

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON DECEMBER 4, 2025 AT 7:45 PM**

Board Members Present: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair; Tim White, Secretary; Matthew Colehour; Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke

Board Members Absent: None

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

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:47 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. Matalyn Tabor and Connor Rayball, student representatives for the 2025/2026 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School including sports, activities, chorus and drama.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. School Partnership Award –Highland

Ms. Cullinan, the Board of Education representative to Highland, introduced the school's recipients, **Tricia Rowold, Luke Dringoli, Jordana George, and Angie Bradley.**

Ms. Cullinan said that Highland Elementary School would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to the members of the PTO Fun Run Committee—Luke Dringoli, Angie Bradley, Tricia Rowold, and Jordana George—for their extraordinary efforts in organizing this year's event. Through their tireless dedication and teamwork, the committee successfully raised nearly \$70,000 to support the installation of a new playground for our students. Their work went far beyond the Fun Run itself—they coordinated and promoted the fundraising campaign, reached out to major donors, planned and prepared for Family Fun Day, and ensured the smooth facilitation of the Fun Run for all 930 of our students. The committee's commitment, creativity, and enthusiasm not only made the event a huge success but also inspired the entire Highland community to come together in support of a shared goal. Thanks to their efforts to lead a successful Fun Run event, and through the partnership with the CPS BOE, we were able to install the new playground in time for the start of the 2025–26 school year. The Cheshire Board of Education thanked Ms. Rowold, Mr. Dringoli, Jordana George and Angie Bradley for going above and beyond for the students of Cheshire.

B. District Performance Index Presentation

Dr. Solan reported that the District Performance Index (DPI), also known as the Next Generation Accountability Report System, is a crucial dataset collected by the State Department of Education (SDE). The purpose is to provide an "apples to

apples" comparison across all Connecticut school systems. The data tracks school district progress, promotes transparency, and satisfies all state and federal reporting requirements. The data is reviewed by the SDE and the District to assess performance across a broad range of metrics and drive improvements. Dr. Solan said the DPI is comprised of 12 core indicators, many of which contain detailed subsets. He reviewed the indicators. The Superintendent reviewed the district's overall progress. The district earned the maximum possible points (green bands on the report) in the following areas:

- ELA Performance (All Students)
- Math Performance (All Students)
- Science Performance (All Students)
- % of High School Students taking College & Career Readiness Courses
- Post-Secondary Entrance Rate

Dr. Solan reported that the district finished 8th in Connecticut for total possible points earned, with an outcome rate percentage of 85.43. The district has demonstrated significant long-term growth. In 2016 the district was 23rd, the last 3 Years the district has consistently been in the top 10. He credits much of this the incredible team of administrators and teachers and to our core focus of the development of students as complex thinkers and a focus on social emotional learning and growth. No statistically significant difference (gap) was found between the performance of all students and students with special needs. The difference is within the expected rate.

C. Redistricting Presentation

Chairman Rosenberg said Dr. Solan will present the redistricting information to the Board for clarity purposes, especially since we have new board members. The Board will have an opportunity to discuss and then we will allow audience participation.

Superintendent Solan said the current phase of the elementary school zoning and capacity review began on November 10 with a public presentation by MP Planning Group. He said we knew 10 years ago that our enrollment was growing and certainly the buildings, particularly Darcey, Chapman and Norton, had outlived their lifespan. The community made the commitment to build two new schools. We also faced a significant issue with overcrowding and recognizing that our population at the elementary grades has been growing and will continue to grow for at least the next 10 years. Highland School is currently at 105% capacity, even with two portable classrooms added. A previous draft scenario developed in 2021 was withdrawn shortly after submission, as it was a preliminary requirement for the grant process and did not reflect the finalized new school construction plans. The

current review focuses on achieving a sustainable, long-term solution by developing zones that align student enrollment with the design capacities of the new Barnum and new Norton Elementary Schools. Dr. Solan said he is aware a strong communication precedent was set over several years indicating that the Chapman community would transition in mass to the new Barnum School. He said all elementary buildings have justifiably strong, proud school communities, and minimizing disruption to existing family bonds is a key priority.

The superintendent reviewed the district's long-range redistricting work, describing how several enrollment and proximity scenarios were analyzed to determine the most balanced and sustainable plan for the next decade. He emphasized that while schools are proud of their communities and families value continuity, the district must make decisions that prioritize long-term capacity, balance, and transparency.

Multiple boundary scenarios (B, C, D, and E) were evaluated for enrollment balance, proximity to schools, and long-term viability:

A Transportation analysis showed no meaningful efficiency differences between scenarios, including number of buses and average ride times.

Dr. Solan said after meeting with families at Doolittle, Chapman, and Highland, the district adjusted boundaries to create Scenario B2, which improves proximity alignment:

- The Moss Farms area would move to Barnum.
- Cheshire Street East would move to Highland.
- Chapman would split roughly 50/50 between Barnum and Highland.

These adjustments created the most balanced 10-year enrollment outlook, though they intensified redistricting impacts for Chapman and Highland families. To honor school connections and provide flexibility, the superintendent proposed a priority waiver process for current Chapman students redistricted to Highland and Highland-area students redistricted to Barnum from the Moss Farms neighborhood. Families would be surveyed immediately to determine interest. After gathering preliminary data, families would confirm their decisions in January. Final priority waiver decisions would be issued by late January, with a second waiver phase for all other redistricted families completed by February 20. The Superintendent said that even in a worst-case scenario where 100% of eligible families request waivers, building usage and class sizes remain manageable and similar to current levels.

The superintendent highlighted significant financial constraints:

- Cheshire spends far less per pupil than comparable districts

- Enrollment growth may require adding teachers and an assistant principal.
- Recent staffing reductions and rising health and transportation costs strain the budget.
- Carrying costs for Chapman and Darcey will continue next fall as Chapman is used for storage during building transitions.

No board vote was expected at this meeting. The superintendent requested the board's acknowledgment to proceed with collecting waiver data and preparing materials for review at a future meeting.

There was continued discussion regarding the waiver process, enrollment projections, class sizes, staffing ratios and transportation.

Board members thanked Dr. Solan and his staff for their work on this project. Everyone agreed that they would like to make the process smoother for the families. Ms. Rosenberg asked if it would be possible to grant one year of transportation so families have time to transition into their new space. Dr. Solan answered that normally there is no transportation when a waiver is issued, but that is up to the Board. It would probably take about two busses at a cost of about \$180,000. He said they will know better after they receive the results from the survey. Board members said they would like to adopt a scenario as soon as possible. They discussed possible dates for a meeting.

3. AUDIENCE

Ms. Rosenberg invited the public to speak reminding them to state their name, address and to limit their comments to three-minutes.

Tyler Bourn - 25 Oxford Court

Mr. Bourn would like to clarify the presented metrics, especially the teacher-to-student ratios. Families are facing challenges due to insufficient hiring, impacting school space and transportation times. It's also difficult to provide an accurate survey assessment without knowing their assigned school and start time.

Michael Olesen - 130 Woodland Drive

Mr. Olesen shared that he's seen a drastic improvement in the education provided to his grandchildren in comparison to his own children. Questions why the guiding principle for redistricting was not student disruption, and what plans are in place if the schools are not ready on time.

Kelly Gruttadauria - 585 Riverside Drive

Ms. Gruttadauria highlights that Chapman is a close-knit community, which influenced her decision to move there. Her daughter took pride in the groundbreaking ceremony for Barnum Elementary, but she may now not attend that school. In addition, she requested clarification of the B2 cutoff, as the slides were hard to read in the back of the auditorium.

Clara Fang - 645 Quinnipiac Court

Dr. Fang would like to take a step back and receive a clear explanation as to why Scenario D is not the leading option for redistricting, as it shows the lowest percentage of students affected and who need to be relocated. Dr. Fang stated that Scenario B is the most likely option at the moment, and that it is not in the best interest of the students.

Kristan McLean - 50 Woodland Drive

Ms. Mclean moved her family back to Cheshire five years ago for the excellent education she experienced. She appreciated the close-knit community at Chapman School and understands that other schools may provide similar environments. Ms. Mclean informed the students attending the new Chapman School urged decision-makers to consider the children's impact.

Angie Bradley - 788 Devonwood Drive

Ms. Bradley asks for clarification on the option B2 and if there is a possibility of another scenario between now and the survey. Dr. Solan stated that there is limited ability for another scenario and B2 is what they will be surveying off of. Dr. Solan said the priority area waivers will be reflective of the B2 sections.

Brian Mancini - 1135 Cheshire Street

Mr. Mancini asks why scenario D is not a viable option and for clarification if the only options are B and B2. Dr. Solan explains that the proximity of D to Barnum is problematic. Mr. Mancini stated that for years they've been told they will go to the new school and that's being taken away and is concerned about the social-emotional fallout.

Mason McLean - 50 Woodland Drive

Mason, a grade 5 student, also spoke at last week's meeting and would like to reiterate that he is heartbroken and feels like he has not been told the truth. Him and his friends will most likely be going to different schools. Mr. Mclean reminisces on a 4th-grade memory of being promised he will attend the new Barnum School.

George LaCroix - 645 Quinnipiac Court

Mr. LaCroix states he is a former Chapman student and expresses the disappointment his siblings felt when they heard the news they might be going to a different school than their friends.

Nancy Hayes - 100 Braemar Drive

Ms. Hayes shares that she relocated to Connecticut and moved to Cheshire for the good words spoken about the community and school system. Ms. Hayes cannot underscore the importance of keeping the Chapman community together when redistricting, and would like to reconsider scenario D.

Vincent Taliercio - 304 Beacon Hill Drive

Mr. Taliercio feels grateful for being heard and feels that progress is being made for alternative solutions.

Joselyn Romero-Montalvo - 100 Curve Hill Rd

Ms. Romero explains that this is an anxious time for both parents and children, so the parents are advocating. In addition, Ms. Romero shares that she sees correlation between this situation and the book, The Anxious Generation, so she hopes they think about this before making a decision.

Jason Rosenblum - 1245 Cheshire Street.

Mr. Rosenblum states that the questionnaire should have several questions regarding transportation as that will influence families' answers. Mr. Rosenblum extends his gratitude to Dr. Solan and the Board for the acknowledgement of this situation.

On a Motion by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Mr. White, the Board unanimously agreed to take a brief recess at 10:15 pm. The meeting resumed at 10:27 pm.

4. **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

A. **FINANCE**

I. **Report on Meeting Held on November 10, 2025.**

Dr. Harrigan reported on the meeting held November 10, 2025. It was a preliminary review of the 2026/27 operating budget where Dr. Solan outlined many variables to the budget. She invited the public to join the Board in the many budget sessions that we will have in January.

II. **Finance Report**

Dr. Harrigan asked Ms. Taylor to report. Ms. Taylor said as of November 30, we've expended or encumbered \$76,209,636 which is 81.8% of our budget, up from 78% last month. We do encumber most of our salary line item. While we aren't currently projecting any variances to our overall budget, we are closely monitoring some key accounts, including student outplacements, which was also a topic of conversation during the Finance Committee meeting, and student transportation due to their potential impact on our year-end expenditures. Regarding the 2026/27 budget, two things to we are evaluating the carrying costs for Darcey and Chapman for the upcoming school year. We do need to coordinate with the Town to figure out the transfer of the properties. Also, we do need to go out to bid for our cleaning contract. We are adding 44,000 square feet of space, and we need to have a new contract to support that, our current cleaning contract is at value to \$859,000 we anticipate that's going to go up closer to a million dollars with a new with the additional 44,000 square feet.

III. **Medical Benefits Update**

Regarding medical benefits, our budget is \$15,958,339 we contribute about \$1.2 million monthly, up from \$1.1 million last year. We currently have a healthy \$2.4 million in our reserve fund and do not have any stop loss reimbursements at this point in the year.

B. PLANNING

I. Report on Meeting Held November 20, 2025.

Mr. White reported that at the meeting they heard from many parents about their concerns regarding transportation and redistricting. The committee discussed fire suppression upgrades, which related to the need for a bid waiver for some upgrades to some of our schools, including the high school and Norton. Mr. White said he was not comfortable with doing a bid waiver, largely because, apparently the problem began 20 years ago. Alternatively, we contracted off of the state bid. The Committee also discussed the weight room renovations at Cheshire High School, there was discussion and support regarding exploring the addition of HVAC. The turf field was discussed. Mr. White said, with turf, there is a maintenance aspect to it, and if it is not maintained, there is a point where it's becomes unusable. He said he does not agree to sending it out to referendum over and over again and being told no by the voters. There is a problem now that was not created by the Board because we never asked for it to go out to referendum at this time. The Committee also received an update on the energy performance contract. He asked Mr. Masciana for an update. Mr. Masciana said there is a meeting scheduled with alternate proposals to get around the school construction grant that we are not going to have at our disposal. He said they are doing some further analysis on the location of the fuel cell at the high school this week.

C. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

Ms. Rosenberg announced the Standing Committee assignments as follows:

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Subcommittee*	Chairperson	BOE Members
Curriculum	Anne Marie Cullinan	Heather Fitzgerald, Anne Harrigan, Tim White
Finance	Anne Harrigan	Matt Colehour, Mark Ecke
Legislative	Samantha Rosenberg	Anne Marie Cullinan, Tim White
Liaison	As Needed	
Personnel	Anne Marie Cullinan	Heather Fitzgerald, Tim White
Planning	Mark Ecke	Samantha Rosenberg, Tim White
Policy	Mark Ecke	Matt Colehour, Anne Harrigan
Public Information	As Needed	
Transportation	As Needed	

- The Board Chair shall serve on all subcommittees as ex-officio.

EDUCATION LIAISONS

Organization	BOE Member
ACES	Anne Marie Cullinan
Cheshire Education Foundation	Heather Fitzgerald
CABE	Anne Marie Cullinan
Calendar Committee	Anne Harrigan
Cheshire PTA Council	Anne Harrigan
Advisory Council	As Needed
Professional Development Committee	Samantha Rosenberg
School/Business Partnerships Council	Mark Ecke/Matt Colehour
Teacher Evaluation Committee	Anne Marie Cullinan/Tim White
Town Council	Samantha Rosenberg
Planning and Zoning	Tim White
Public Building Commission	Matt Colehour

SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES

School	BOE Member
Chapman	Heather Fitzgerald
CHS/Humiston	Mark Ecke
Darcey	Samantha Rosenberg
Dodd	Anne Harrigan
Doolittle	Matt Colehour
Highland	Anne Marie Cullinan
Norton	Tim White

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

MOVED *that the Board of Education approve the Minutes from the Showcase and Business meetings held on November 6, 2025.*

VOTE: The Motion passed 5-0-2 (Mr. Colehour and Ms. Fitzgerald abstained)

6. CORRESPONDENCE

It was noted that there has been a number of emails received regarding redistricting.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Due to the late hour, there was no Superintendent's report.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Rosenberg announced upcoming meetings. Board members discussed next steps including scheduling a Planning Committee of the Whole to review the redistricting scenarios before a Special Meeting to vote.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Ms. Cullinan, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 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: 12/19/2025.