

**MINUTES OF CHESHIRE BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUDGET PRESENTATION MEETING HELD IN TOWN COUNCIL
CHAMBERS ON JANUARY 9, 2025 AT 7:30 PM**

Board Members Present: Samantha Rosenberg, Chair; Anne Harrigan, Vice Chair; Adam Grippo, Secretary; Anne Marie Cullinan; Mark Ecke; Anthony Perugini; Timothy White

Administrators Present: Jeffrey F. Solan, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools; Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; Marlene Silano, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; Robin-Anne Carey, Director, Pupil Personnel Services; Mary Jocelyn-Gadd, Principal, Cheshire High School; Kristin Pelz, Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Maureen Reed, Ed.D., Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; Daniel Tartarelli, Assistant Principal, Cheshire High School; John Perosino, Athletic Director, Cheshire High School; Kelly Grippo, Principal, Dodd Middle School; Ryan Murphy, Assistant Principal, Dodd Middle School; Diana Burns, Principal, Chapman Elementary School; Katharine Carlucci, Assistant Principal, Chapman & Norton Elementary Schools; Kimberly Dessert, Principal, Darcey School; Amy O'Brien, Principal, Doolittle School; Kristin Lopa, Assistant Principal, Doolittle School; Jodie Roden, Principal, Norton School; Scott Jeffrey, Principal, Highland Elementary School; Erica Bordonaro, Assistant Principal, Highland Elementary School; Kevin Hanlon, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator; Christina Sherwood, Supervisor of Elementary Special Education; Marie Broadway, Supervisor of Secondary Special Education

1. CALL TO ORDER – 7:40 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. PRESENTATIONS

A. SUPERINTENDENT'S PROPOSED 2025/2026 BUDGET

Dr. Solan began by thanking his administrative team, and Mr. Masciana and his team in the Operations Department.

He began by clarifying his role vs. the Board's role. The Board member's duty is to provide an appropriate learning environment for all its students which includes (1) adequate instructional books, supplies, materials, equipment, staffing, facilities, and technology, (2) equitable allocation of resources among its schools, (3) proper maintenance of facilities, and (4) a safe school setting. The

Superintendent’s duty is “*to collaborate with district leaders to design a fiscally responsible budget that ensures equitable and developmentally appropriate educational experiences between schools, a safe and clean learning environment, fulfills statutory obligations, and allows for the advancement of Board of Education goals.*”

The Superintendent said the budget provides:

- Resources to provide high quality instruction to 4,257 students;
- Mental health, nutrition, and medical care to allow students to access instruction;
- Specialized services required for all students to meet their potential;
- Diverse opportunities for students to engage in activities outside of their curricular pursuits; and
- Transportation to and from school.

Dr. Solan reviewed the external factors that affect our budget: Wage, Benefits and General Inflation; Minimum wage increased to \$16.35 on 1/1/25, up 63.5% since 2019; State of the State – Biennial budget year for CT; State/Federal Education Revenue; State/Federal Mandates: Town of Cheshire’s continued growth and development. Internal factors include General and Special Education increasing steadily; Contractual Wage and Medical Benefit Cost Increases; New Teacher Contract – 4.59% for 25-26 vs 3.02% in 24-25; Non-certified Salaries – 6.78% for 25-26 vs 5.71% in 24-25; Medical Benefits – 10.94% for 25-26 vs 7.95% in 24-25; Vendor contracts including transportation and cleaning services; and Aging Facilities.

The Superintendent reviewed his budget recommendation.

2024-25 Budget	\$89,542,609
2025-2026 Recommendation	\$95,892,631
<i>Wage Increase</i>	<i>\$3,308,368</i>
<i>Medical Benefit Increase</i>	<i>\$1,573,085</i>
<u><i>All other Increases</i></u>	<u><i>\$1,468,569</i></u>
Total Increase	\$6,350,022
Total Increase %	7.09%
Increase % W/O Medical Benefits	5.33%

He said increasing enrollment is driving:

- Regular and Special Education Staffing additions of Classroom and Specials Teachers and Paraprofessionals
- Higher special education outplacements & cost
- Addition of STEM Curriculum Coordinator for grades 9-12
- Wage inflation for certified staff and non-certified staff, exacerbated by CT minimum wage increases (\$10.00 in 2019 to \$16.35 now)
- Increasing Medical Benefit costs

- Facilities operating costs (utilities & maintenance)

This budget **restores** a moderate increase in maintenance to address building and equipment issues; **advances** STEM Curriculum Supervisor (CHS); and **maintains** class sizes, special education services; medical benefit funding matching expected claims, school counseling resources and transitional kindergarten.

The budget impact of hiring a CHS Stem Coordinator is \$200,000. The standards and expectations for secondary math and science have shifted significantly over the past decade. Our teachers and administrators have worked diligently to address those shifts in standards by updating curricula and instructional practices, but we recognize that they need support. This position will play the same role that Kevin has played at the K-8 level but addresses the myriad classes that exist within STEM at the high school level. In brief, data analysis, planning professional development, curricular review, coaching for instructional practices, facilitating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

The Transition Kindergarten Program is an additional consideration. There is no budget impact. Almost every state in America has a kindergarten cut-off age of five by September 1 because there is substantial agreement about the developmental readiness and benefit. Our experience over the 24-25 school year has underscored this finding. We currently have the space to be able to continue to accommodate students and families at no cost through a tuition program.

The Superintendent reviewed net Staffing changes.

Certified Staffing

School/Dept.	Position	2025-26 Requested Changes - Teachers - Account 113	Change
Chapman	Elementary Teacher	Increase from 20 to 21 Teachers (Avg. class size = 18.2 students/teacher)	1.0
Doolittle	Elementary Teacher	No change - 29 Teachers (Avg. class size = 18.0 students/teacher)	-
Highland	Elementary Teacher	Increase from 47 to 48 Teachers (Avg. class size = 19.7 students/teacher)	1.0
Norton	Elementary Teacher	Decrease from 23 to 22 Teachers (Avg. class size = 18.5 students/teacher)	-1.0
Elementary	School Counselor	Position was funded through the ARPA School Mental Health Grant that expires 6/30/25	0.5
District	STEM Curriculum Coordinator	New position for a 9-12 Science and Math Curriculum Coordinator	1.0
K-8	Health Education Teacher	New position for a Health Teacher to primarily serve elementary and middle school grades	1.0
District	Art Teacher	New position for an ART Teacher to serve elementary and high school grades	1.0
Elementary	TESOL Teacher	New .5 position for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)	0.5
Total Net Increase			5.0

Elementary enrollment increases have driven the new teacher additions (4.5). More than 10% of our students speak a second language at home. The school counseling position at Doolittle (.5) is the transition off a Connecticut grant where the State has been covering the full cost of the position for 2 years. We will be responsible for 50% of cost in 2025-2026. The curricular position is beyond our current scope of service.

Non-Certified Staffing Impact.

- 6 Paraprofessional positions added in 24-25 that will need to be retained for 2025-26 due to student needs
- 1 additional Learning Support Tutor
- 1 additional BOE bus driver

Next, the Superintendent reviewed Medical Benefits.

- Reserve is at 1.24 months claims as of 11-30-24
 - Target is 2.0 months or claims or higher, if possible
- This medical benefits budget increase is intended to simply meet the expected claims rate for 25-26
 - We are increasing our monthly contribution rate from \$1,188,000 to \$1,267,330. This is a 9.09% increase.
- This does not enhance our reserve balance

The Superintendent said that the total Projected Revenue for 2025-26 is \$10,907,911. Revenue is paid directly to the Town of Cheshire, but it is taken into consideration when the Town Council sets the Board of Education Budget.

Dr. Solan shared DRG B Per Pupil Expenditures. Cheshire's PPE is \$20,156.61.

He reviewed the Key Takeaways:

- This budget is focused on maintaining our trajectory of success.
- Our enrollment growth reflects a thriving community where people want to live.
- Our achievement continues to climb as we maintain our focus on Complex Thinking and Social-Emotional growth.
- The budget is grounded in leveraging our resources to continue to achieve at exceptionally high levels.
- Cheshire Public Schools is an outstanding value for our community providing exceptional results. If this budget were adopted as proposed, our per pupil spending in 2025-2026 would still be less than the state average PPE from **2023-2024!**

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Mr. White, and seconded by Mr. Grippo, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 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: 1/15/2025.