

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUSINESS MEETING  
HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON AUGUST 22, 2024 AT 7:30 PM**

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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;

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**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.

Dr. Solan said it is with a heavy heart to share that late last night he learned of the sudden passing of a Cheshire High School student. Due to confidentiality laws and out of respect for the family's privacy, we are unable to release the child's name at this time. Superintendent Solan reminded everyone how important it is for students to speak with an adult if they have any concerns or questions. He said as a school system, we want to make sure we are supporting all of our students and our community. We encourage our students to talk to a parent, school counselor, or to call 211 for mental health/grief support.

Dr. Solan announced that in partnership with Wellmore Behavioral Health and Cheshire Human Services, we offered counseling services at Cheshire High School today. Those services will be offered again tomorrow between 9am and 3pm. People may also contact their local school for additional resources.

Dr. Solan called for a moment of silence.

**3. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**MOTION** by Dr. Harrigan and seconded Mr. White.

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

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Ms. Rosenberg explained the Consent Calendar Items:

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 2024-25 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. Approval of Textbook.**

Ms. Cullinan explained that based upon its review and following the public viewing period, the Curriculum Committee recommends to the Board approval of the purchase of the following textbook:

<b>Textbook</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Grades</b>
Ways of the World	Bedford, Freeman and Worth	11-12

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

**MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the purchase of *Ways of the World*, as recommended by the Curriculum Committee.

Discussion: Mr. White asked what course this book would be used for. Ms. Silano said it is the AP World History course, which is a new course next year. She added they will purchase approximately 30 books for just under \$4,000.

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

## **B. FINANCE**

### **I. Finance Report**

Mr. Masciana explained the approved budget for the 2024-25 fiscal year is \$89,542,609. While we have expended and encumbered \$17,702,057 during the first month of the new fiscal year, we have not yet entered the bulk of our encumbrances for our largest accounts, namely payroll and transportation. There is a 50% cap on expenditures. The September and October reports will be more reflective of our full-year financial picture as it will include the encumbrances for our major expenditure categories. At this time, there are no variance concerns to report, and note the following one item related to our 24-25 budget at this time:

Energy Price Locks – pricing is locked for most of the commodity purchases needed for our schools which will help to ensure that we will meet our budget for the below items in 2024-25, as follows:

- Heating Oil - \$2.510/gallon (\$2.583/gallon in 23-24)
- Transportation - Diesel Fuel at \$2.588/gallon (\$2.698/gallon in 23-24)
- Transportation - Gasoline at \$2.464/gallon (\$2.524/gallon in 23-24)
- Electricity (Supply only) - \$.1035/kWh (\$.1170/kWh in 23-24)
- Propane – Not locked yet (\$2.29/gallon in 23-24)

For the time being, natural gas will be purchased from Eversource at market pricing because the locked pricing options are still not attractive.

### **II. Medical Benefits Update**

Mr. Masciana reviewed that they budgeted just under \$1.2 million per month for claims, based on the actuarial estimates that we received from USI, the benefits broker and Cigna. He said unfortunately, the first month's claims exceeded the \$1.18 million expected at 1.56 million. The reserve balance was decreased by \$393,000 a high claim month. He noted that there are several large continuing claims for people who have either chemo or immunotherapy treatment that's ongoing. As of right now, the reserve balance is 1.826 million. So we, you know, we have 1.54 months of claims. He said he does expect that as we get into September, October, claims should settle down. And they are looking to average the 1.18 million as the year progresses. If there is another high claim month and we exhaust our reserve, the first place we have to go is to our operating budget to make sure we can make up the

deficiency. We always have the option, to request additional funding, but we haven't done that in the past.

C. **PERSONNEL**

I. **Report on Meeting Held .Appoint of Assistant Chief Operating Officer.**

Mr. Masciana presented Ms. Emily Taylor to the Board of Education. He explained that Emily was selected from a pool of 30 candidates and endured a grueling multi-round interview process that included members of our Board of Education, Administration, and Operations leadership team. Throughout the process, Emily was personable, thoughtful in her responses, enthusiastic about the position and professional in her interactions with everyone. She ultimately proved to us that she is the right fit for this new position.

Emily has more than 12 years of experience serving in various school operations leadership roles and is currently the Chief Operating Officer at Kipp Academy where she is responsible for managing the operations of five charter schools in the Boston area that serve more than 2,100 K-12 students with an operating budget of more than \$50M. Emily earned a BS in Psychology, Criminology & Criminal Justice from the University of Maryland - Summa Cum Laude. She then went on to earn an MBA from Bentley University. We are pleased to share with the Board that Emily also is a former Cheshire resident and a proud graduate of Cheshire High School! Emily and her family reside in Glastonbury. She will be starting her career with the Cheshire Public Schools on October 9.

**MOTION** by Mr. White, seconded by Ms. Cullinan.

***MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education appoints Emily Taylor to the position of Assistant Chief Operating Officer. Further, the Board authorizes the Superintendent to enter into an agreement with Ms. Taylor for her employment as the Assistant Chief Operating Officer.*

**VOTE:** The Motion passed unanimously 6-0.

Board Members welcomed Ms. Taylor.

D. **PLANNING**

I. **Report on Meeting Held on July 17, 2024.**

Mr. Masciana reported that on the date of the meeting, they provided an update on the status of the Highland portable classrooms project to add two module classrooms at Highland Elementary School because of growing enrollment. As of the date of the meeting, there were 890 students enrolled at Highland Elementary and as of today, there are 915 students. At the meeting he said he reported to the Planning Committee members that we had

issued an initial RFP to purchase the portable classrooms February and we awarded the actual purchase and delivery of the portables back in March. Planning and Zoning approved the project and on May 13 we had construction design and bid set drawings completed by Antinozzi. On June 11, they issued a second request for proposals to do the site, electrical, plumbing and construction work. Since the Planning meeting, they screened the proposals, did a scope review with the architect and our Director of Facilities, and ultimately awarded Beacon Electric. The project will be funded with a combination of capital funds and funds from our operating budget. Mr. Masciana said the other item that they discussed at the meeting was a meeting he had with Eversource regarding getting natural gas delivery at Doolittle School. He noted they never did it previously, because it was cost prohibitive and they learned it is still cost prohibitive.

Since the Planning meeting, they have had several meetings with Beacon Electric. They will be installing perimeter fencing and site work will begin next week. Mr. Masciana said they should have the portables ready for occupancy around Thanksgiving

**E. OTHER STANDING COMMITTEES**

None.

**5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**MOVED** that the Cheshire Board of Education approve the Minutes from meetings held on June 6 and June 28, 2024.

**VOTE:** The Motion was approved unanimously, 6-0.

**6. CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

**7. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

Dr. Solan shared information on upcoming meetings for the new school projects. There will be a joint meeting to review the North End final plans on Thursday September 12 at 7:00 p.m... On Thursday, September 26, we will have another joint meeting with the Next Gen School Building Committee to approve the Norton final plans at 7:00 p.m. He reported construction has begun at both locations.

Dr. Solan reported on the Anxious Generation Book Club. Over 200 parents and staff signed up to read the Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt and more than 100 people have participated in book discussions. He said after reading the book, it has changed the way that he looks at parenting, educational leadership, how we support kids to develop to be healthy

young people and hopefully young adults. To their significant detriment, we tend to dramatically under protect our kids in the virtual world. There is a great deal of causal data around the addictive nature of social media and the adverse impact it has on our kids' mental health, sleep and many other things, particularly for young women. The State has issued guidance around cell phone policies and this has been our position from the outset. While he thinks restricting cell phone access is great, it is like the idea of saying that we are going to restrict cigarette access to kids during the day, but really, we want to do it all the time. Dr. Solan said is not outlandish to make the parallel that social media is as addictive and harmful for young people as smoking. The Superintendent said he is focused on educating our community about this is hopeful that this is the first step in community understanding and acceptance when we are much more restrictive around cell phone use.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Chairperson's Update**

Ms. Rosenberg read a list of the upcoming meetings.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. Ecke, and seconded by Mr. White, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Samantha Rosenberg, Board Chair

Attest:

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Carol K. Jesensky, Board of Education Clerk

Filed at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Cheshire: \_\_\_\_\_.