

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON NOVEMBER 16, 2023 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Adam Grippo-Vice Chair; Anne Harrigan-Secretary; Faith Ham, Andrew Martelli, Samantha Rosenberg, Timothy White

Board Members Absent: Anthony Perugini, Chair

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

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. Grippo led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- C. Student Representatives. Andrew Elliot and Ella Paul, student representatives for the 2023/2024 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School. The students reported on items such as sports standings, the marching band, student volunteer work, the fall play, and a college fair.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. District Performance Index

Superintendent Solan gave a presentation on the Next Generation Accountability Report. (Presentation on file.) Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System is a broad set of 12 indicators that help tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers, and life. It provides a holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance. He said the State of Connecticut recently released statewide data. The state is looking at academic achievement, from both the perspective of overall performance and student growth year over year. He reviewed the Cheshire district report for 2022-23 noting the areas of maintenance, improvement, and needs to improve. He reported that Cheshire has the ninth highest overall performance in the State of Connecticut of comprehensive districts. This represents the best performance in our history and significant growth from our position of 23rd in 2015. Dr. Solan also reviewed some of the district's strategic priorities – chronic absenteeism, SAT scores, and social-emotional learning.

3. AUDIENCE

Marléna Soble, 25 Flagler Lane. Ms. Soble and representatives from the Cheshire Food Drive presented Dr. Solan with a plaque in recognition of the generous participation of the Cheshire Public Schools.

Ben Palladino, 25 LeClerc Road. Mr. Palladino, a parent of a CHS Fencing Club student, is in support of advancing the CHS Fencing Club to a varsity sport. He said that he is aware this matter will not be reviewed formally until the budget process in January. He noted Mr. Perosino offered two buses for their away games, but said there are eleven away games and requested eight buses to transport students to those games.

Dr. Solan noted he had just received an email from Steve Votto, an advocate for the CHS Fencing Club. The email will be on record with the minutes.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **CURRICULUM**

I. **Report on Meeting Held November 13, 2023.**

Ms. Ham reported that the Committee heard an overview of the Cheshire High School Program of Studies. There is an addition of the AP World History course. The Committee heard from CHS teachers who presented recommendations for a new textbook for use with the Chemistry and Honors Chemistry courses. They voted to move the recommendation to approve the textbook to the full board after the two-week review period. Lastly, the Committee heard details regarding two out-of-state overnight field trips. Ms. Ham encouraged the public to watch the meeting on YouTube for more details.

Ms. Ham noted that a few years ago, the State mandated students complete a capstone project as a graduation requirement. This required the district to spend a great deal of time to implement and required additional staff hours to manage the mandate. The state has now decided this mandate is no longer required. She said she hopes our legislators put more time into determining what they will mandate and hopes our Board will hold our legislators accountable to thoroughly review these mandates before they are imposed.

B. **FINANCE**

I. **Finance Report**

Mr. Grippo asked Mr. Masciana to give the Finance Report. Mr. Masciana reported they have expended or encumbered 74.8% of the budget, all our major encumbrances, primarily payroll and transportation, are completed. He said, as of right now, there are no issues in any of the budget lines.

II. **Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reported that claims were \$1,082,051. As of October 31, the Medical Benefits Reserve fund balance is \$2,022,978, 1.84 months of claims reserve.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Mr. Martelli.

MOVED to go into Executive Session to discuss the Secretaries and Technicians bargaining agreement and the proposed transportation contract, including Dr. Solan, Mr. Masciana and Ms. Silano, with possible action to follow.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present. (8:42pm)

Executive Session adjourned and the meeting resumed at 9:11 p.m.

C. PERSONNEL

I. Discussion/Possible Approval of Contract between the Cheshire Board of Education and the Cheshire Educational Secretaries and Technicians United

MOTION by Ms. Ham, seconded by Mr. White.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the collective bargaining agreement with Cheshire Educational Secretaries and Technicians United for the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2027. Further, the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent of Schools to sign the contract on its behalf.

Discussion

Mr. Masciana reviewed the terms of the four-year contract.

Employee Benefits:

- HSA Plan deductibles remain at \$2,000/\$4,000 (Single/2-Person & Family) for the first two contract years, increasing to \$2,250/\$4,500 effective with the HAS plan year beginning on 1/1/26.
- The Board's contribution to the employee's HSA account will remain at \$1,000/\$2,000 (Single/2-Person & Family) all 4-contract years.
- The co-share rate paid by employees for the HSA Plan will increase from the current 12% rate to - 13% effective 1/1/24, then 14% effective 1/1/25 through 12/31/26, and 15% effective 1/1/27.
- The PPO and HMO Plan options are eliminated as coverage options.
- Dental coverage is enhanced to include Rider-A (50% coverage for restorative services such as inlays, crowns & oral surgery).

Wage Increases:

- Employees at Steps 1 - 4 - 2.625% in 23-24 retro to 7-1-23, 2.75% in 24-25, 2.75% in 25-26 and 2.75% in 26-27.
- Employees at Step 5 - 2.875% in 23-24 retro to 7-1-23, 3.0% in 24-25, 3.0% in 25-26 and 3.0% in 26-27.
- Technology Assistants (five employees) who maintain job-specific certification of an ongoing nature will earn an additional \$1.50/hour.

Wage Concessions:

- 1.5x overtime pay will begin after 40 hours worked instead of 36 hours.
- 10-month employees hired on/after 7/1/23 will receive 5 paid vacation days per year instead of 10 per year.

Mr. White said he thinks this contract is fair and will support the motion. He thanked Mr. Masciana and the union for the time they put into negotiating this agreement.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

D. PLANNING

I. Report on Meeting Held November 15, 2023.

Mr. Martelli reported at the meeting the Committee discussed the transportation contract.

II. Discussion/Possible Action Regarding Transportation Contract

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

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education recommends that the Cheshire Town Council waives the bidding requirements and approves entering into a new agreement with Dattco, in accordance with their proposal dated October 12, 2023, to provide transportation services to the Cheshire Public Schools for the period from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2029 with annual escalations of 6%, 4%, 4%, 4% and 3%.*

Mr. Masciana explained this is a request for the Board of Education to approve requesting a bid waiver from the Town Council to enter into a new five-year agreement. He said they have been negotiating for a new contract with Dattco for several months now and Dattco has proposed through a term sheet, a new five-year agreement that would begin July 1, 2024. The high-level terms would be a new five-year agreement, however, at the Board's option; they can extend the agreement for another five years. The contract increases are 6% in year-one, followed by 4% in the next three years, and then the last contract year would be 3%. As part of this agreement, Dattco will replace approximately 50% of the bus fleet with new buses, all diesel, in the first year of the contract. They also are making sure that the buses will all have the latest technology including GPS tracking video cameras, and if we would like, the buses will enable us to offer a parent app to allow parents to track the bus. Dattco will also give us a onetime \$20,000 credit in year-one if we want to add any additional features to the bus fleet, such as the extended stop arms.

Mr. Masciana added that he thinks Dattco has earned our business, and they are very aggressively trying to keep it through this proposal.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

E. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held November 8, 2023.

Mr. Grippo said the Committee reviewed six policies/bylaws. The Committee agreed to bring forth three policies and one bylaw for a first reading. The Committee also reviewed #3541 Transportation, #6130 Organization of Instruction, #6145.21 Status Level Sports Program, Bylaw #9400 Bylaw Monitoring Products and Processes and Bylaw #9271 Code of Ethics and will not be taking action on those at this time.

II. First Reading of Policies

Policy # 2132 Administration - Assist. Superintendent for Instructional Services.

The recommended change to this policy is to change the title to Assistant Superintendent, removing "For Instructional Services". In addition, with regard to the Superintendent's hiring recommendation to the Board, language will be changed from solely Assistant Superintendent to "executive level central office executive leadership".

Policy #5111 - Students - Admissions/Placement.

Revisions to this policy is due to the recent change in State legislation. The law now states that a child must be five by September 1 in order to enroll in kindergarten. Previously, children who were five by January 1 could enroll. The following language is being added, "*Those born between September and January, who are four years old prior to the start of the upcoming school year are eligible to be considered for Kindergarten admission with a written request to the Superintendent of Schools.*" In addition, there was discussion between committee members and Dr. Solan regarding appropriate kindergarten eligibility assessment.

Policy #5112 - Students - Ages of Attendance.

This policy is being updated to reflect that students who are five years old by September 1 of the school year and under age twenty-two may attend school. The previous age of attendance was five years old by July 1 through age twenty-one.

Bylaw #9230 - New Board Member Orientation.

This bylaw is being revised to substitute paper copies with electronic links to materials are provided. After some discussion, the committee recommended removing a paragraph that states that orientation will begin

during a new member's candidacy. In addition, changes were made to state that new board members would receive some orientation materials electronically instead of paper copies.

F. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the Minutes from the meetings held October 19, 2023 and November 2, 2023.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence other than what Dr. Solan read at the start of the meeting.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Solan reported that this is National Education Week and he would like to acknowledge everyone in Cheshire Public Schools and the Board of Education who work to make us successful. During this week, we hosted the Superintendent's Awards Dinner where 21 students were recognized. The Next Gen Building Committee met and approved the design of both the north end and new Norton schools. Dr. Solan reported that last year the American Heart Association recognized us as a Silver Award community for our fitness and well-being programs. This year we have been designated a Gold Level community. He noted he, Ms. Silano and several Board members would be attending the CABE/CAPSS Convention. He will be presenting with CHS Principal, Mary Gadd and our security consultant on Teen Mental Health. He reported had the honor of attending the Teacher of the Year Award ceremony in Hartford this week with Katherine Zukis.

As this was their last meeting, Dr. Solan thanked Ms. Ham and Mr. Martelli for their service on the Board of Education. Mr. Martelli shared heartfelt thanks to everyone in attendance for their role on the Board and in Cheshire Public Schools.

8. OLD BUSINESS

None.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Mr. Grippo read a message from Chairman Perugini thanking the two outgoing board members. Mr. Grippo said it has been an honor to serve in leadership on this Board the last few years.

10. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Martelli, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adam Grippo, Board Vice Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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