPACT is to connect children facing serious and chronic illness with college athletic teams, forming life-long bonds and life-changing outcomes. They are an exceptional group of people and make the students feel like a million bucks as they are taught some soccer skills, learn some dance moves from the CHS students, and just spend some time talking about shared interests like movies and

food. The Cheshire Board of Education thanked the members of the Quinnipiac Men's Soccer team for going above and beyond for the students of Cheshire.

[Mr. Perugini called for the student representative's report. He noted he did not call for their report at the usual time, under 1. Call To Order because it was not listed on Agenda.]

*IC. Student Representatives.* Monica Ghaly and Michael DeJoseph, student representatives for the 2022/2023 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School. They reported that spring sports are underway. Unified Theatre is holding their performance on May 5. A college fair was held at Cheshire High School for students in all high schools in the area. Over 50 colleges attended. The Peer Health Educators held the elementary Leadership Conference on April 6 and the Middle School Leadership Conference on April 18. Both conferences were empowering experiences for our elementary and middle school students. The Robotics Team was invited to attend the National Championship in Houston, Texas and will compete against teams from all over the country. The spring musical, The Addams Family, was extremely successful, and well attended. The junior and senior proms will be on Saturday, April 29 and Saturday, April 13. Michael noted there has been an issue at CHS with trash being left behind at lunch tables. They are trying to come up with a student led response to improve those conditions and uphold our cafeteria and Commons to a standard of cleanliness and greatness.

**3. AUDIENCE**

Tucker Deming 230 Oregon Road. Mr. Deming said there are innuendos that our school is being infiltrated with a program to sexualize our children. He said correct me if I am wrong, but was there a publication, a query to all students in our district, on what sex they were? How could we allow that to happen? He said they aren't looking for followers, but for leaders who will come out and say, this is wrong.

Sharon Hauck, 424 Cardinal Lane. Ms. Hauck said regarding the survey, she heard a student was sent to the office for saying there are only two genders, just boys and girls but she is here to speak on a different issue. She said she is here this evening to ask about safety and security at our schools. She said there have been 377 school shootings since Columbine and asked a number of questions regarding safety and security in our schools.

Mr. Grippo referred Ms. Hauck to the video of the December 2022 Policy Committee Meeting where our security consultant spoke to the Committee. In addition, Mr. Masciana and Ms. Silano reviewed safety, security and mental health practices and procedures that are in place in our schools.

Mr. Perugini added that at the next Policy Committee meeting, the Committee would be discussing survey questions.

#### 4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

##### A. CURRICULUM

###### I. Curriculum Report

Ms. Ham, the Chair of the Curriculum Committee will report on the meeting held April 17, 2023. The Committee heard from Michelle Catucci, CHS Director of School Counseling, on a new platform for student success plans called School Links. Ms. Silano put forth a request for Peck Jones Grant funds to be used for classroom library books for kindergarten and grade 1 classrooms. Ms. Silano gave an overview of the state and national concerns raised over teacher recruitment and retention. She shared the district's conversations to improve both teacher recruitment/retention as well as address the need for increased collaborative planning time at the elementary level. Ms. Silano and Dr. Maureen Reed shared an updated format for the School Business Partnership Committee. Ms. Silano shared that feedback from teachers was positive regarding the entire district professional development held on March 17. Mr. Hanlon shared the work of the ad hoc Middle School Math textbook Committee. Lastly, the Committee reviewed two overnight field trips.

###### II. Approval of Peck Jones Funds

Ms. Ham explained that the 2022-23 Cheshire Public Schools' Peck Jones Fund request for \$22,000 would enhance the availability of quality reading materials in classroom libraries for students in grades K-1. In March 2020, when schools were closed due to the pandemic, the district sent home ample reading material for elementary students. Many of the books sent home either were not returned or are worn and in need of replacement. Teachers need additional texts at various reading levels to support all primary-grade students. In addition, we have identified a need for additional decodable texts for Kindergarten and first-grade readers.

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

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the use of Peck Jones Funds in the amount of \$22,000 to enhance the availability of quality reading materials in the classroom libraries for students in grades Kindergarten and Grade 1."*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

##### B. FINANCE

###### I. Finance Report

Mr. Masciana reported they have expended or encumbered 92% of budget. He reported an internal team meets every 2 weeks to review and make

sure they are ready to balance and close the books. He will continue to update the Board as the year progresses.

**II. Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reported claims increased for the month of March to \$979,267, up from the prior month, but in line with the \$1 million per month expected. They also received Stop Loss reimbursements in the amount of \$169,461 in March and \$138,228 in prescription rebates. As of March 31, 2023, the Medical Benefits Reserve Balance is \$1,616,087, which is 1.62 months of reserves.

Discussion

Ms. Ham asked if Eversource reduces their rates, could we switch suppliers. Mr. Masciana said we are locked into our current supplier through November. After that, we could switch but usually we can do better than the Eversource rate.

Ms. Rosenblatt asked about the Substitute – Intern Line Item that is at 161.9% expended. She asked if there are leaves or if there is a substantial absence problem. Mr. Masciana said it is a combination of leaves and professional development coverage. He said internally they track and try to keep it as low as they can. Ms. Silano added that there are staff out on FMLA in addition to a shortage of interns.

Mr. Grippo asked about Outplacement costs. Mr. Masciana responded we are at 92% and expect to be within budget again this year.

**C. PLANNING**

**I. Report on Meeting Held April 17, 2023.**

Mr. Martelli reported they held a virtual Planning Committee meeting. At the meeting, there was a presentation by Energia. The Planning Committee is exploring options to determine if there are alternative methods of financing some of the future capital expenditures. Energia is an Owner's Representative for energy performance contracts. Their next steps are to put together a proposal, and then actually do an assessment of our school buildings to identify projects to determine where they can or cannot help us. Mr. Masciana said if we could find enough projects whereby the energy savings pays to finance the project; it would not have to be bonded.

**D. POLICY**

**I. Policy Report**

Mr. Grippo, Chair of the Policy Committee reported on the meeting held on April 17, 2023. He noted that the policy minutes included in the Board

packet are incorrect. They say the meeting was virtual and it was actually held in-person.

At the meeting, Transportation Coordinator, Luther Miller attended. The Committee heard testimony from parents regarding having their children added to a bus route. They discussed the impact of changing the walking distance for students and discussed sidewalks. The Committee will examine Policy #3541 Transportation at an upcoming meeting. Dr. Solan reviewed Policy #5117 regarding school attendance areas. This policy is in place for parents requesting their children attend school in a different area than their districted school. The requests will be looked at on a case-by-case basis this year due to the growing enrollment at Highland School.

The Committee also reviewed Policy #6159.1 Instructional Arrangements-Teacher Aides, but did not move it forward and will continue their review at a future meeting.

**II. First Reading of Policies**

Grippo gave a first reading to the following Policies:

#4222 Teacher Aides/Paraprofessionals - a new policy driven by Title I that states if a person is a Title I paraprofessional, they will have to meet certain credentialing requirements. He said our personnel already meet the requirements.

#6172.3 Educational Instruction under Parental Direction (Home Schooling). Mr. Grippo said Dr. Solon is recommending that we revise our current policy to state that homeschool students cannot attend school classes on a part time basis and are not allowed to participate in after school activities. Currently, we do not allow either option and for clarity purposes, the policy should state our practice.

**III. Second Reading of Policies**

Mr. Grippo gave a second reading to Policies #6140 Curriculum and #6142 Basic Instruction. Both policies contain statutory updates. There were no changes to these policies since the first reading.

Mr. White commented that they have a policy on international travel for students and he would like to add it to a policy agenda to extend it to staff. Mr. Grippo said yes for their next meeting.

**E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES**

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION** by Mr. Grippo and seconded by Ms. Ham.

**MOVED** *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the minutes from the meetings held on February 16 2023. March 16 2023. April 10 2023.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Dr. Harrigan reported that there were two emails received. The first was from Stephan Calo regarding placing SRO's at all of our schools going forward. The second email is from Bojraj Thumatti who is inquiring if the Board has considered a later starting time for students. Mr. Perugini said this might be a topic for the Board Retreat this year.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

In Dr. Solan's absence, Assistant Superintendent Silano reported they had the kickoff meeting for the architectural core group, which is made up of Superintendent of Schools, herself, Mr. Masciana, Ms. Carey, the principals who are directly involved in those schools, Ms. Dessert, Ms. Grillo, Ms. Burns, along with a teacher representative from each of those buildings, and Mr. Clavet, Director of Facilities. They will be meeting every two weeks from now until December 26. The committee will be working on looking at visioning, the Ed Specs, safety and security, site improvements, systems and lighting, interior design refinements of the concepts and a room by room assessment. Additionally, there will be two committees/think tanks, one for the new North End school and one for the new Norton school. This committee will be made up of parents, teachers, students, paraeducators, secretaries, nurses, etc. That group will meet three times. They are inviting two Board members to sit on the committee for the North End and two members for the new Norton. The first meeting will be to review and talk about initial design for both buildings, and especially looking at the site. They will discuss overall design strategies, and talk about sustainability strategies, looking how to bring nature into the design. The second workshop will be in late September, early October, followed up with a third meeting in mid-November, early December.

Mr. Perugini shared that the community is concerned about dangerous school bus passing around town and asked if we can put more cameras on our busses.

Mr. Masciana said a car passed multiple cars and then the school bus when it was stopped with the stop-arm extended. Unfortunately, there were no cameras on that bus. He said they have three busses that have cameras that can catch a bus pass out of a fleet of 35. He said if there are repeat passes, the bus is rotated to that area. In addition, if drivers can catch the license plate, they can report it. Mr. Masciana said that we recently purchased and installed an extended stop-arm on one bus and it should be in service next week. The

Arm extends to 6 feet. Mr. Perugini asked if any busses have dash cameras to which Mr. Masciana replied, no. He said we can request more stop arm cameras and he will speak to the Police Chief and Traffic Officer.

There was discussion regarding Ed Specs for the new buildings and classroom size and capacity. Mr. Masciana said the number of students in a class is not determined by the room capacity, but the teacher capacity. The average classroom is about 900 square feet.

Dr. Harrigan said she would like to be on one of the committees. Ms. Rosenberg asked about the 3:15 pm starting time which is in conflict with her work hours. Ms. Silano said they would be happy to have her join later when she can than not join at all.

**8. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Chairperson's Update**

Mr. Perugini noted that CAFE held a webinar to discuss what has come out of the Appropriations and Finance Committee. He will send a link to Board members to listen to the webinar. Mr. Perugini read the upcoming meetings.

**10. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Grippo, and seconded by Mr. White, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Anthony Perugini, Board Chair

Attest:

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Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: May 1, 2023.