

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON AUGUST 14, 2025 AT 7:30 PM**

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

Board Members Absent: Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke; Anthony Perugini

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

[This meeting was recorded and is available to view on the district's website]

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.

2. AUDIENCE

None.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

Ms. Rosenberg called for a motion for the consent calendar.

MOTION by Mr. Grippo and seconded Dr. Harrigan.

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

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Included in the Consent Calendar:

Approval of Statement on Class Size Policy

In accordance with the Agreement between the Cheshire Board of Education and the Education Association of Cheshire, Article XXIII, the Board of Education hereby publishes and provides to the Association its policy relating to class size:

"That the Board shall endeavor to maintain class sizes consistent with proven educational practices which require that various learning situations may alter the number of students per class. The Board, through its committees, shall study and make recommendations concerning personnel and space requirements based on all factors affecting class size."

Approval of ACES Annual Membership Agreement

Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) is a Regional Educational Service Center, pursuant to Section 10-66a of the Connecticut General Statutes, which acts as a voluntary association of member Boards of Education establishing a cooperative arrangement to provide services, programs and activities for the education of children. Each year participating Boards of Education must renew their participation in ACES by (a) carrying out its responsibilities as described in the Membership Agreement, (b) paying an assessment fee of \$250, and (c) appointing Board of Education Members to serve as Representative and Alternate to the ACES Governing Board.

“That the Cheshire Board of Education agrees to participate for the 2025-26 school year in Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES) as set forth in the ACES Annual Membership Agreement and appoints a Representative and Alternate to the ACES Governing Board.”

4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. CURRICULUM

I. Report on Meeting Held June 9, 2025

In Ms. Cullinan’s absence, Assistant Superintendent Silano gave the Curriculum report. The Committee reviewed an out-of-country field trip. Trip Leaders shared details of the trip to Milan, Cinco Terre Florence, Rome and Sorrento. The cost of the trip is just over \$5,000 and the tour guide company is called EF tours. Next, Jillian Puckett, who is the K-12 Art Department Chair, was there to represent the art teachers and talk about the Curriculum review. Nicole Kleigel presented a summary of the Music Department 5-year review.

Next at the meeting, Ms. Silano said she gave an overview of the status of the transition kindergarten program. There were 31 families who petitioned for early admission to kindergarten after the screenings, 12 were admitted. She noted that this will be the last year that transition kindergarten is offered. Lastly, the committee talked about the results of the preliminary Safe School Climate Survey that was administered in April to students, parents and teachers. Ms. Silano said they discussed re-administering the survey in October, perhaps during parent conferences, to get greater participation from families.

II. Approval of Out of Country Field Trip

Cheshire High School teachers, Katie Oparowski and Josephine Countryman, have requested permission to take students to Italy in April 2026. Superintendent Solan recommends approval of this request. The Superintendent reserves the right to cancel the trip should national security issues warrant.

MOTION by Dr. Harrigan, seconded by Mr. Grippo

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the participation of Cheshire High School students in the educational field trip to Italy from April 3-13, 2026.*

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously by those present.

B. FINANCE

I. Financial Update

Dr. Harrigan reported that the approved budget for Fiscal Year 25-26 is \$93,124,314. As of today, \$17,786,660 (19.1%) is encumbered and expended. The bulk of the encumbrances for the largest accounts, namely payroll and transportation, have not yet been encumbered. The September and October Financial Report will include the encumbrances for major expenditure categories and will more accurately reflect the full year financial picture.

Ms. Taylor added that they locked energy prices for this year with favorable pricing for our big commodities. This year compared to last year, especially heating oil, transportation fuel for both diesel and gasoline.

We actually had a savings from the prior year. We have not locked in for propane yet, that will probably be in October, and the same with electricity. For natural gas, we just purchased at Eversource market rates. There are no variance concerns for the budget, but it is early, so you'll see a more accurate reflection of some of those bigger budget categories in September and October.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Ms. Taylor said the July report is not yet available. Our medical benefits fund budget for this fiscal year is almost \$16 million. We are going to be contributing more than we contributed last year, about \$1.2 million, an increase of about \$100,000 a month from the prior fiscal year. The starting balance for this fiscal year, is \$2.6 million. In closing out last fiscal year for medical benefits, we actually ended up with 2.25 claim months in reserve. We ended up \$330,000 over where we started last July, and we had a pretty good claims month in June of 2025, just over a million dollars, which is less claims than the previous two months. Our starting balance for the current fiscal year is \$2.6 because that was our closing balance from the prior fiscal school year. We do have a potential stop loss reimbursement coming in as well. We did have more stop loss reimbursements than the prior year. We have \$764,000 and we had more prescription rebates.

C. PERSONNEL**I. Report on Meeting Held July 8, 2025.**

Mr. White reported the committee met and discussed the Superintendent's evaluation process. Dr. Solan added that in that meeting, they discussed a retreat with the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education to work with the Board to identify goals to support the Superintendent's evaluation.

D. PLANNING**I. Update on Energy Performance Contract 2.0**

Mr. Masciana updated the Board on the Energy Performance Contract. He reviewed the presentation that was made to the Cheshire Town Council. He explained this is an initiative that started with planning in October of 2023 and we are at a critical stage now. The energy performance contract initiative had to be split in half because there are some significant tax credits that are going to be expiring now that the One Beautiful Bill Act has been passed. It eliminates some of the Inflation Reduction Act tax credits. He said they are intending to install a fuel cell at Cheshire High School and photovoltaic electric generation, which are solar arrays, at six of our schools. There is about \$19.5 million worth of project work that would get completed in this phase. The total cost of this phase is \$23.4 million. There is \$6.6 million in rebates and school construction grants that we would receive. For this reason, we have the Approval of the Educational Specifications on the agenda for this evening. In order to apply for a school construction grant, the Board has to approve the ED Specs. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that \$4.6 million of benefit expires if we don't complete this portion of the initiative by September and have part of the construction completed by December of this year. The initiative has been expedited because we don't want to lose that IRA benefit. He reviewed the net total, the difference between the cost of the project, \$23.4 million, minus the rebate and the tax credit benefit, we would install the solar and the fuel cell at a net cost of \$12 million, saving approximately \$1 million a year in energy if we complete that work over 20 years. So there are savings that exceed the total cost when we do the financing. Mr. Masciana reviewed the project timeline. There are a series of steps that we have completed successfully. The Town Council approved the contract on August 12. By August 27 we have to submit an application to NRES, a non-residential energy savings program that would give us about \$5 million worth of benefit and then Notice to Proceed (NTP) to Johnson Controls to begin actual construction of the solar and fuel cell project. The most important thing to understand about what we're about to embark on, assuming this gets all the necessary approvals, is Johnson Controls is representing that we'll save \$1,085,300 per year, and those savings come from savings from our utility that we're not buying electricity, but they also come from the credits that are from the NRES

program. If we fall short of that \$1,085,000 in utility savings, Johnson Controls writes us a check to make up the difference every year. So that's why that's one of the big advantages of entering into this energy performance contract, is that guarantee. Johnson Controls will likely never write a check to make up that guarantee, because they're going to build this solar and fuel cell and make sure that financially they we will achieve those savings. Energia is our owner's representative. Everything that Johnson Controls has presented is being validated by Energia, including the details of the rooftop solar to make sure that the schools have sufficient structural support when we add rooftop solar. Mr. Masciana shared where each of the solar panels would be located at each of the schools and the cost and guaranteed savings for the projects. At Cheshire High School the proposal is to add a natural gas fuel cell that will create electricity. There is a significant financial incentive to do that. Savings from this will go towards new building projects.

There was a lengthy discussion with Board members regarding the Energy Performance Contract and solar energy.

II. Approval of Educational Specifications

Mr. Masciana noted these are the standard motions they do for school construction.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Solar Panel Installation at Norton Elementary School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Solar Panel Installation at Barnum Elementary School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Fuel Cell and Solar Panel Installation at Cheshire High School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Solar Panel Installation at Dodd Middle School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Solar Panel Installation at Doolittle Elementary School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

MOTION by Mr. White, seconded by Dr. Harrigan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approves the Educational Specifications for the Solar Panel Installation at Highland Elementary School.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the Minutes from meetings held June 5, 2025 Business Meeting; June 30, 2025 Business Meeting, July 30, 2025 Special Meeting and July 30, 2025 Retreat Meeting.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously 4-0.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan gave an update on School start times adjustment process (on file) for the 2026-2027 school year. The rationale for changing start times is due to the geography of the schools and moving several hundred students to a different location in town, as well as many busses that are associated with those students. The buses need more time to get to their schools and then onto the next wave, and traffic. Superintendent Solan reviewed the process for gaining feedback from the community, analyzing the feedback to see what can work with our school community. There was strong interest in the benefits of later school start times in the secondary grades. Later, school start times would unfortunately coincide with peak rush hour on route 10. A single bus run costs about \$80,000 per year, so to add several runs to reduce to a 2 tier system costs more than \$1,000,000 per year. Time adjustments were welcomed by many and rejected by many. He shared different scenarios with the final being favorable to 80% of parents and staff and 70% of students. He said he is sharing it tonight and will bring it back to the Board in September for approval.

2026-2027 Student/Teacher Schedule				
School	AM Bell	PM Bell	Staff AM	Staff PM
CHS	7:30 AM	2:00 PM	7:20 AM	2:40 PM
Humiston	8:00 AM	1:00 PM	7:40 AM	3:00 PM
Dodd	8:15 AM	2:50 PM	8:05 AM	3:25 PM
Barnum	8:20 AM	2:50 PM	8:10 AM	3:30 PM
Doolittle	8:20 AM	2:50 PM	8:10 AM	3:30 PM
Norton*	9:05 AM	3:35 PM	8:55 AM	4:15 PM
Highland*	9:05 AM	3:35 PM	8:55 AM	4:15 PM

As is the case now, 30 minutes are added onto the staff time each Wednesday. That additional time would be before the school day at Norton and Highland.

*Considering alternative staff time of 8:45AM to 4:05PM subject to union and admin agreement

Mr. Grippo asked about the cost increase. Dr. Solan responded that said all of the scenarios had a cost increase, this one is \$365,000, the second to lowest cost.

Ms. Rosenberg asked Dr. Solan to explain the Available Seat Petitions. Dr. Solan said over the years, we have easily approved the petitions for students to get a seat on a bus if you lived inside a walker zone. With the rise in enrollment, some of those buses are to capacity and we have not been able to approve some of those requests this year. We need to assess the number of riders on the buses before we can approve students who live in walking areas.

Ms. Rosenberg asked about students who live on town lines and want to attend Cheshire Public Schools. Dr. Solan said you attend school in the town where you pay your property tax to.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. **Chairperson's Update**

Ms. Rosenberg wished everyone a great school year. She noted CABA is establishing an alumni group and hope Mr. Perugini will join. She announced the upcoming meetings.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 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: 8/28/2025.