(REVISED) MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2026

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

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; Christina Sherwood, Director, Pupil Personnel Services; Kevin Hanlon, Principal, Cheshire High 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.

C. *Student Representatives*.
Dr. Solan welcomed Dodd Middle School student representatives Marco Durante and Lily Grenier. On behalf of Principal Kelly Grillo, he shared that both eighth graders were selected for their leadership, commitment to the Dodd community, and ability to represent student perspectives. Marco is a member of the National Junior Honor Society and Lily was recognized for exemplifying Dodd's SPARK values.

Marco and Lily reported on the opening of the school year, Dodd's SPARK expectations, team-building activities and upcoming field trips, the Apex fundraiser, fall athletics, and the addition of advisory to the RAM schedule. They explained that advisory provides dedicated time for relationship building, reflection, goal setting, executive functioning skills, and learning about themselves as students. They also reported that National Junior Honor Society meetings and officer elections were beginning and invited families to the upcoming seventh- and eighth-grade open houses. In response to Board questions, the students discussed how they will gather feedback from classmates and noted that Wi-Fi service had been inconsistent but was improving.

Cheshire High School Principal, Kevin Hanlon, introduced Cheshire High School student representatives Logan Tracy and Jenna Zidan, highlighting their extensive involvement in school and community activities. Logan and Jenna reported on the fall pep rally and athletics, the upcoming club fair and homecoming dance, the fall blood drive, Best Buddies activities, the inaugural Senior Sunrise, and a new National Honor Society peer-tutoring initiative. They also announced that CHS would receive the CIAC Michaels Cup and Fred Balsamo Sportsmanship Award.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. 2026-2027 Paraeducator of the Year

Christina Sherwood, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, recognized Laurie DelCore as Cheshire Public Schools 2026-2027 Paraeducator of the Year. Ms. Sherwood described Ms. DelCore's expertise, dedication, compassion, flexibility, leadership, and exceptional work ethic. She noted Ms. DelCore's ability to build trusting relationships with students, recognize their strengths, and continually seek creative ways to develop student independence and life skills. Ms. DelCore was also recognized for her service as a former paraeducator union president and for willingly accepting a temporary reassignment last year to support a student in need. Ms. Sherwood thanked Ms. DelCore for 15 years of service and the meaningful difference she has made for students and colleagues.

3. AUDIENCE

Gary Baylor, 741 Cornwall Avenue. Mr. Baylor addressed the Board regarding traffic and pedestrian safety concerns near Doolittle School during afternoon dismissal. He described vehicles parking along Cornwall Avenue near the Ardmore Road intersection, which he said obstruct sight lines at the crosswalk, contribute to congestion, and block private driveways. He requested coordinated review and enforcement by the Cheshire Police Department and Doolittle administration and referenced the traffic pattern associated with the school's 1994 expansion approval. Dr. Solan stated that they would review the concerns with the Cheshire Police Department.

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

> **MOVED** that the agenda be amended to move Agenda Item 4C. Planning before Agenda Item 4A.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

A. PLANNING

I. Approval of Revised Educational Specifications.

Mr. Ecke asked Dr. Solan to report on the request to revise educational specifications for HVAC and Building Management System improvements at Cheshire High School, Dodd Middle School, and Humiston School. Dr. Solan explained that the specifications had previously been approved, but the State requested more specific language identifying the building management system improvements. The Cheshire High School work includes duct sealing and direct digital controls; Dodd includes direct digital controls and exhaust-fan integration; and Humiston includes direct digital controls and boiler replacement. Approval would allow the specifications to return to the Town Council and the related

grant applications to be resubmitted. Dr. Solan also noted that the district recently received approval for window and roof replacement at Doolittle School.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the revised educational specifications for Cheshire High School HVAC and Building Management System improvements.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the revised educational specifications for Humiston School HVAC and Building Management System improvements.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

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

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the revised educational specifications for Dodd Middle School HVAC and Building Management System improvements.

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously.

B. CURRICULUM

I. Report on Meeting Held on September 17, 2026.

The Committee reviewed Connecticut state assessment results, summer curriculum-writing projects, the upcoming Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) survey, standards-based grading, AI-supported curriculum writing, and teacher leadership roles across the district. The Committee requested greater clarity regarding the various teacher leadership positions and their responsibilities, including middle school division leaders and high school department chairs.

Ms. Silano provided an overview of state assessment results. Smarter Balanced achievement in English language arts and mathematics remained relatively stable over the five-year period. For 2025-2026, 76.8% of students met or exceeded the ELA standard and 74.8% met or exceeded the mathematics standard, compared with 77.2% and 76.5%, respectively, the prior year. Science results varied by grade. Grade five science declined from 83.1% meeting or exceeding expectations to 74.9%, with Cheshire's

DRG ranking moving from first to tenth, and was identified as an area for closer review. Grade eight science continued to improve, with 76.7% meeting or exceeding expectations and Cheshire ranking third in its DRG. Grade 11 science achievement increased from 64.9% to 69.7%. SAT School Day ELA performance remained relatively steady, with 77.2% meeting or exceeding the benchmark, while mathematics declined from 54.9% to 46.3%. High school mathematics has been identified as an instructional priority, including work to strengthen the grade nine geometry experience and improve coherence in mathematics instruction. Chronic absenteeism improved from 9.7% to 8.4%.

Ms. Silano summarized the results as generally consistent over time, with encouraging gains in grade eight and grade eleven science, grades four, six, and seven mathematics, and grades three and seven ELA, while grade five performance, particularly science, and high school mathematics warrant closer attention. She said the district will also continue its work to address achievement gaps for multilingual learners. She emphasized that state assessment results are considered alongside other student data to identify patterns, understand what is working, and determine areas for continuous improvement. She also reported that families had received a video and FAQ regarding standards-based grading in seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics and that several opportunities were being offered for parents to ask questions. The Board also discussed middle school parent conferences and the importance of ongoing communication between families and teachers.

(Mr. Colehour left the meeting at 8:31 p.m.)

C. FINANCE

I. Finance Report

Dr. Harrigan introduced the financial report for the 2026-2027 budget reflecting expenditures and encumbrances through August 31, 2026. Ms. Taylor reported that the approved budget is $99,849,080 and that $22,959,735, or 23.0%, had been expended and encumbered as of August 31. She stated that spending was on track and that no budget variances were projected at this early point in the fiscal year.

Ms. Taylor highlighted Tuition Outplacement and Transportation Supply. Tuition Outplacement was 70.7% expended and encumbered because current placements were encumbered for the full year; she cautioned that the percentage should not be directly compared with the prior year because the encumbrance methodology had changed. Transportation supply was 101% expended and encumbered, primarily because of significantly higher fuel prices. She said they continue to monitor State contract pricing and other opportunities to stabilize energy costs. Board

discussion also addressed efforts to expand in-district special education programming and opportunities to collaborate with ACES and other regional partners where appropriate.

II. Medical Benefits Update

Ms. Taylor reported that the 2026-2027 Medical Benefits Fund budget is $16,651,205, with a monthly contribution of $1,295,887 to the reserve. The reserve balance as of August 31 was $2,454,853. August claims totaled $1,330,063, approximately 7% higher than August 2025. The fund had 1.84 claim months in reserve, below the two-month target, but Ms. Taylor stated that the fund remained stable and that it was still early in the fiscal year.

D. POLICY

I. Report on Meeting Held September 14, 2026.

Mr. Ecke reported that the Committee advanced three policies for second reading:

II. Second Reading of Policies

Mr. Ecke gave a second reading to Policies #3451, Petty Cash Funds; Policy #5141.4, Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect; and Policy #6130, Organization of Instruction.

Policy #3451 was updated to reflect current administrative titles and District organization; Policy #5141.4 incorporates mandated changes regarding training for contractors who have regular contact with students and clarifies mandated-reporting responsibilities; and Policy #6130 was updated to reflect the district's current organizational structure.

The previously considered Ages of Attendance policy was not brought forward because no revision was necessary. No action was required on the second readings.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION by Ms. Cullinan and seconded by Mr. White

MOVED that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes of the August 20, 2026 Business Meeting and the September 10, 2026 Opening of School Meeting.

VOTE: The motion passed 5-0-1 (Dr. Harrigan abstained.)

6. CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Solan reported that the Board received correspondence from a parent regarding delayed openings and early dismissals used for professional development and the impact of interruptions to consecutive school days. He explained that contractual collaboration and professional development requirements necessitate some schedule adjustments and that staff feedback regarding preferences for delayed openings versus early dismissals has been mixed. They have attempted to preserve longer stretches of uninterrupted instructional days and to align schedule changes with weeks already affected by other interruptions when possible. Dr. Solan acknowledged the disruption that schedule changes can create for families and noted that other districts use a variety of approaches to provide professional development time.

7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Solan presented the annual report on special education programming contracted by the district, worksite partnerships, and staff attrition. He noted that Cheshire contracts with a range of individuals and organizations for specialized services, including therapy, audiological, teacher-of-the-deaf, and intensive physical therapy services. He also highlighted community worksite partnerships used by the district's transition programs to provide students with work-based skill development.

Dr. Solan explained the staff attrition report and noted it now uses a September 1 through August 31 reporting period so that summer turnover is captured consistently.

Dr. Solan reviewed the 2026 CABE Board Recognition Award application and stated that the Board meets the criteria for recognition and distinction. He noted that CABE recognizes boards at its annual convention in November.

Dr. Solan also reflected on the recent open houses and ribbon-cutting celebrations at the new Norton and Barnum Schools. He reported strong community attendance, including many residents without children currently enrolled in the schools, and said the feedback on the new facilities was very positive. He thanked the Norton family for attending the Norton celebration and extended well wishes to Colonel Harvey C. Barnum Jr., who was unable to attend the Barnum event.

Board members asked several follow-up questions. Mr. White asked about the new fire alarm system at Norton School, and Ms. Taylor explained that the system's visual and audible alerts were intentionally designed and meet applicable fire codes and regulations. Mr. White also raised questions about ensuring that students who moved from Highland to Norton have equitable opportunities to participate in activities such as student council and safety patrol. Dr. Solan said he would review those concerns with Principal Roden.

Mr. White also requested an update on the former school properties. Dr. Solan reported that the Town had engaged a realtor and was gathering site information, including records related to abatement and other building data. He noted that the properties remain under

Board of Education control through December 31, 2026. Mr. White expressed concern about the level of public discussion surrounding the potential sale of the properties and about references suggesting that the Board had previously been advised of the Town's action. Board members discussed the transition of the properties to Town control and the ongoing costs associated with maintaining vacant buildings.

MOTION by Mr. Ecke and seconded by Ms. Fitzgerald

> **MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the 2026 CABE Board Recognition Award application.

VOTE: The motion passed unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

None.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chairperson's Update

Chair Rosenberg thanked Dr. Solan and the administrative team for the successful opening of the school year and the recent ribbon-cutting celebrations at Norton and Barnum Schools. She commented on the strong community attendance and said she looked forward to Colonel Barnum returning for a future official ribbon-cutting celebration at Barnum School.

B. Announcement of Upcoming Meetings

Chair Rosenberg reviewed upcoming meetings, including the October 1 Open Forum, October 5 Policy Committee meeting, October 8 Curriculum Committee meeting, and October 15 Board Business Meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Ecke, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

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Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

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