

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
HELD AT DODD MIDDLE SCHOOL ON JANUARY 25, 2024 AT 7:00 PM**

Board Members Present: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair; Adam Grippo, Secretary; Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke; Timothy White (7:30)

Board Members Absent: Anthony Perugini

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Robin-Anne Carey, Director, Pupil Personnel Services; Mary Jocelyn-Gadd, Principal, Cheshire High School; Kelly Grippo, Principal, Dodd Middle School; Diana Burns, Principal, Chapman Elementary School; Katharine Carlucci, Assistant Principal, Chapman & Norton Elementary Schools; Kimberly Dessert, Principal, Darcey School; Jodie Roden, Principal, Norton Elementary School; Scott Jeffrey, Principal, Highland Elementary School; Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator; Marie Broadway, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education; Mike Woods, Community Engagement Coordinator.

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:05 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. Ms. Rosenberg turned the meeting over to Finance Chair, Ms. Harrigan.

2. AUDIENCE.

None.

3. PUBLIC BUDGET REVIEW AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE SUPERINTENDENT’S RECOMMENDED BUDGET.

After reviewing the key budget assumptions, Mr. Masciana responded to questions the board members had from the previous meeting regarding pensions. Mr. Masciana said this evening they would discuss Instructional Expense, Special Education, Support Services, and Maintenance and Operations.

Instructional Expense is 5.7% of the budget. This year’s request is \$5,181,927, which is an increase of 15.03%.

		EXPENDED	BUDGET	PROJECTED	RECOMMENDED	CHANGE	% inc/ % dec
		2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	(From BGT)	
130	STAFF TRAINING	\$ 286,665	\$ 186,700	\$ 186,700	\$ 211,700	\$ 25,000	13.39%
323	PUPIL SERVICES	\$ 721,247	\$ 786,468	\$ 786,468	\$ 864,198	\$ 77,730	9.88%
560	TUITION OUTPLACEMENTS	\$ 2,150,899	\$ 2,252,214	\$ 2,252,214	\$ 2,752,214	\$ 500,000	22.20%
611	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLY	\$ 497,408	\$ 440,147	\$ 440,147	\$ 489,577	\$ 49,430	11.23%
641	TEXTBOOKS/SOFTWARE	\$ 200,570	\$ 414,809	\$ 414,809	\$ 414,809	\$ -	0.00%
642	LIBRARY/PERIODICALS	\$ 37,194	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000	\$ 55,000	\$ -	0.00%
643	CURRICULUM MATERIALS	\$ 65,180	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 5,000	20.00%
644	LIBRARY/MEDIA SUPPLIES	\$ 28,498	\$ 36,929	\$ 36,929	\$ 38,639	\$ 1,710	4.63%
645	TESTING SUPPLIES	\$ 43,125	\$ 69,926	\$ 69,926	\$ 75,790	\$ 5,864	8.39%
689	ADULT EDUCATION SUPPLIES	\$ 8,676	\$ 2	\$ 2	\$ -	\$ 2	-100.00%
730	REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT	\$ 76,674	\$ 118,750	\$ 118,750	\$ 125,000	\$ 6,250	5.26%
731	NEW EQUIPMENT	\$ 113,320	\$ 118,750	\$ 118,750	\$ 125,000	\$ 6,250	5.26%
	INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENSE	\$ 4,229,456	\$ 4,504,695	\$ 4,504,695	\$ 5,181,927	\$ 677,232	15.03%

He explained that they are increasing Staff Training by 13.39% because they no longer have ARP ESSER funding, which was utilized for this in the past, after this year. Pupil Personnel and Tuition Outplacement is the biggest driver of this year's budget request for this category and the largest line item increase is tuition outplacement for \$500,000. The tuition outplacement costs have been very stable the last several years, but Ms. Carey, Director of Pupil Personnel is anticipating that next year we will see an increase based on students that either are in the system, or are expected to come into the system, that we cannot provide services for in district. The remainder of line items were flat lined the last few years because of budget restrictions and we would like to increase them. Mr. Masciana shared a chart of special education costs per year.

Special Education Presentation by Robin Anne Carey, Director of Pupil Personnel Services. Ms. Carey shared the focus of the department's work; one new focus area is Specially Designed Instruction. She said it is important for special education students to remain in general education classes as much as possible. They identified specially designed instruction, such as IEP Development, Professional Development, Instructional Strategies, Technology, and Assessment. Ms. Carey highlighted some initiatives throughout the district. She said our students ranked very high in SBA results. They had a paraeducator study done. She said they identified areas that needed to be reviewed. She reviewed the high growth rate of students with IEPs. Regarding out of district placements, they have increased by three this year. The average tuition cost of an out of district student is \$113,000, plus \$36,000 for transportation. She said we are seeing an increase in autistic students. For specialized programs, they like to keep the number of students per class to 8. She said last year, they added an intensive education classroom at Norton due to our growing numbers of student who attend the Norton. She said projections for next year have 12 students slated to go to Norton. She said they are requesting an additional intensive education classroom at Norton to include one teacher and one paraeducator. In time, they will split the classroom, one for grades K-3, and the other for grades 4-6. Those two classrooms will move to the new Norton School.

Discussion continued with Board Members regarding intensive program students. Ms. Harrigan asked why we could not retain Paraeducators. Ms. Carey said there are a number of reasons that were identified in their study. Ms. Harrigan wondered if it could also be a salary discrepancy compared to other districts. Mr. Grippo mentioned a few years ago there was concern with suicide ideation, depression, etc. and asked how the statistics are now. Ms. Carey responded that we are not seeing the level of reports as were seen right after COVID.

Mr. Masciana responded to Dr. Harrigan’s comment regarding wages for Paraeducators. He said we are in the second year of a three-year contract. He said there are some districts that pay more, but we provide a career path that will allow the Paraeducators to earn a higher salary by becoming ABA DTI certified. He said we are competing with other companies such as Amazon that pay much higher. In addition, he thinks when the employees accepted the position; they did not understand what the job entailed.

Continuing with Instructional Expense, Ms. Silano spoke about initiatives planned for next year. She reported on the funding requested for instructional materials as well as district and building based PD to support CPS goals. Funding is also requested for curriculum writing and revisions. She noted that in the past, they have used funding in part from the ESSER funds that will not be available next year, the reason they are requesting an increase.

Support Services is 8.6% of the budget. This year’s request is \$7,716,777, a 6.95% increase. 58% of this line item is transportation. Mr. Masciana said the largest increase is for Pupil transportation.

		EXPENDED	BUDGET	PROJECTED	RECOMMENDED	CHANGE	% inc/
		2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	(From BGT)	% dec
330	OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$ 890,118	\$ 869,150	\$ 869,150	\$ 900,124	\$ 30,974	3.56%
440	RENTALS/LEASES	\$ 237,396	\$ 310,000	\$ 310,000	\$ 317,050	\$ 7,050	2.27%
510	PUPIL TRANSPORTATION	\$ 3,499,728	\$ 3,732,721	\$ 3,732,721	\$ 4,056,719	\$ 323,998	8.68%
520	PROPERTY INSURANCE	\$ 104,471	\$ 119,384	\$ 119,384	\$ 133,310	\$ 13,926	11.66%
521	LIABILITY INSURANCE	\$ 133,511	\$ 135,431	\$ 135,431	\$ 148,615	\$ 13,184	9.73%
522	TRANSPORTATION INSURANCE	\$ 44,917	\$ 45,618	\$ 45,618	\$ 56,694	\$ 11,076	24.28%
530	TELEPHONE/INTERNET SERVICES	\$ 127,927	\$ 173,000	\$ 173,000	\$ 173,000	\$ -	0.00%
531	COMMUNICATIONS	\$ 28,591	\$ 40,037	\$ 40,037	\$ 42,587	\$ 2,550	6.37%
580	TRAVEL/CONFERENCE	\$ 62,905	\$ 61,074	\$ 61,074	\$ 62,074	\$ 1,000	1.64%
590	OTHER SERVICES	\$ 276,624	\$ 285,421	\$ 285,421	\$ 306,910	\$ 21,489	7.53%
610	OFFICE SUPPLY	\$ 100,107	\$ 85,500	\$ 85,500	\$ 89,735	\$ 4,235	4.95%
627	TRANSPORTATION SUPPLY	\$ 364,367	\$ 373,741	\$ 373,741	\$ 402,711	\$ 28,970	7.75%
690	OTHER SUPPLY	\$ 5,203	\$ 9,750	\$ 9,750	\$ 9,750	\$ -	0.00%
732	CAPITAL EQUIPMENT	\$ 979,057	\$ 913,652	\$ 913,652	\$ 954,596	\$ 40,944	4.48%
810	DUES/FEES	\$ 82,580	\$ 60,900	\$ 60,900	\$ 62,902	\$ 2,002	3.29%
	SUPPORT SERVICES	\$ 6,937,502	\$ 7,215,379	\$ 7,215,379	\$ 7,716,777	\$ 501,398	6.95%

He mentioned there is a new Dattco contract effective July 2024, with a 6% increase in year 1, then 4%, 4%, 4%, 3% in years 2-5. He reviewed technology initiatives.

Maintenance and Operations is 5.4% of the budget. This year’s request is for \$4,843,575, a 12.37% increase. Mr. Masciana reviewed that all our buildings are aging. They are not only used for school but also as community centers for after-school activities. 40% of the budget is for utilities and heating.

		EXPENDED	BUDGET	PROJECTED	RECOMMENDED	CHANGE	% inc/
		2022/23	2023/24	2023/24	2024/25	(From BGT)	% dec
410	PUBLIC UTILITIES	\$ 989,500	\$ 1,268,748	\$ 1,268,748	\$ 1,364,441	\$ 95,693	7.54%
420	MAINTENANCE/REPAIR EQUIPMENT	\$ 109,870	\$ 153,700	\$ 153,700	\$ 153,700	\$ -	0.00%
430	MAINTENANCE/REPAIR BUILDINGS	\$ 2,199,050	\$ 2,095,876	\$ 2,095,876	\$ 2,431,299	\$ 335,423	16.00%
613	MAINTENANCE SUPPLY	\$ 318,879	\$ 267,450	\$ 267,450	\$ 314,225	\$ 46,775	17.49%
620	HEAT/ENERGY	\$ 537,049	\$ 524,700	\$ 524,700	\$ 579,910	\$ 55,210	10.52%
	MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS	\$ 4,154,348	\$ 4,310,474	\$ 4,310,474	\$ 4,843,575	\$ 533,101	12.37%

Mr. Masciana explained the Capital Budget. This is separate from the Operating Budget.

Dr. Solan acknowledged all of staff but especially Mr. Masciana for their work on this budget. He said like the Cheshire community, the Cheshire Public Schools are growing. This budget is dedicated to maintaining the level of service provided over the last several years. He explained that, if possible, he would like to consider the addition of Elementary STEM program to provide students in pre-engineering skills and environmental science for grades 4 and 5. The implication would be two certified teachers (\$160,000) and supplies (\$200,000).

4. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Ecke, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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