

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MAY 15, 2025, AT 7:30 PM**

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

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; Kevin Hanlon, Principal, Cheshire High School; Kelly Grillo, Principal, Dodd Middle School; Ryan Murphy, Assistant Principal, Dodd Middle School; Kristin Lopa, Assistant Principal, Doolittle School; Jodie Roden, Principal, Norton School

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.
Ms. Rosenberg led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

MOTION by Mr. White and seconded by Mr. Ecke.

MOVED to AMEND THE AGENDA to move Agenda Item 4C Personnel to the next item, preceding Student Representatives.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

4.C. PERSONNEL

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

MOVED to approve the Superintendent's contract as presented and discussed in Executive Session on May 15, 2025, subject to minor edits.

Discussion

All Board members present spoke in favor of supporting the Motion and supported Dr. Solan. They explained this is a 3-year contract with salary increases to hopefully bring the Superintendent's salary in line with those in area districts. Mr. Ecke said he and his colleagues spent a long time discussing this. Ms. Cullinan said she supports the work Dr. Solan has done for the district. Mr. White explained the difference with this contract is that the yearly increases are spelled out for each of the next three years. He said the Board wants him to stay in Cheshire. Ms. Rosenberg said she supports the Superintendent and the contract. She noted that the Superintendent is data driven. He listens to feedback and makes

an effort to improve. She said the finalized contract will be available on the Cheshire Public Schools website and in the Town Clerk's office.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Dr. Solan thanked the Board for their support, not only through the contract process, which is an annual thing as a superintendent, but throughout the year to allow us to do the incredible things we do for our kids. He said it has been a privilege to work in Cheshire for the last 20 years in various roles and he really looks forward to the next nine so, thank you very much.

(Ms. Cullinan and Mr. Ecke exited the meeting at 7:43) Mr. White noted the reason Personnel was moved up on the agenda was because Mr. Ecke and Ms. Cullinan had another commitment, but they wanted to be present for the vote.

- C. Student Representatives. Malakhi Beyah and Lydia Ghaly, student representatives for the 2024/2025 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School including all the senior events.

2. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. CABE Student Leaders

Dr. Solan introduced the CABE Student Leadership Award recipients. The program was developed to give local Boards of Education a chance to reward student leadership potential. These students were selected from among their peers for exhibiting leadership qualities as defined by a list of criteria developed by a subcommittee of CABE's Board of Directors. Dr. Solan introduced this year's recipients:

Lily Giuliano	Dodd Middle School
Palmer Simpson	Dodd Middle School
Tatum Gutmann	Dodd Middle School
Lydia Ghaly	Cheshire High School
Malakhi Beyah	Cheshire High School

B. School Partnership Awards

Norton School

Tim White, the Board of Education representative to Norton School, introduced Norton Principal, Jodie Roden and the school's recipient, Claire Newell. Ms. Roden said Claire Newell joined the Norton School Community during the 2023-24 school year. Due to personal reasons, Claire was not able to return to us full time for the 2024-25 year, but at the same time, did not want to leave her school family completely. Claire has been able to come to school each week to support our primary students, especially those in Mrs. Hart's room. Claire enters the building with a smile and leaves the same way. You can find her in the classroom

reading with a student or assisting students in the cafeteria. The Norton School Family feels very fortunate that Mrs. Claire Newell has been able to continue to share her time with us.

Doolittle School

Adam Grippo, the Board of Education representative to Doolittle School, and Kristin Lopa, Assistant Principal, introduced the school's recipient, Deanne Moore. Mr. Grippo read that over the past six years, Deanne has been an invaluable partner to the school community, dedicating her time, energy, and heart to supporting staff and students in meaningful ways. As the Chairperson of the Doolittle PTA Teacher Appreciation Committee, Deanne has gone above and beyond in recognizing and celebrating our educators. She has tirelessly organized breakfasts, luncheons, and special raffle prizes, ensuring our teachers feel valued—not just during Teacher Appreciation Week but throughout the entire school year. Beyond her work with staff, Deanne has actively involved students in showing gratitude for their teachers, fostering a culture of appreciation within our school. Her leadership and creativity have inspired students to contribute thoughtful gestures that honor the dedication of our educators. Additionally, her talent for organizing and decorating has transformed our school environment multiple times a year, making our spaces feel warm and inviting. Her dedication is evident in every detail, and her efforts have had a lasting impact on our school community. Deanne embodies the spirit of partnership, and Doolittle is incredibly fortunate to have her as part of their school family.

The recipients were given a certificate and a small gift.

C. CABE Award of Excellence

Dr. Solan presented an Honorable Mention award to Dodd Middle School principal Kelly Grillo, the recipient of the CABE Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications. Kelly was chosen under the category: Special Project (AV) for her school Newsletter, Be in the Know.

3. AUDIENCE

None.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Approval of Grants Resolution

Chairman Rosenberg said that in accordance with Board Policy 3290 – Business and Non-Instructional Operations – Grants and Other Revenue, the Board of Education, by resolution, shall authorize the Superintendent to apply for and accept any and all grants as may be determined appropriate by the administration. Therefore, the Superintendent shall:

1. Investigate new sources of revenue whether local, state, or federal.

2. Propose new revenue sources and associated programs to the Board of Education for approval.
3. Implement measures necessary to apply for/receive additional revenues.

In accordance with this policy, the Superintendent, or his designee, is authorized to sign all required forms for state and federal programs. In addition, the Superintendent shall inform the Board of the activity of all grants applied for and received with the exception of those pursuant to Chapter 1973 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

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

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Consent Calendar as presented.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

5. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM

I. Curriculum Report

In Ms. Cullinan's absence, Ms. Silano reported on the meeting held April 21, 2025. CHS Teacher, Tim Galvin shared information regarding a new textbook recommendation, U. S. History-Interactive, by Lapsansky-Werner. The previous text was both outdated and in poor condition. Kevin Hanlon presented the proposed Algebra I text iReady Classroom Mathematics-Algebra I, by Curriculum Associates for use at Dodd and CHS. The previous text, Big Ideas in Math - Algebra I (2018), did not fully align with the priority Common Core Standards, and the instructional design of the text did not match the district's definition of High-Quality Instruction. The district has had an opportunity to implement a full pilot of the resource this year, and the rigor, tasks, instructional design, and priority standards are all strengths of the resource. The adoption of this resource would provide strong alignment of curricular materials from the current grade 6-8 iReady resource.

The Committee reviewed various overnight field trips. Mr. Hanlon gave an update on the 2025-2026 Cheshire High School schedule. The 2025-26 schedule, published in January of this year, included eight total periods, 5 sessions each day, and 68-minute classes. Through staff and student feedback, two main areas of feedback were given related to this schedule: the rotation of classes and the impact on homework. Through department meetings, a student forum, and a faculty meeting, feedback was given on proposed mild updates to the rotation and planning for appropriate

homework design. The final version of the schedule aims to apply the best practice of balancing the frequency of meeting, and the length of each class.

Scott Jeffrey, Lisa Bernabe, Tom Tuscano, and Jessica Atnes provided an executive summary of the full Math presentation given to the CCC in March. Goals for curriculum, assessment, instructional strategies, text/resources, and professional development were shared.

II. Notice of Textbooks Out for Review

Ms. Silano reported that in accordance with Board Policy, the following textbooks will be made available for public viewing in the Cheshire Public Library and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at 29 Main Street from Friday, May 16, 2025, through Friday, May 30, 2025, and slated for approval and adoption at the Board of Education meeting on June 5, 2025.

Textbook	Publisher	Grade
US History - Interactive	Savvas Learning	10
iReady Classroom Mathematics-Algebra I	Curriculum Associates	8-9

B. FINANCE

I. Financial Report

Dr. Harrigan noted that the financial report was included in the Board's packet. She asked Mr. Masciana to report. Mr. Masciana noted they will be closing out the books at the June 30th meeting with a \$250,465 surplus balance. This is to carry money from this year's budget as a surplus and put it into an account for use next year to help to meet the reduction made by the Town Council. Overall, the budget year has proceeded smoothly, with no significant unexpected occurrences. The expenditures reflected in the report are consistent with our budget. In order to be able to end the year with \$250,000 remaining, we will manage that by reducing the expenditures we normally make at the end of the year, whether it's summer purchases or summer maintenance projects. As the Board knows, throughout the year we do not allow expenditures to be fully made against budget accounts. We've held the line at 70% for most of the last portion of the school year.

II. Medical Benefits Report

The Medical Reserve. Balance is \$2,015,741, or 1.7 months in claims reserves. When you look at the March claims, you'll see that they were \$660,000, below what we have been averaging. And you will see that the

April claims are \$1.8 million, well above what we have typically averaged. The reason is that in the month of March, there was a large claim, over \$400,000 that was reversed, and so it showed that our claims were artificially lower.

Mr. White asked for a status report on the Performance Contract. Mr. Masciana responded that the Town Council heard a presentation from Johnson Controls, the firm that was recommended to take this initiative. They will take us through the next step of the process, which is called an investment grade audit, where they will go into all school and town buildings, except for the three buildings we're taking offline, and they will further examine and determine, looking at our HVAC systems, motors, all types of appliances that we have in our schools, determining where we can add solar, if a fuel cell or battery storage system will work. They will work to put together a contract in which we will reduce our utility costs. The savings will pay for infrastructure improvements. The work that Johnson Controls did in this initial phase was premature, but they identified over \$20 million of potential infrastructure improvements that would generate about \$738,000 in utility savings per year. That utility savings would pay over a 20-year period, the \$20 million of infrastructure work, and then once that 20-year repayment period is over, we reap the benefit of any energy savings that continue forward. It is a contract that enables us to make quite a bit of infrastructure improvements and pay for it through energy savings. It will take several months to do this examination with Johnson Controls. As they're going through the process, they will be updating the working group, and, the working group will review all the energy conservation measures that are identified and look at if there is a viable contract before it gets formal approval. The Town Council has formal approval of the contract. He said Johnson Controls will be a strong partner for us as we go through this, and it was impressive to see the potential infrastructure improvements that could be made.

III. 2023/2024 Audit Report

Mr. Masciana reported he attended the Town Council Audit Committee meeting on April 30. Our auditors from CLA provided an update to the Audit Committee on the results. This audit was for the 2023/24 fiscal year that ended June 30 of 2024. The auditors issued a clean report. There is a copy of the audit letter in the Board's packet. Mr. Masciana added there are three major components to the audit. One is the audit of the financial report of the town. The second is a single state audit report, where the auditors examine the grants that are paid by the state. And the third component is a single audit of federal grants this year, one of the federal grant programs that was audited closely, was the Child Nutrition cluster, which is a Food Services budget, and there were no findings that were

problematic. The Town's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report is available for viewing on the town's website. CLA, which has just completed its fifth year as our audit firm provided pricing to extend for two years, and the Town Council did approve CLA to continue as the Town and Board of Education auditors for the next two years.

IV. Approval of Increase to School Meal Prices

Erica Biagetti and Emily Taylor presented this Agenda Item. Ms. Taylor reported that Ms. Biagetti completed a robust financial and competitive analysis for the next school year, and she's going to recommend a 25-cent increase to breakfast and a 50-cent increase in lunch. The justification for the increasing meal price is because there are increasing labor costs and food costs, and our desire to keep program enhancements that exist so we can offer quality food to our students. She noted that last year we were below the target price set by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The target price was \$3.85, our school lunch prices are \$3.50, \$3.75, and \$4.00 at elementary middle school and high school, respectively.

Ms. Biagetti said they are looking to increase, based on all the information Ms. Taylor just shared and expanded on the reasons for increased costs. She said they work very hard to put the best meals forward every day. The documentation shows a loss for next year, even with the 50-cent lunch increase. However, increasing participation could significantly mitigate this loss.

Mr. White asked what the negative balance is right now, Ms. Biagetti answered it is currently \$26,000 and they continue to make calls and send emails. She said some of our neighboring districts are facing over \$40,000 deficits.

Board members asked questions and discussed strategies to try to get the negative balance lower. In addition, Ms. Biagetti gave an update on composting at the schools.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approves an increase in the school meal prices effective the 2025-26 school year as follows:

Elementary, Middle, High School Breakfast - .25 cents increase
Elementary, Middle, High School Lunch - .50 cents increase

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

Ms. Biagiatti gave an update on the composting program. So far this year, Chapman has composted 6.8 tons, and Doolittle has composted 7.6 tons of food waste.

V. Report on Grant Activity for the 2024/2025 School Year

Assistant Superintendent Silano reviewed the grant activity, explaining what each grant pays for. In 2024-25 we were awarded \$1,640,677, slightly up from last year.

C. PERSONNEL (Moved to beginning of Agenda)

D. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held May 5, 2025.

In Mr. Ecke's absence, Dr. Harrigan gave the policy Report.

II. First Reading of Policies

She reported that the Committee reviewed Policy 5114 Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process for a first reading. This policy is being changed because of the change to the legal definition of Bullying. The new definition is, "Bullying" means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

III. Second Reading of Policies

The Committee reviewed Policy #5131.911 School Climate Policy & Regulation. This new replacement policy was developed to provide districts guidance on recent revisions to Connecticut's School Climate Law, Public Act 23-167. For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional board of education shall adopt and implement the Connecticut School Climate Policy. He said it is our job to create a safe learning environment that is emotionally and intellectually safe, a positive learning environment for every student.

IV. Third Reading and Approval of Policies

After a thorough review, the Committee brought forward Policy #5131.81 Electronic Devices. The policy mimics our current practice.

MOTION by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to Policy #5131.81 Electronic Devices.

Discussion:

Mr. Hanlon discussed how this policy is currently being implemented at the high school. Mr. Grippo noted at this level, we are depending on personal responsibility and trust instead of a total clampdown as other districts are doing.

Mr. White said he is not going to support this motion. He is totally against the addictiveness of social media. He visited Cheshire High School and observed about 10-15% of students were focused on their phone. He also feels there is a big difference between freshman and senior students. He would agree that seniors should have access, but he would like a stronger policy banning cell phones.

Dr. Solan said he agrees with the points that Mr. White brought up, and this policy is an evolution. Mr. Grippo added that the Committee discussed a ban until 10th Grade, but Dr. Solan said it would be very difficult to enforce.

VOTE: The Motion passed 3-1 (Mr. White opposed).

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES
None.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

Dr. Harrigan noted that her name was listed as “Harrington” in the April 10, 2025, minutes.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the amended Minutes from meetings held on April 10, 2025, and May 1, 2025.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

8. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Dr. Solan reported that the “skeleton” at Norton School is in place and looks amazing. He also reported that Amy O’Brien announced her retirement as principal at Doolittle School. He has surveyed parents and staff as to what they are looking for in the next principal and has received great feedback. The position has been posted internally and after the required ten days, they will decide how to move forward.

9. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

10. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson's Update**

Chairman Rosenberg read a statement acknowledging the concerns and engagement shown by our community during this year's tough budget season. It was a complex budget process and difficult decisions were made by the Board and the Town. She said she appreciates the transparency of the process. She said they heard overwhelming responses from the public about how important education is to their decision to be in Cheshire. She thanked the Board, Dr. Solan, his staff and the Town staff for their effort.

B. **Announcement of Upcoming Meetings**

Ms. Rosenberg read the upcoming meetings and the list of promotions and graduation.

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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