

MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON OCTOBER 15, 2026

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

Board Members Absent: Heather Fitzgerald

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Emily Taylor, Chief Operating Officer; Kevin Hanlon, Principal, Cheshire High School; Daniel Tartarelli, Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Scott Jeffrey, Principal, Highland Elementary School

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:31 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.

Student Representatives. Jenna Zidan and Logan Tracy, student representatives for the 2026/2027 school year, reported on recent events at Cheshire High School including a welcome breakfast for new students, the National Honor Society induction, Music in Motion, upcoming PSAT administration, Homecoming and the Halloween costume parade. They also recognized the football communities' support for Coach Mike Ciotti during his illness.

Dodd Middle School representatives Lily Grenier and Marco Durante reported on parent conferences, an upcoming internet-safety presentation by Scott Driscoll, summer reading discussions, fall athletics, a planned student council food drive, National Junior Honor Society activities, and an eighth-grade Boston Freedom Trail trip. They reported that the Apex fundraiser raised more than \$10,000. The representatives are developing a student survey on school experiences, including peer relationships and internet connectivity, and expect to share results at a future meeting.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. Teacher of the Year.

Cheshire High School Principal Kevin Hanlon introduced Ian Wildermann, the 2026 Cheshire District Teacher of the Year. Mr. Hanlon recognized Mr. Wildermann's service as an English teacher since 2010 and department chair since 2015, his emphasis on student thinking and ownership of learning, his collegial leadership, and his thoughtful approach to the responsible use of artificial intelligence. The Board congratulated Mr. Wildermann.

B. School Partnership Award – Highland

Board member Anne Marie Cullinan presented the School Partnership Award to Kathy Gillman. On behalf of Highland Principal Scott Jeffrey, she recognized Mrs. Gillman's extensive volunteer service in the school library, assistance to students in selecting books, and support for library staff and instructional activities. The Board expressed its appreciation.

3. AUDIENCE

Deborah Manke, 1725 Cheshire Street. Ms. Manke, a retired (and current) teacher and current Town Council Member, thanked Dr. Solan, current and former Board members, and community supporters for their sustained work toward the successful opening of Barnum and Norton Schools. Ms. Manke acknowledged the ongoing punch-list work at both buildings, praised the efforts of teachers and staff in all elementary schools, and noted positive experiences reported by families transitioning from Chapman to Highland. Dr. Solan thanked Ms. Manke and emphasized the broad team effort that made the school projects possible.

4. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**A. CURRICULUM****I. Report on Meeting Held October 8, 2026.**

Ms. Cullinan reported on the October 8th Curriculum Committee meeting. The proposed Cheshire High School Grand Canyon trip was canceled due to insufficient enrollment, and the Committee approved a contingent overnight trip to the New England Cross Country Championships in Belfast, Maine, for students who qualify. Christina Sherwood presented generally positive findings from the Bureau of Special Education's integrated monitoring review, including strong relationships and instruction; the district addressed one documentation-related corrective action and continues to refine IEP data, extended school year considerations, and supports.

Assistant Superintendent Marlene Silano reviewed the introduction of standards-based grading in seventh and eighth grade mathematics at Dodd. Families received an informational video, frequently asked questions, and opportunities to attend four informational sessions, with two additional sessions planned before report cards are released December 16. Students use progress trackers to reflect on learning and identify next steps; Ms. Silano also discussed geometry curriculum work, cross-grade mathematics collaboration with the Partnership for Educational Leadership, and district participation in an EdAdvance Artificial Intelligence conference. The AI Learning Collaborative continues developing AI literacy guidance.

B. FINANCE**I. Finance Report**

Chief Operating Officer, Emily Taylor presented the financial report through September 30, 2026. The approved FY 2026–2027 budget is \$99,849,080, of which \$66,269,948, or 66.4%, had been expended or encumbered. Certified salary encumbrances rose as annual teaching commitments were recorded. Instructional program expenditures were approximately \$4.3 million, with outplacement tuition accounting for much of the year-over-year increase. Tuition outplacements totaled approximately \$3.2 million, or 90.5% of that account. Ms. Taylor also noted that preparation for the FY 2027–2028 budget is underway.

II. Medical Benefits Update

In the medical benefits update, Ms. Taylor reported a September 30 reserve balance of approximately \$2.3 million, compared with \$2.4 million a year earlier. Year-to-date claims increased approximately 11.7%; September claims were approximately \$1.6 million, compared with \$1.4 million in September 2025. The reserve represented approximately 1.72 months of claims, below the two-month target. Ms. Taylor said she will continue monitoring claims, stop-loss reimbursements, and prescription rebates.

C. PLANNING**I. Report on Meeting Held.**

Dr. Solan explained that revised Educational Specifications for the Highland School roof project reduce the proposed replacement area from approximately 62,000 square feet to 49,751 square feet following further review. The smaller replacement area is expected to reduce project costs; the planned solar array remains part of the project.

MOTION by Mr. Ecke and seconded by Dr. Harrigan

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the revised educational specifications for the Highland School roof replacement.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

D. POLICY**I. Report on Meeting Held October 5, 2026.**

Mr. Ecke reported that at the meeting the Committee reviewed policies for first and third readings.

II. First Reading of Policies

Policy 3542.43-Charging Policy. Dr. Solan said he met with Ms. Taylor and Food Service Director, Ms. Nuzzo to review and update the district's food service charging policy, incorporating initial feedback from the Policy Committee. The policy is being revised to reflect current school breakfast practices.

Policy 5114-Suspension and Expulsion. Dr. Solan reviewed two minor revisions to the Suspension and Expulsion Policy required by recent legislative changes. The first addresses out-of-school suspensions for students in preschool through grade two, clarifying the standard involving conduct that causes serious physical harm. The second revision expands the requirement to provide an alternative educational opportunity to certain students experiencing a second expulsion.

III. Third Reading and Approval of Policies

Mr. Ecke brought forward the following policies for a third reading and approval:

Policy 3451-Petty Cash Funds. Revisions include updating the title of the Chief Operating Officer, revising school names, and increasing petty cash account limits.

Policy 5141.4-Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect. Revisions expand mandated reporting provisions to include applicable contractors who have regular contact with students.

Policy 6130-Organization of Instruction.

Revisions identify the elementary grade levels as kindergarten through grade six, designate Barnum School as the location of the Early Childhood Center, including Birth-to-Three services, and update the description of the district's alternative high school program.

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

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education give a third and final reading to policies 3451 Petty Cash; 5141.4 Reporting of Child Abuse/Neglect; and 6130 Organization of Instruction and direct the Superintendent to put said policies into immediate effect.*

VOTE: The Motion passed unanimously by those present.

E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES

None.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The Board reviewed minutes of the September 24, 2026 Business meeting and October 1, 2026 Open Forum meeting.

MOTION by Dr. Harrigan and seconded by Ms. Cullinan.

MOVED *that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the minutes from the meetings held on September 24 and October 1, 2026.*

Mr. Colehour identified a correction to a recorded vote in the September 24 minutes, changing a 6–0–1 notation to 5–0–1 because he had left the meeting before the vote.

VOTE: The Minutes were approved unanimously as corrected.

6. **CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. White raised correspondence questioning the ownership relationships of the district's school photography vendor, Lifetouch. Dr. Solan described an earlier review of the issue and said the they have had no reason to believe student images had been compromised or misused. Ms. Taylor explained that the district's arrangement with the vendor is a no-cost agreement, typically reviewed in the spring.

7. **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Energy Performance Contract Update: Dr. Solan indicated that the projects approved at the previous meeting had been submitted and that there was no substantive new update.

New Schools Report: Dr. Solan discussed ongoing work to improve arrival and dismissal procedures at the elementary schools. At Doolittle, a revised parent-pickup arrangement using the Oak Avenue entrance appeared to improve traffic flow. At Norton, adjustments to dismissal procedures had improved operations, while paving and pedestrian access work near Sharon Drive and Farmington Drive remained in progress. Dr. Solan also noted continued work on outstanding construction punch-list items at Barnum and Norton.

Dr. Solan reported that Cheshire Public Schools ranked 13th in Connecticut in the latest Niche district rankings, up from 15th the prior year. He addressed questions about adjustable student desks and chairs and discussed the volume of Parent Square communications, noting that the median parent received 49 messages in September and one parent received 177. They are examining ways to make communications easier for families to manage and prioritize.

8. **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Samantha Rosenberg reviewed upcoming Board meetings.

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Colehour, and seconded by Ms. Cullinan, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 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: 10/22/2026.