

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON DECEMBER 7, 2023 AT 7:45 PM**

Board Members Present: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Ph.D.; Vice Chair; Adam Grippo, Secretary; Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke; Anthony Perugini; Tim White

Board Members Absent: None

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent-Instructional Services; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Diana Burns, Principal-Chapman Elementary School; Mary Gadd, Principal-Cheshire High School; John Perosino, Athletic Director; Mike Woods, Community Engagement Coordinator.

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:45 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. Ms. Rosenberg led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
- C. Student Representatives. Andrew Elliot, student representative for the 2023/2024 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. School Partnership Award – Chapman School

Jim Jinks is the Executive Director of Bike Cheshire, a community-based non-profit focused on encouraging and improving biking in Cheshire. Bike Cheshire operates a community bike share, holds public bike-safety sessions, organizes group rides, and advocates for the Cheshire Village Bike Route Network (a 40-mile network of bike-friendly streets in Cheshire, CT.)

According to Mrs. Burns, the Chapman School Principal, in addition to Jim's community contribution, Jim has organized and led Bike Safety classes for the students at Chapman School. Jim has taught students how to wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet, adjust their bicycles to fit them for safe riding, check their bikes for safety before riding, how to see and be seen riding, how to best control their bicycle, how to watch for road hazards and the importance of avoiding riding at night. These critical bike safety skills come in handy when Jim leads our Bike to School Day. This special day promotes active transportation along with a social opportunity for Chapman parents and students to connect in the fun of not taking the bus or a car ride to school while practicing their bicycle safety skills.

Mrs. Burns said individuals like Jim are truly unsung heroes who recognize that education is not confined within the four walls of a classroom, but extends into the very fabric of their community. Chapman School thanks Jim Jinks for organizing events that bring families, students, teachers, and our whole community together. The Cheshire Board of Education thanks Mr. Jinks for

going above and beyond for the students of Cheshire. Mr. Jinks thanked the Board but said it is not just him, but also everyone who is involved in Bike Cheshire.

B. Recognition of Girls Volleyball Coach

CHS Athletic Director John Perosino introduced Special Education teacher and Coach, Susan Bavone. Ms. Bavone is being recognized for winning her 600th Girls Volleyball game. He noted this is just for the girls’ team and in the spring when the boys win their next game, it will be her 900th combined win. The Board congratulated Ms. Bavone on her accomplishment.

3. AUDIENCE

None.

4. STANDING COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Ms. Rosenberg announced standing committee assignments as follows:

Subcommittee*	Chairperson	BOE Members
Curriculum	Anne Marie Cullinan	Anne Harrigan, Anthony Perugini
Finance	Anne Harrigan	Mark Ecke, Adam Grippo
Personnel	Anne Marie Cullinan	Anthony Perugini, Tim White
Planning	Mark Ecke	Samantha Rosenberg, Tim White
Policy	Mark Ecke	Anne Harrigan, Adam Grippo
Public Information	TBD	
Transportation		As Needed

5. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM

I. Approval of Textbook

Ms. Silano reviewed the textbook, World of Chemistry that the Curriculum Committee reviewed and voted unanimously to move forward to the full Board of Education for Approval. This new text will replace the current outdated Chemistry text. The request includes hardcopy textbooks for each classroom as well as six years of online access for every enrolled student.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the purchase of *World of Chemistry*, as recommended by the Curriculum Committee.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

B. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Mr. Masciana reported they have expended or encumbered \$68.04 million or about 80% of the budget. He reported that this month several students were outplaced because we could not accommodate their specialized needs within our district programs. Our outplaced tuition budget is approximately \$150,000 over budget and he will continue to monitor this and make adjustments as may be needed.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Mr. Masciana noted that it is too early in the month so we have not received the November claims breakdown, but he updated the October numbers. Total claims were \$1,220,682 but we did receive a prescription rebate of \$169,617. The medical reserve balance is \$1,903,475, 1.73 months of claims reserves.

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

MOVED to go into Executive Session at 8:19 pm to discuss the bargaining agreement between the Cheshire Board of Education and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30, to include Dr. Solan, Mr. Masciana and Ms. Silano with action to follow.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Executive Session ended and the business meeting resumed at 8:59 p.m.

C. PERSONNEL

I. Approval of Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Cheshire Board of Education (BOE) and the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30 (IUOE)

Mr. Masciana summarized the terms of the tentative agreement with the IUOE, which consists of 24 maintenance employees. The proposed new agreement is unique in that it transfers responsibility to IUOE for four significant employee benefits that were historically provided by the Board of Education. Those benefits are Medical, Rx and Dental coverage, and a \$35k Group Life Insurance benefit. The agreement was negotiated so that it is cost-neutral or better to the BOE as compared to retaining the existing benefit plan. In order to make the agreement feasible financially, below-market wage increases were negotiated to offset the cost of benefits under this new structure. Wage increases are 2.0% in 2023-24 retro to 7-1-23; 1.50% in 2024-25; 1.50% in 2025-26; and 2.00% in 2026-27. There were

other additional compensation adjustments including shoe allowance increases, longevity payments, and employee training.

MOTION by Ms. Cullinan and seconded by Mr. White.

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the collective bargaining agreement with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30 for the period from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2027. Further that the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent of Schools or his appointed designee to sign the contract on its behalf.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

Dr. Solan thanked all the employees of this union for the tremendous job they do maintaining our buildings.

D. PLANNING

I. Approval of Educational Specifications for HVAC Projects

Mr. Masciana explained the request to approve the Educational Specifications for the Dodd Middle School boiler replacement project. The project has been funded by the Town Council in the amount of \$600,000. In order for us to apply for the grant funding the state has made available to HVAC projects, the Board has to approve educational specifications and the Town Council has to approve three resolutions. Mr. Masciana said that they did apply for grants last year, but they were rejected. If they receive the funding it is 50% of eligible costs.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Boiler Replacement Project at Dodd Middle School, Town of Cheshire Project Number 01522 with an appropriation totaling \$600,000 and

FURTHER, 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 pass 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 the project; 2) Establish a building committee for the project; and 3) Authorize the preparation of at least schematic drawings for the project.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 7-0.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

MOVED that the Board of Education approve the Minutes from meeting held on November 16, 2023.

VOTE: The Motion passed 4-0-3 (Mr. Perugini, Ms. Cullinan and Mr. Ecke abstained.)

7. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

8. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Solan gave an update on school modernization. He explained the last meeting was held on November 30 and they discussed energy issues with each building and how they plan to provide geothermal hybrid systems fully electric at both locations. The desire is to be as green as possible and fit within the budget constraints of each project. The next meeting will be next Thursday.

He said last evening our Cheshire Delegation joined the Board for a conversation about the upcoming legislative session and sharing the Board's legislative priorities. They spent a great deal of time discussing the Right to Read legislation. He urged the public to watch the meeting to learn more about the legislation. The legislation was passed to address the needs of students who have been underachieving. Cheshire is not one of those districts. The State has required districts to use particular programs and Dr. Solan said those programs do not represent the heart of our programs as we have grounded our curriculum and program in the findings of the National Reading Panel. Dr. Solan said our grade 3 scores are exceptionally high. Our Hispanic Latino students were the highest performing in Connecticut, our students identified by the state as high needs, either receiving free or reduced lunch, multi-language learners or special education students ranked second, and we ranked seventh for our entire student population. Our estimate is that it would cost \$700,000 just for the materials to adopt the program. He said he feels our delegation is in strong support of this priority.

Mr. White questioned doing two hybrid geothermal systems. He said he believes we should be using a full geothermal versus the hybrid. He understands that was the plan for the North End school until they learned of a lower cost option at Norton. He said he does not agree with this and is advocating strongly that at least the North End be switched back to geothermal.

Dr. Solan said the initial design contained a full geothermal system at the North End. Because the projects were over budget, they had to make substantial reductions to both buildings. He received information from the Committee this afternoon and will share that to the website and the Board. Mr. White said his request is to get better numbers from the architects and possibly go out to referendum to ask the voters for more money.

Dr. Solan said there have been many decisions made to bring the projects back on budget. There was continued conversation about the new schools.

Board members thanked Dr. Solan for his presentation to the Curriculum Committee regarding the Right to Read legislation.

9. OLD BUSINESS

None.

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Ms. Rosenberg read a statement on being selected as the first female person of color selected as Board Chair. She thanked her other board members for their support. She said Cheshire Public Schools is in good hands with the Board, administration and staff.

B. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings

Ms. Rosenberg announced the upcoming budget meetings.

11. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Ms. Cullinan, the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: 12/15/23.