

Chariho School Committee Meeting
Regular Session Minutes – November 14, 2023

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Catherine Giusti, Vice Chair Karen Reynolds, Donna Chambers, Tyler Champlin, Kathryn Colasante, Polly Hopkins, Craig Louzon, Linda Lyall, Andrew McQuaide, Larry Phelps, Patricia Pouliot and Jessica Purcell.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, High School Principal Andrea Spas, High School Assistant Principal Jean Bradanini, Richmond Police SRO Brock Taylor, Richmond Police Corporal Dan Kelly and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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

Chair Catherine Giusti called the meeting of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho High School Library, to order at 6:46 PM. She asked all to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

II. Motion/Vote to go into Executive Session

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide 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)(8) for the purpose of reviewing and/or approving matters which relate to the privacy of students and their records (1. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of October 24, 2023 – Approval of Home Instruction Requests and 2. Approval of Home Instruction Requests); any persons to be discussed have been so notified. In favor: Unanimous.

III. Reconvene Open Session/Pledge of Allegiance/Silent Meditation

Chair Giusti reconvened the meeting at 7:00 PM and asked all to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

IV. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

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

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Tyler Champlin and it was

VOTED: That minutes pertaining to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous.

V. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Vice Chair Reynolds reported there were three votes taken in executive session. The first vote, approval of executive session minutes of October 24, 2023 – Home Instruction Requests, passed with 10 in favor and 2 abstentions with Chambers, Colasante, Giusti, Hopkins, Purcell, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps and Reynolds all approving and Champlin and Pouliot abstaining.

The next vote, approval of home school requests, passed with 11 in favor and 1 abstention with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Giusti, Hopkins, Purcell, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps and Reynolds all approving and Pouliot abstaining.

The last vote, to return to open session, was unanimous with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Giusti, Hopkins, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot, Purcell and Reynolds all in favor.

VI. Recognition – The following were congratulated/thanked:

1. Fall Athletic Accomplishments:

➤ High School Football Team received the Dick Reynolds Sportsmanship Award. Thanks to Coach Samiagio for instilling this quality in his team.

- High School Field Hockey – After graduating 12 seniors, the team, under the leadership of Emily Louzon (1st year as Head Coach), advanced to the Division II State Championship game against Lincoln who gave up only one goal all season. Unfortunately, Lincoln won by a score of 3-0. Next year looks promising!
 - High School Girls' Tennis made its first appearance in the State finals since 2015. They lost to South Kingstown Rebels who were 16-0. Thanks to Coach Marc Fain and his team for a great season.
 - High School Girls' Soccer edged Pilgrim by a score of 1-0 in the Division I quarterfinals. They were not as successful in the semifinal game losing to Mt. Hope by the same score 1-0. Four starters were injured and four of their losses were by one goal. This team, under the leadership of Coach Brittney Godbout, had numerous challenges and setbacks and had to overcome a lot of adversity in a short amount of time. Congratulations to them for finishing the season strong.
 - High School Girls' Volleyball beat East Greenwich 3-0 to advance to the Division I semifinals against Coventry. Chariho was undefeated in Division II last year and moved up to Division I this year. Unfortunately, they were defeated by Coventry. Thanks to Coaches Kathy McGeehan and Shawn Cole for raising the bar and watching their team excel in Division I.
 - High School Girls' Cross Country – Erin von Housen placed 2nd in the State Cross Country Championships at Ponaganset. She had a personal best time of 18:18 in the 3.1 mile course earning All-State Honors. She advanced to New Englands and earned All-New England status last Saturday by finishing 23rd overall. She was the top girls' finisher for Rhode Island.
2. SRO Brock Taylor was in attendance along with Corporal Dan Kelly. Brock was congratulated for receiving the MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) School Resource Officer Award. Gina read the narrative submitted by Chief Johnson nominating Brock (this was included in the packet and on the website for all to see). Brock was thanked for all he does for the Chariho District and was presented with a gift from the High School administrators.

VII. Public Forum

Michael Werth, a Doctoral student from Johnson & Wales in Providence, stated that he is on assignment to ask questions of the Committee. He chose to ask about chronic absenteeism which is a gigantic problem around the State and the Country. He looked at the RIDE data and has read the District's Attendance Policy. He noted that the policy is very strong and is curious as to how Chariho is handling this issue and how kids are being supported. Chariho has shown great improvement in this area. He has several questions that he would like to ask of the District. Chair Giusti explained that the Committee refrains from engaging in dialogue during Public Forum but that he could submit his questions via email to the Superintendent and she will respond to them.

VIII. Business

A. Architect Selection for Preparation of Stage II Application to RIDE – Links to the two qualified respondent bids were provided. The Superintendent recommended, per the memo from Ned Draper dated November 9, 2023, that the Committee authorizes an agreement with SLAM Architects, Providence, RI so long as we achieve suitable contract terms and it is within the budget available. If not, the next responsive bidder will be engaged. Andrew made a motion, which was seconded by Karen, to approve the Superintendent's recommendation. Jessica asked if anyone on the Building Committee had any comments as she would love to hear them. Craig stated that they scored the portfolios they were given to which Gina added that the references for both were very good. Both had good bids. Craig noted that the last time they went out to bid, they received about ten bids to which Gina explained that this is a short timeline that they have to work around. Jessica added that they also have other projects they are involved in. Tyler commented on the number of consultants noted in SLAM's bid. He is worried about project management to which Gina replied that often architects will bring in other companies to work with them. We still have Colliers who is our Project Manager. Craig commented that he was on the 2020 project and he saw the same thing then. Linda asked if either company had any representatives present to which Craig responded "no one was there." Gina added that they provided references which were checked. Jessica noted that both companies presented the same amount of consultants with the difference being that SLAM noted theirs up front.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Karen Reynolds and it was VOTED: To authorize an agreement with SLAM Architects so long as we achieve suitable contract terms and it is within the budget available. If not, the next responsive bidder will be engaged. In favor: Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Giusti, Hopkins, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Purcell and Reynolds. Opposed: Pouliot. The motion carried by a vote of 11 in favor with 1 opposed.

B. AP, SAT and PSAT Data Presentation – High School Assistant Principal Jean Bradanini prepared and presented a slideshow on AP, SAT, PSAT student performance. Both SAT and PSAT surpassed State and National scores with Chariho's 2023 Mean Score at 1019, Rhode Island's at 944 and the Nation at 960. Jean also noted comparative data using Chariho, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts SAT scores. She noted that Rhode Island and Connecticut both use SAT as their state test while Massachusetts does not. Chariho's mean score was 1019 while RI was at 944, CT at 975 and Mass at 934. Linda questioned if CALA scores were grouped in here to which the Superintendent replied that CALA has their own SAT data and it is a similar story with PSATs. Tyler commented that looking at the PSAT data – those are our 2023 SAT students to which Jean responded "yes". Karen questioned if the "Met Both Benchmarks" at 37% was an increase or decrease as it was not noted. Jean replied that it would either be the same or a decrease as she did not note an increase. She was thinking it may have been the same. Karen questioned the difference between a standard RICAS test and PSATs to which Jean replied that the format is different and RICAS is taken every year. The test is structured to look at anticipated success the first year in college. Our first semester 10th grade PSATs will have a growth report as well. She noted that most AP courses are taken by students in grades 10, 11 and 12. Only a few 9th graders take them. 41% scored a "4" or higher. Donna commented that Barry Ricci is applauding in heaven as he is the one who pushed AP courses. Jean stated that the District had 42 AP Scholars (26 were AP Scholars scoring a 3 or more on AP exams, 7 were AP Scholars with Honor scoring at least a 3.25 on ALL AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on 4 or more exams and 9 AP Scholars with Distinction (average score of at least a 3.5 on ALL AP exams and scores of 3 or higher on 5 or more exams). We do have things we need to continue to work on. We are on track with the two goals we have set, which are 1) the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations on the state Math assessment (SAT) will increase from 37% to 52% by the end of the 25-26 SY and 2) the percentage of students who meet or exceed expectations on the state English Language Arts assessments (SAT) will increase from 64% to 79% by the end of the 25-26 SY. Andrew asked how the School Committee could support this ongoing work. He noted the positive progress particularly in light of the pandemic. Gina replied that the School Improvement Plan is a good barometer. In budget season you will hear us discuss high quality curriculum. ESSER dollars supported professional learning. A large focus will be on the special education population. This is key. We will be doing a deep dive in multi-system supports. Students do better when they know what the goals are. Our students have work to do in math but they have improved at the elementary level. Supporting the District Strategic Plan is where we would ask for School Committee support. Bob Cardozo commented that 53% of our kids are not meeting proficiency in Math and ELA. Why are these numbers the way they are? We need to go back to fundamentals. If the old stuff works, go back to it. Don't reinvent the wheel. To see those numbers in math is appalling. It is not good and to keep making excuses; something needs to be done. Polly felt Bob was making good points. There is more data coming out about the use of computers. It is overwhelming and it has been proven that kids do better when they are handwriting notes (hands to the brain). This is the prevailing way they learn. They should go back to carrying books and using paper and pencils. We need to revert back. Jessica questioned what Bob was talking about – SAT or RICAS data? Bob replied. Look at the data in the Middle School. There is a problem in Math and ELA to which Gina disagreed. We are looking at ways to improve but it is not just academic issues we are dealing with. There is a lot around mental health. Our job is to make sure every child grows. Our staff is doing an amazing job. Bob asked how the District was going to get students to the next level – are you just going to move them on. The Superintendent stated that the District is rethinking the way we sequence math and we are confident the teams we have in place are working on growing children. Bob asked if this is changing in 2023-2024. Gina responded that this is a statewide conversation as we have students who come from other districts to attend our CTC. We have to be mindful of all students. At this point the District Clerk requested that the conversation cease as RICAS scores were discussed at the last meeting. They are not on this agenda. Bob apologized as he was a former School Committee member and he knows he needs to adhere to the agenda. Pat asked who Bob was to which she was told he is a Richmond resident.

C. Request to Send a School Supply Survey to Staff – Superintendent Picard reported that, on behalf of the Budget Subcommittee, Andrew McQuaide has requested that the School Supply Survey be sent to staff for their input. Andrew acknowledged that the Budget Subcommittee did not have a chance to review this survey at its last meeting but will review it at the next meeting. Donna clarified that it had not yet been sent out to which Andrew responded that it had not gone out to anyone. Donna had two questions: Why do they need to know what step a teacher is on? Andrew explained that the intent is to understand if there is any difference in data as you go across steps. Is there a big difference from a step one teacher's spending to a top step teacher's spending plus step one teachers may not have the resources that a top step teacher might have. This is an issue of equity. He thanked Donna for asking this and noted that one educator did have the same question. Donna suggested that Andrew put context in it. The other concern she had related to quantity, for example, if they put "1" in for paper – is that one ream? Andrew stated that he wanted a higher response rate to the survey so that is why he tried to make the survey easier for them. He wanted to keep it efficient. Donna thought he might want to ask them to estimate to which Andrew felt they may quantify at different amounts. It would be like comparing apples to oranges. He does not want to ask for that level of data as that may mean they won't complete the survey. Pat's concern was unless a teacher is keeping receipts, how will they recollect what they have purchased or the money they have spent. They will be just guessing. Andrew replied that they are asking them to approximate their spending. That is the intent. He trusts they will do this appropriately. Tyler added that they are just trying to get an idea of what is coming out of pocket. He knows this did not come before the Subcommittee but his question would be around items purchased by the District. This is included in our own budget. Andrew responded that they know not all educators are purchasing the same items and some may have items leftover from the previous year or they may have access through the District to supplies. We may find the District is purchasing and the educator is purchasing on top of what the District has purchased, for example, paper towels or tissues. Tyler felt they were asking teachers to give them a decent amount of information. Wouldn't it be easier to break it down to classroom supplies versus cleaning supplies? Andrew responded that he was looking for overall what is spent. This survey is open to the Committee's preference. Tyler commented that they could get a little more information from the first survey and maybe have a second one down the road. Andrew added that the goal is that they understand educators spend personal funds to purchase core supplies and they should understand the fiscal impact of this on an educator's personal budget. Look at practices as to how the numbers come about and work with the Policy Subcommittee to look at the use of personal funds to purchase core supplies. Craig noted that he does not like the second approach. Karen asked if classroom teachers send home requests at the beginning of the year to which the Superintendent replied that they are not supposed to. They may suggest items that are needed but they are not to request that families buy them. Karen stated that as a classroom teacher, if she got this survey, she would just throw it out. This needs to be as simple as possible like just ask "are you purchasing something or is there something the District should supply". Donna felt they did not need all the columns. Andrew explained that respectfully some of this feedback he got at the last meeting which he used to structure the survey. This could come from a variety of places to which Donna felt it just complicates the survey. Polly asked if the survey could be edited and should they table it. Karen added that she felt this was a good start.

Tyler Champlin made a motion, seconded by Karen Reynolds and Polly Hopkins and it was VOTED: To table this item for more review. In favor: Unanimous.

D. Budget Transfers – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the Transfers for 11/14/23.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To approve the Transfers for November 14, 2023. In favor: Unanimous.

E. FY24 Budget Updates – Andrew felt it was helpful having this as a standing agenda item and asked the Superintendent or Ned if they could give an overview of what is contained in the memo. Ned explained that the numbers follow along with what is in our system. Enrollment is favorable on the tuition side and wages are favorable because of vacancies. We are seeing some loss in outgoing tuitions and he is keeping an eye on ESSER Funds as RIDE wants Districts to verify the number of positions that have been funded with ESSER money. The capital funds have covered the Stage II process and we are staying on track for

Housing Aid. He is keeping an eye on this as well. There is a small loss in lunch revenue but prior years have helped us to have a balance in that account. There is typical activity in SAF. Ned was thanked for the overview.

IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Giusti asked if there were any items to be pulled. Tyler pulled A-3. Craig acknowledged the donation and thanked the donor.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was

VOTED: To move the remainder of the Consent Agenda Items. In favor: Unanimous.

A. Minutes – Approved the following:

1. Regular Session Minutes of October 10, 2023.
2. Executive Session Minutes of October 24, 2023 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of October 10, 2023 (minutes not sealed).

B. Bill Review – Accepted.

C. Permission to Issue Bids/Request Quote – Approved issuance of the following:

1. Clinical Psychological Services Request for Proposals for FY24 with optional future years
2. Window Safety Film Bid
3. Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Section 75 and Related Analysis Request for Proposals FY24 with optional future years

D. Permission to Award Contracts – Awarded the following:

1. Medical and Dental Services for the following three years to Wood River Health per the attached memo from Ned Draper and attached proposal from Wood River Health.
2. Ocean State Transportation Agreement Extension for FY25 per the attached memo from Ned Draper and support of the Transportation Subcommittee.

E. Home Instruction – Action taken in executive session.

F. Grants – None at this time.

G. Donations – Accepted the following:

1. Betsy Lennon from URI Master Gardeners Program and the Staff and Volunteers, led by Refuge Biologist Nick Ernst, at the US Fish and Wildlife Service for their donation of thirty (30) native plants, valued at approximately \$650.00, to CALA's Outdoor Classroom Project through the Learning Inside Out Initiative.

A-3. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was

VOTED: To approve the Regular Session Minutes of October 24, 2023. In favor: Chambers, Colasante, Giusti, Hopkins, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Purcell and Reynolds. Abstained: Champlin and Pouliot. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 2 abstentions.

X. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports

1. Budget Subcommittee met on November 6, 2023. Included in the packet was a draft copy of the minutes of October 16, 2023.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. Effective School Solutions Parent Workshop Feedback – We had about 38 participants; this was more than Effective School Solutions has seen at a Parent/Caregiver presentation ever. Our families gave lovely comments thanking the presenters. The parents asked questions and were very impressed with the level of detail in the responses.
2. Chronic Absenteeism – State and District Focus – School attendance is a powerful predictor of student outcomes. Rhode Island defines chronic absenteeism as the percentage of students who miss 10% or more of school days during the year (or two days per month). Research shows that chronic absenteeism is associated with a number of negative consequences for students, including lower achievement, disengagement from school, not reading on grade level, course failure and an increased risk of dropping out. Attendance each day is critical to ensure students stay on track and show growth. While we know some absences are unavoidable, at this time of year if a student has four or more absences, they would be on track to be chronically absent. In the November E Update we shared a link that allows our families to check attendance at every school in the District and compare the data to schools across the State. Our

Chronically Absent numbers have decreased. It is important to note that during the 21-22 school year and for half of the 22-23 school year, students had mandatory quarantines per the State's executive order. The following is the percentage of students absent in 2021-22 compared to 2022-23: Ashaway 30.7% decreased to 13.4%; Charlestown 19.8% decreased to 12.7%; Hope Valley 29.4% decreased to 12.8%; Richmond 25.4% decreased to 8.2%, Middle School 29.5% decreased to 17%; High School and CTC 30.2% decreased to 18.8%. The District 28.8% decreased to 16.3%. Right now, Ashaway has the best attendance for the District, Richmond is in 2nd place and Charlestown is in 3rd. However, we have a long way to go as across the State (out of 271 schools) Ashaway ranks 53rd, Richmond 69th, Charlestown 73rd, Hope Valley 103rd, Middle School 114th and High School/CTC 128th.

3. Chariho Theatre Company Fall Production – The One-Act Play That Goes Wrong – Friday, November 17th and Saturday, November 18th – 7:00 PM; Sunday, November 19th – 1:00 PM – Middle School Auditorium

4. Diving into the Ocean Twilight Zone (OTZ) Grant Update – The Middle School was awarded the OTZ grant that was on last meeting's agenda. The Program will begin next year.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

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

Craig requested discussion on the school facility survey results.

XII. Adjournment

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Tyler Champlin and it was

VOTED: To adjourn at 8:06 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk