

Chariho School Committee Special Meeting/Budget Workshop  
Regular Session Minutes – January 6, 2022

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti, Ryan Callahan (exited at 6:55 PM), Donna Chambers, William Day, Gary Liguori (arrived at 6:25 PM), Craig Louzon, Lisa Macaruso, Linda McAllister, Karen Reynolds and endawnis Spears. Absent: George Abbott.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Assistant Director of Administration and Finance Gail Wilcox, Richmond Resident Mr. MacInnis and District Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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

Chair Lyall called the Special Meeting/Budget Workshop of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho High School Library, to order at 6:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was then followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Budget Workshop

Ned stated that Craig has asked him for enrollment numbers for the past few years. He will put this information in the update. Ryan noted that he has no recommendations for cuts at this point but questioned what the difference would be if they went from 2.25% in the fund balance to 2.0%. Ned replied the difference would be \$143,136.98. He informed all that the Governor's budget is expected to be out on the 20<sup>th</sup>. He will compare it to what RIDE has prepared. Chair Lyall asked if RIDE could change his to which Ned responded "yes" and legislation can change it as well. Chair Lyall questioned if this will include Transportation Categorical Aid to which Ned noted it will. Ryan reiterated the unknowns such as the increase in healthcare and the Governor's budget. What lines could be impacted? Ned stated that he is guessing they will have to figure something out for urban districts that are getting hit about a million each. Gina added that Transportation Categorical Aid could be impacted and it could be June before we know what the amount will be. We are also uncertain about DCYF placements; we cannot predict these or Preschool enrollment. Ryan questioned heating costs to which Ned explained that they looked at prior years' consumption. He then looked at the Dept. of Energy's forecast for fuel oil price which is predicted to be \$3.06 a gallon (based on a standard index). The biggest unknown is related to the two contracts to which Gina noted that the School Committee helps drive that. Catherine apologized for missing the first meeting. She questioned the tone – anything from the towns and their feelings on the budget? Gina replied she has not heard anything yet and thought maybe after Tuesday Night's School Committee Meeting or the Omnibus Meeting. Chair Lyall added that they met with them right before the holiday. Gina stated that they explained the budget and discussed ESSER funding with them. Donna noted that they usually have a lot more people at their workshops. She is surprised and feels they will all come forth at the end. Ned noted that when they did meet with the towns, ESSER was the main topic. They stated they preferred that capital be addressed. They were told that ESSER III comes with strings attached. If you look at the ProJo article at what each town is doing – some towns are plugging revenue gaps. He is not sure how they will justify that. Craig commented that they have put a big investment in air handlers, air purifiers, etc. These will not last forever. Will we be forced to replace these? Ned responded that in the short-term dealing with the pandemic, we are two years in and he feels these should probably go for five years. Hepa filters will probably have a life of 3-5 years. An evaluation of the systems was done and he feels the District is in good shape. He thinks we can replace Hepa filters and accomplish what we need to do. RGB had significant costs associated with this so we will have to go through it. The longer term investment he is not sure about. Gina noted that substitute teacher rate of pay was just increased in four surrounding districts – ours is \$120 per day with some going to \$160 per day. Craig questioned the

northern part of the State to which Gina replied the larger districts like Cranston and Providence are over \$200 a day. Donna noted that she listened to a Professor named Emily from Brown who did a study of students that were in-person versus distance learners. It was unbelievable the difference so a credit to Gina for keeping Chariho open. Gina replied that the credit goes to all staff. We know it is safer keeping kids in school, especially teens who will gather with no masks when not in school. We are now testing our staff in-house so we can keep them here. endawnis stated how grateful she is to hear all the questions being asked as budgets are not her forte. She is not so much focused on finding discretions in spending; framing of changes are first and foremost to her. She appreciates the Committee's patience with her as she learns. Chair Lyall and the Superintendent both noted that anything she can bring forward or that she hears would be helpful to them. Bill questioned the capital plan in Section 6 – the CTC roof. There is \$275,000 to be set aside for this; how far out are we going for replacement of the roof? Ned noted that at the tail end of next year we will probably need another million the following year. Bill noted a concern about the spending of \$30,000 to keep the roof going and then spending more the next year. He does not see the logic in this. Why aren't we accelerating the money? Ned explained that he met with Colliers and Sully. The \$30,000 figure is in case we have issues with drains, seams, etc. (in case we need to repair these). We won't spend it if we don't need to. This buys us more time. It is a significant expense as we have to go through the engineering process and housing aid. Our goal would be to spend nothing. Bill suggested that the word "emergency" be added as that would explain it better. His second question – he does not see anything about Middle School repairs. The gym leaks and there are a couple leaks in the area by the auditorium stairs. Ned responded that they are doing repairs as they come up. We do not have any indication that the roof is needing replacement. They are working on flashing issues. Bill again mentioned the area by the stairs – back exit in the auditorium – to which Ned stated that he would need to check with Sully about this. Ryan brought up a concern about Special Education Transportation. Are the 2019 actuals a closer match to this budget and the year-to-date for FY22 seems incredibly low? Ned replied that is part of it; they haven't distributed to other locations and the reason FY22 seems low is because there are two months of billing that is not included in this. Craig asked if the new swing set at Charlestown School was going in the lower or upper field. Ned thought it was the lower one but will check this. Craig then questioned the replacement of floor tiles that were improperly installed. How long ago was that? Ned replied that to the best of their knowledge, they were improperly installed but they are way beyond any warranty period. Craig asked if the \$160,600 to replace a Middle School exhaust fan could come from ESSER funds to which Gina replied the rest of the cost of this is in ESSER. ESSER III is focused more on teaching and learning. Craig's next question was regarding the fence at Richmond School. Ned explained the fence will be installed in the area from the parent drop-off to across where the buses turn in. This is an area where a child could easily run. Bill noted that the fence is going to be up around where the signage is. The State has big plans around this area. He does not want to put a fence in and then have to pay to remove it. Gary agreed with almost all Mr. Day said but for \$15,000, if it prevents one kid from running in the street, he is happy to do it. Let the State pay to fix it. Gary noted that he has been thinking about a plus/minus column that the gentleman in the audience brought up at the last meeting. At a School Improvement Team Meeting at the Middle School, the principal noted that he has been hearing a lot about the \$4.6 million the District got in ESSER funds and people saying that the budget better go down that amount. Greg did a good job explaining what the funds are earmarked for so besides having a column for the public, we need to redirect this concern as well. Gina responded that at the Omnibus Meeting she will do another slide that explains why one line item may have gone up. Chair Lyall agreed with Gary. Maybe they could do something with bullet points that explains ESSER funding. Craig added that they need to put something in the paper to let the public know. Gina stated that she could send something to Jason at *The Sun* – maybe a one-pager like they did for newer/fewer and allow the public to ask questions. Craig noted that Charlestown is taking a hit this year and he could not understand it until Ned explained it. Others will have the same question. Bill suggested that maybe Katie could assist in getting the word out like she does with her newsletter; task her to get more PR out about the budget. Ryan questioned line 6692 (electricity – the solar credit section). Ned explained that capital costs are 2/3 of the

credits. We are a little short this year. The field is in Westerly and only began generating so it was not a full year as we were hoping it would be. Gina added that electricity includes all projects (lighting, solar, electricity delivery). Consumption was due to COVID mitigation so it is higher than expected. We are about \$50,000 below FY22 spending mainly due to solar. Ned commented that we are getting electricity for less. Last year we “dumped” air in buildings because of COVID. The lighting project included replacement with LEDs. It will take us five years to pay back the cost of this project but LEDs will last twenty years so we will see a savings. This came at a great time as we are short custodians so there is no need for them to spend time changing light bulbs. Bill noted a concern on page 44 – Row 6642 – Gasoline. Ashaway is up and it seems like this is up across the District with the exception of CALA. Ned replied that this might be based on the way it was spread out. In 2021 it was really low. In 2020 all our gasoline was charged to Ocean State; now we have vans. Gina stated that CALA did get two new vans and when we first did this, it all ran through CTC but CALA should have money in it. Ned noted that this was an error on his part and he will fix it. Bill reiterated that this is why our budget looks so crazy – because of UCOA. The towns don’t have to do their budgets like ours. Mr. MacInnis was asked if he had any comments. He noted that he plans to send his comments to town reps and will email them to administration. Nowhere in the budget does it say what happens to grant-funded positions (7.5 FTE) when the grant money goes away. His comments to the towns deal with how are you going to sell this budget. Gina explained that one grant (IDEA) is federal money which is based on our special education needs. The four positions in ESSER will go away. She can explain to the community which ones won’t sunset. Mr. MacInnis felt that would help if she broke this out. It looks like subs are tracking closely but next year goes up \$120,000. If we are beyond COVID, why the increase? Gina responded that pre-COVID we were going to overspend in that line item. Because of COVID we had to use coverages and the funding has to come from somewhere. We are expecting to see this increase based on what we have seen. Mr. MacInnis noticed an overall drop in tutors which he assumes is impacted by COVID yet the Middle School went up. Gina explained that this is student-based so whatever grade level the student is and the teacher who does the tutoring is – that is where the money is charged. Mr. MacInnis commented on page 20 – line 53086. Everything he is talking about hits a 15% increase or more. This line is Superintendent catering to which Ned responded that some of this is for breakfast for students during testing. Also the cost has gone up due to inflation. Mr. MacInnis noted that it would be useful as an informed voter to publish the document with percentages and an explanation as to why it went up. He recommends the District have a messaging plan – tie it to the rate of inflation (2.3%) which is close to what the budget went up. Also highlight the drops that are dependable and don’t impact students. His last comment is in regards to periodicals/books in the library. People today are more interested in this. All are up but the High School. Gina replied that some of this is accounting. It is UCOA and it has to be aligned to this. Not all schools have put these in the same line. This is a great point. Bill stated that he would like to explain why he is so negative about the Rhode Island Department of Education. He gave an example of how RIDE treats people/districts and he does not feel they are supporting Chariho and the job we are trying to do. Craig added that when a neighboring community decided to draw our students there was language on RIDE’s website that defended our lawsuit. When RIDE realized this, they immediately took down the site.

### III. Adjustments to Superintendent’s Proposed Budget

No adjustments were made at this time.

### IV. Adjournment

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was  
VOTED: To adjourn at 7:19 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

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Donna Sieczkiewicz, District Clerk