

Chariho School Committee Virtual Meeting
Regular Session Minutes – January 12, 2021

Committee Members Virtual Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti, George Abbott (rejoined at 6:47 PM – issue with link), Ryan Callahan, Donna Chambers, William Day (joined at 6:24 PM), Sheila Grover (joined at 6:49 PM), Gary Liguori (joined at 6:34 PM), Craig Louzon, Linda McAllister and David Stall. Absent: Lisa Macaruso.

Administrators and Others Virtual Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Jane Daly, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Retired Director of Administration and Finance Susan Rogers, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, Director of Maintenance and Grounds Jason Sullivan, Administrative Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent Nancy Pirnie, High School Principal Craig MacKenzie, Middle School Principal Greg Zenion, Middle School Assistant Principal Mary Beth Florenz, Hope Valley Principal Joe Gencarelli, NEA President Vin Levcowich, NEA ESP President Tom Pirnie, NEA ESP Vice President Chris Caldarone, Charlestown Town Council President Deb Carney, Richmond Town Council Vice President Jim Palmisciano, RGB Representatives Andrew Barkley and Tracey Donnelly, Friends of Chariho Representative Robin Woodmansee, Westerly Sun Reporter Cynthia Drummond, Attorney for the School Committee Jon Anderson (joined at 6:34 PM), School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz and other community members.

I. Meeting Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance/Silent Meditation

Chair Lyall called the virtual meeting of the Chariho School Committee to order at 6:30 PM. She read the following: *By now many of you have all heard the sad news that one of our teachers, Jeanne Ross, passed away last week. I would like to extend sympathy to the family and friends of Jeanne on behalf of the School District and the entire School Committee. Our thoughts are with them.* All joined in a moment of silence for Jeanne. The Pledge of Allegiance was next followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Motion/Vote to go into Executive Session

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was

VOTED: That the School Committee go into executive session and close the meeting to the public under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussion and/or action pertaining to collective bargaining (1. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of December 15, 2020 – NEA ESP Negotiation Update; 2. NEA ESP Negotiation Update; and 3) Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho Pertaining to Graduation Portfolio); under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(3) for the purpose of discussion regarding the matter of security including but not limited to the deployment of security personnel or devices (Approval of Executive Session Minutes of December 15, 2020 - Criteria and Assessment of Emergency Drills); and under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(8) for the purpose of reviewing and/or approving matters which relate to the privacy of students and their records (1. Approval of Home Instruction Requests and 2. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of December 15, 2020 – Approval of Home Instruction Requests); any persons to be discussed have been so notified. In favor: Unanimous (Day, Grover and Liguori were not in attendance for the vote).

The Committee returned to open session at 6:50 PM and Chair Lyall reconvened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

III. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

1. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (NEA ESP Negotiation Update) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been made.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (NEA ESP Negotiation Update) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been made. In favor: Unanimous.

2. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho Pertaining to Graduation Portfolio) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho Pertaining to Graduation Portfolio) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached. In favor: Unanimous.

3. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes relating to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes relating to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous.

IV. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Vice Chair Giusti reported there were 5 votes taken in executive session. The first vote, approval of executive session minutes of December 15, 2020 – NEA ESP Contract Negotiation Update, passed with 9 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals with Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall voting in favor.

The second vote, approval of executive session minutes of December 15, 2020 – Matter of Security (Criteria and Assessment of Emergency Drills), passed with 9 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals with Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall voting in favor.

The third vote, approval of executive session minutes of December 15, 2020 – Home Instruction Requests, passed with 10 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall voting in favor.

The fourth vote, approval of two Home Instruction Requests, passed with 11 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Grover, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall voting in favor.

The fifth vote, to return to open session, passed with 11 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions and 0 recusals with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Grover, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall voting in favor.

V. Recognition

Nothing to report.

VI. Public Forum

Chair Lyall noted that this was the part of the meeting where the public can speak on items that are not on the agenda. She explained the process to follow if anyone wanted to speak. There was no one interested in speaking.

VII. Policy

A. Written Information Security Program (Adoption) – Superintendent Picard recommended adoption of this policy which was drafted by The Trust, approved by the Audit Subcommittee and reviewed by legal counsel. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Ryan, to adopt this policy. Bill questioned why it only mentioned the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as we have employees who live in Connecticut. Gina noted this was reviewed by legal counsel but she could not answer, at this time, why Connecticut was not listed. David stated that it would be nice to have legal counsel here if the policy is drafted by them to answer questions. Craig withdrew his motion and Ryan withdrew his second.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was
VOTED: To table this item until they have clarification from legal counsel. In favor: Unanimous.

B. Secondary Grading Policy (Revision) – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the revision to this policy - Middle School Learner Qualities (page 1). Greg Zenion and Mary Beth Florenz were both on the call if there were any questions. There were no questions.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was
VOTED: To approve the revised Secondary Grading Policy. In favor: Unanimous.

C. Academic Requirements for High School Graduation (Revision) – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the “temporary” revision to this policy to waive the “Must Pass” expectation for all classes that are graduation requirements for the first semester and possibly the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year (page 3). While all students have the opportunity to retake should they fail to meet proficiency, as long as the student’s semester average is 70 or above, the student is not required to pass the Summative Assessment to pass the course. This mirrors a decision made last spring for semester exams and considers the challenges of providing remediation and instruction within the allotted 10 days from the exam given the potentially large number of distance learners and concerns about students carrying remediation and reassessment responsibilities into semester two and equity issues of exam retake integrity for in-person vs. distance learners. The other revision is the removal of testing language that is outdated (page 6). Principal MacKenzie was in attendance but there were no questions asked of him.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was
VOTED: To approve the revisions to the Academic Requirements for High School Graduation. In favor: Unanimous.

VIII. Business

A. New Curriculum Resources to Meet RIGL § 16-22-30 (Statewide academic standards); § 16-22-31 (Curriculum frameworks); § 16-22-32 (High quality curriculum and materials); § 16-22-33 (Curriculum implementation accountability) Requirements – The “Curriculum Bill” – Superintendent Picard noted that Jane will provide an overview on this new State mandate for ELA and she recommended adoption of the English Language Arts (ELA) New K-12 Curriculum. Craig made a motion, seconded by Ryan to adopt the English Language Arts (ELA) New K-12 Curriculum. Jane stated they began work on this as RI Legislation is requiring all districts to select a new high quality ELA curriculum by June 2023. Math and Science will be next. RIDE provided a list of materials they recommend. Many might ask why the District is moving on this now and the answer is the pandemic moved us much quicker with the elementary 1:1 initiative and the new curriculum will provide better access to digital resources. Jane thanked the following who worked with her on the selection: Joe Gencarelli, Kerry Pastore, Dana Hall, Mary Beth Florenz, Iris Ornberg, Andrea Spas and Jill Burke. They surveyed parents and staff and reviewed the District’s strategic plan. They also worked with RIDE and EdReports. Joe Gencarelli introduced and reviewed the highlights of the K-5 program they selected. It is user friendly and provides a workbook for students to take home over the summer to keep up with reading. The foundational skills for K-12 are great; it is content rich, award winning

and ethnically diverse. Teachers will have access to a lot of reports/data. He is very excited and knows this will meet their needs and more. Jane provided program highlights of the grades 6-12 program. This is a fully digital program that won't require the purchase of many hard-covered texts. They will, however, still get a consumable workbook for grade 6. The program places high importance on student collaboration and discussion and will integrate with Google. There is also a full assessment suite; gradebook and data reporting summary of how a student performs on each of the standards. They brought Shawn Cole in on the discussion to make sure the programs will work with our system. She is working to secure funding through the budget and teachers will be provided professional development. She then reviewed the cost with the total estimated to be \$187,600. They will be able to remove about \$20,000 from the budget for items not needed if the School Committee chooses to approve this. Bill wanted everyone to be aware that this is another State mandate that the District has no control over. Because of budget concerns, people need to know this. Donna thanked all for the great presentation. She is very impressed and supportive. Linda McAllister agreed and noted her appreciation for all the work that went into this. She questioned if the amounts for PD will be for PD that is ongoing to which Jane replied that the prices given are for the first year. She is not sure how much will be needed after that. The digital access is ongoing support and the District will not have to purchase anything but consumables every year. The Committee was practical; there were other programs that were good but very costly. Craig questioned the sharing of kits at the elementary level to which Jane explained that each teacher will get his/her own supplies. What will be shared are reading materials and the reason for this is that the school's library may already have some of the reading materials. We will assess this after we get the kit. They were offering the District 10% off; she has them to 15% and will continue to work on this. Bill noted that he will be abstaining from the vote; not because he is opposed to it but because it is another unfunded mandate by the State. We keep getting cut and they keep pushing unfunded mandates. This is why the budget goes up.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was

VOTED: To adopt the English Language Arts (ELA) New K-12 Curriculum. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Grover, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Stall. Abstained: Day. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 1 abstention.

B. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho Pertaining to Graduation Portfolio – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho pertaining to Graduation Portfolio. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Ryan, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation. David requested more clarity to which Craig MacKenzie explained that historically, as part of NEA's contract, every certified staff person is responsible to judge/observe two graduation portfolio presentations. Due to unknowns (in-person vs. digital), a decision was made to do all graduation portfolio presentations virtually. This way parents, friends, and others can observe. The compromise in the MOA is the reduction in notice of sign-up and they only have to do one observation.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was

VOTED: To approve the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District Committee and NEA Chariho Pertaining to Graduation Portfolio. In favor: Unanimous.

C. Necessity for School Construction Update and Decision – The Superintendent reported that Ned Draper, Necessity for School Construction Committee Chair Ryan Callahan and RGB representatives will provide an update and review options for a possible decision on newer/fewer schools. Ryan presented some background information. If the District continues with a plan to maintain existing infrastructure (capital projects), RIDE compensates the District 61% (standard) for brick and mortar improvements. The State came out with a program that incentivizes districts to invest in newer/fewer buildings. The School Committee formed a Necessity for School Construction Committee and they engaged with RGB to look at existing infrastructure. Our capital needs are

rapidly approaching \$60 million with around \$26 million allocated to elementary buildings. They want to be fiscally responsible to taxpayers. The District typically gets about 65% reimbursement and this is a pathway to get at least 80% reimbursement. They have narrowed down the options to three models after reviewing infrastructure and demographics. Ned added that this has implications for how the District's budget will look. The meeting was turned over to Tracey and Andrew from RGB. They thanked all and noted that an updated power point was added to the website. They provided a quick overview of the process that started about a year ago. They began by looking at demographics (a demographer was hired) and it appears that this will stay pretty constant. The major focus was at the elementary level. They then interviewed administration, faculty, students and held vision workshops. They looked at every aspect of every program. Andrew noted that the community and students responded really well to how Chariho is doing. The huge push is what is equitable from elementary to high school. He then reviewed the three options. Option A would bring grade 5 students back to the elementary schools. They would take the four elementary schools and combine them into one school preferably on campus or close to it. There appears to be two pieces of property that would work. The land is privately owned so this would require the purchase of land. The school would house PreK to grade 5 which would allow the Middle School to expand. Tracey added, even though it would be a large building, they would provide each grade level with an identity to itself. Grades 9-12 would remain at the High School. A diagram was shared that showed how classrooms would be designed. Option B would include improvements to Ashaway, Charlestown and Richmond Schools (closing Hope Valley). Fifth grade would be brought back to each town school. This would result in a three-elementary model and the three existing schools (HS, MS and CALA). Chariho's standing is fantastic; you would get at least 80% reimbursement on any project. Option C would encompass maintaining all facilities and doing health/safety improvements to each. Comparing the three, Option A would allow for maximum reimbursement. It would be the most efficient as there would be just one building to maintain. Using the models presented, Option A would cost about \$23.6 million after reimbursement. Option B incentives are similar to Option A but you would only be taking one elementary school offline. There would still be ongoing maintenance to the buildings as they are old with the cost after reimbursement to be around \$11.5 million. Option C would cost about \$17.7 million after reimbursement. The average age of the buildings is 57 and reimbursement would only be around 70%; 10% less than the other two options. This option does not address the aging buildings. Each Committee member then weighed in on the options presented. Most felt Option A was the most logical as far as providing for students while considering taxpayers but wanted the community to weigh in before making a decision. Andrew noted that they are hopeful that RIDE will push the timeline a bit because of COVID. Craig asked if there was any change financially with the State to which Andrew replied that they have spoken with Christine Metcalf Lopes and everything is still in place but he added that they do not see where the \$250 million that has been allocated for newer/fewer will be reinstated. Chair Lyall asked Ryan and others if the Committee had enough information to move forward. Andrew stated that they will reach out to everyone in the community including the elderly population; they will try to reach as many residents as possible through meetings with the Town Councils and Community forums.

D. School Committee Compensation – This item was requested by Donna Chambers. Donna stated that she thought Jon was going to weigh in on this. The Clerk noted that in her discussion with Jon, his concern at the last meeting was that the Committee cannot take any action that pertains to the stipend they receive as a School Committee member. In other words, they should not vote or have any discussion on the manner in which they are to be compensated. Bill added that it is his understanding that administration will make the decision on when and how compensation will be handled. Gina stated that she will check with Jon but the best course of action will be the cleanest way to do it year to year. There was no action taken.

E. FY22 Budget – The Superintendent noted that this is an opportunity for discussion on or adjustments to the budget. Donna stated that she looked over briefly the recommendations they received from Sharon Davis and it seems that she cut service items; she was cutting dollars but not things in the line item. If she could explain her cuts (her rationale), she might consider them. Gina

replied that she did reach out to Councilor Davis and asked for clarification but she has not heard back from her. Ned noted that they went through sections after the last meeting and verified the number of CALA students who pay tuition. They noticed that the District can yield another \$46,000 for this line item (Section 5, Row 19). This brings the total to \$192,630. David noted that he had some concerns, as did Donna, on Sharon's recommendations as he has no idea of the merit of each one of those. He would certainly want to listen to her and hear what she has to say. Gina stated that if Sharon should respond to her, she will forward the information to the Committee. Craig questioned if the additional \$46,000 was for one student to which Ned responded that it depends on the needs of the student and the program he/she is enrolled in. Craig wanted to insure that no Chariho student was being bumped out of the program. Ned replied that there are available spots so no Chariho student is being excluded.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was
VOTED: To increase revenue in Section 5, Row 19 – CALA tuitions by \$46,000 from \$146,630 to \$192,630. In favor: Unanimous.

Bill noted concerns he has about the capital budget. He talked to the Fire Chief/Marshal and they have no knowledge or reason as to why the Hope Valley School Voice Fire Alarm upgrade is being done as well as the installation of a dry sprinkler system. We need to rethink some of this \$98,700 that is being set aside for these projects. Why do we want to spend this kind of money if we do not plan on using this building much longer? Ned explained that they needed to set this up as a draft in absence of having a confirmed plan. He will need to let Andrew speak in terms of pricing but with newer/fewer this could potentially go away. Andrew explained that the number came from the electrical engineer and they assumed it needed to be upgraded. If the local fire department does not see a need to have this upgraded and they don't have a concern about it, that number can go away. He did not have an answer for the dry sprinkler system. Bill noted that he has over 50 years of volunteer fire service experience and if someone told him that he needed to spend \$15,000 on a dry system, he would want to know why. He continued with things that he noted are a concern to him. RGB has presented pictures of things they identified that need to be done, including windows at Ashaway School and the gas-fired boiler that needs to be replaced. He is more upset about this capital plan than anything else. Ryan suggested that at the next budget workshop they spend some time on capital and get more justification for line items. He suggested that RGB be prepared. He noted that he received an email from the Richmond Town Council. They want to know what the District's plans are for grounds maintenance at Richmond School. He would like an assessment at the next workshop or the one after. Chair Lyall noted that the email was included in this evening's addendum as an FYI item. George asked if they are voting on the budget this evening as it is; are they voting to move it forward? Chair Lyall replied that she is just looking for items that Committee members have a concern with. They are not voting on the budget tonight. They have a lot more work to do.

IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall asked for clarifying questions or items to be pulled. Items A-1 and A-2 were pulled.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was
VOTED: To move the remainder of the Consent Agenda Items. In favor: Unanimous.

- B. Transfers – None at this time.
- C. Bill Review – Accepted.
- D. Budget Summary – As per enclosed.
- E. Balance Sheet – As per enclosed.
- F. Personnel Actions (Staff Updates listed in FYI)
- G. Permission to Issue Bids/Request Quote – None at this time.
- H. Permission to Award Contracts – Awarded the following:

1. Charlestown Elementary School Fire Alarm and Heat Detector Addition Bid to James J. O'Rourke, Inc., Warwick, RI in the amount of \$10,625.00.

I. Home Instruction – Action taken in executive session.

J. Grants – None at this time.

K. Donations – None at this time.

A-1. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was

VOTED: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of December 15, 2020 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of November 10, 2020 (minutes not sealed). In favor: Unanimous.

A-2. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was

VOTED: To approve the Regular Session Minutes of December 15, 2020. In favor: Unanimous.

X. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports

1. Anti-Racism Task Force met on January 6, 2021. A copy of the approved minutes of December 2, 2020 were included in the packet. The Superintendent added that they are working on posting the videos on the website.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. Review Concurrent Learning Plan and Updates – We returned to in-person learning on Monday. Distance Learning can be challenging so she is glad we can continue to offer both options. Families can always move to DL if they wish. In quarter three, around progress report time, we will be looking for any changes families want to make for quarter four. She and Craig MacKenzie visited South Kingstown as they have been doing Binax testing. We hope to pilot this for the High School and CALA staff and students as this is where we have the most cases of COVID. We are moving into winter athletics and have already implemented weekly testing for athletes (in-school Binax testing). The Athletic Trainer, Director and Nurse are all on board and will become the District trainers. They are not ready to do this at every school but she will share updates with the Committee. They hope to be up and running for the trial next week. We are still at 75% in person and 25% DL. There are a lot of updates to the playbook but student travel requirements have not changed; it is still a 14-day quarantine period. She reviewed what "travel" means.

C. Coming Events were highlighted. The Superintendent noted that elementary principals have asked for a change in plans; they want to remove progress reports as they have the opportunity to track a need and follow-up with parents. So there will be no elementary progress reports issued.

XI. School Committee Requests for Future Agenda Items or Legal Opinions

Craig Louzon requested a legal update in executive session. He then discussed two newspaper editorials he saw regarding something that happened at North Kingstown. The Commissioner ruled against the school district. He would like a legal opinion from Jon. Gina noted that we have put a policy in place so we can go above RIDOH guidance but can't go below it. She does not think that North Kingstown had a policy. She will check and make sure there is nothing in the North Kingstown case that could happen in Chariho. Craig stated that he would still like a legal opinion on this.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by William Day and it was

VOTED: To request a legal opinion on the ruling by the Commissioner in the North Kingstown case. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Grover, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister. Abstained: Stall. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 1 abstention.

XII. Adjournment

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was

VOTED: To adjourn at 9:58 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk