

Chariho School Committee Virtual Meeting
Regular Session Minutes – February 8, 2022

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti (arrived at 6:33 PM), George Abbott, Ryan Callahan, Donna Chambers, William Day, Gary Liguori (arrived at 6:33 PM), Craig Louzon, Linda McAllister, Karen Reynolds and endawnis Spears. Absent: Lisa Macaruso.

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, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, High School Principal Andrea Spas, High School Assistant Principal Jean Bradanini, CTC Director Gerry Auth, STEM Specialist Susie Scanapieco, NEA ESP President Thomas Pirnie, Attorney for the School Committee Jon Anderson and District Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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. The Pledge of Allegiance was 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)(1) for the purpose of discussion and/or action pertaining to an individual's job performance or character (Pre-deprivation Hearings/Non-Renewal of Teacher Contracts); under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussion and/or action pertaining to litigation (RGB Update); 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 January 11, 2022 – Approval of Home Instruction Requests); any persons to be discussed have been so notified. In favor: Unanimous (Giusti and Liguori were not in attendance for the vote).

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

The Committee returned to open session at 6:57 PM and Chair Lyall reconvened the meeting at 7:00 PM. She asked all to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silent meditation.

IV. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

1. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to an individual's job performance or character (Pre-deprivation Hearings/Non-Renewal of Teacher Contracts) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was

VOTED: That minutes pertaining to an individual's job performance or character (Pre-deprivation Hearings/Non-Renewal of Teacher Contracts) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous.

2. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to litigation (RGB Update) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Linda McAllister and it was

VOTED: That minutes pertaining to litigation (RGB Update) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous.

3. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes which relate 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 which relate 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 Giusti reported the first vote taken in executive session, non-renewal of teacher contracts, passed with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

The next vote, approval of executive session minutes of January 11, 2022 – Home Instruction Requests, passed with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor with Day abstaining.

The third vote, approval of Home Instruction Requests for tonight passed with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

The last vote, to return to open session, was unanimous with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Louzon, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

VI. Recognition – Superintendent Picard asked all to join her in congratulating the following:

1. High School Junior Madelyn Lussier received 2 Silver Keys and a Gold Key for her photography entries (*In Between the Lines* – Silver; *Reflections* – Silver; *Thoughts by the Seaside* – Gold) in the Rhode Island Scholastic Art Competition. Her Gold Key winning work will automatically advance to the national level of adjudication in New York City in March.
2. Margaret Weeden and Erin vonHousen each finished first in two events in the Sullivan Division Girls' Indoor Track Dual Meet at the Providence Career & Technical Academy. Margaret took first place in the high jump and long jump; Erin took first place in the 1,500 and 1,000.
3. Canyon Baker finished first in the shot put in the Boys' Southern Division Indoor Track Meet at the Providence Career & Technical Academy.
4. Chargers took first in the Griswold Wrestling Tournament – Brady Anderson, Corbin Maraia and Ryan Currier each finished first in their respective weight class.
5. Gary Gardiner won three matches with pins at a quad wrestling meet against Exeter-West Greenwich, Coventry and Bishop Hendricken. He is 8-0 with 8 pins.
6. We were informed by the RI Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association that *Chariho Regional High School* is receiving *The George Nasuti School of the Year Award for Athletics*. We were also informed that our Girls Soccer Coach, *Britney Godbout* is receiving the *Female Coach of the Year* award and *Stephanie and Dan Potts* are receiving the *Sister Charlene Tedeschi-Distinguished Service Award*. Congratulations to all!

VII. Public Forum

Chair Lyall explained to all how the 'raise hand' function works if someone wishes to speak. She then noted that if using a phone and you wish to speak, you will need to press '*9'. This is an opportunity for comments on anything that is not on tonight's agenda. Frank Hopkins from Charlestown noted that he is retired from health care, is a rotation and a volunteer for Chariho. He encouraged all to consider becoming a mentor and joining the mentoring program for the Middle School and High School. It is a life-changing opportunity that has an impact on the development of students. You can make a difference in someone's life and you, too, will be changed. Go to CHILL Mentoring on the Chariho website. Goldie Williams from Richmond asked if the CALA meeting on Thursday at 2:30 PM will be a virtual meeting. Chair Lyall replied that the CALA CAB will meet on Thursday, at 2:30 PM in person at CALA. Goldie wondered if she would

be able to ask questions. Chair Lyall noted that it would be based on the agenda and the students they serve. Goldie stated that her son attended the RYSE School and there are no pleasantries. He was bullied. Chair Lyall informed Goldie that this was not the time for this but she is welcome to join them on Thursday. Tom Pirnie of Charlestown asked when meetings will be in-person again. The Superintendent responded that the Governor's Executive Order ends on February 14th and he is planning to speak tomorrow. She thinks he will address it then. Chair Lyall thanked all who came forward to speak.

VIII. Business

A. CTE Equipment Grant – Superintendent Picard reported that, due to the quick turnaround, Gerry Auth and Katie Kirakosian submitted this grant request on January 28th. She recommended approval of the CTE Equipment Grant request to RIDE in the amount of \$221,407.52 for CHARIHotech Program Equipment. Director Auth is available for questions. Chair Lyall thought this was a great idea and was hopeful that we get these funds. She thanked all who worked on putting this together.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was
VOTED: To approve the CTE Equipment Grant request to RIDE in the amount of \$221,407.52 for CHARIHotech Program Equipment. In favor: Unanimous.

B. 2022-2023 High School Program of Studies – The Superintendent noted that the only changes are dates, new personnel, and the addition of the course descriptions of School Committee approved Statistics CP & Statistics Honors courses. She recommended approval of the 2022-2023 High School Program of Studies. Jean is here to answer any questions. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Donna, to approve the 2022-2023 High School Program of Studies. Donna commented that she appreciated the opportunity to look this over and was so impressed by the offerings we are providing our students. She commended all who put this together. It is an excellent High School program. Bill noted that the student activities listed on the back page may be missing a few (i.e. co-ed hockey, swimming). We should make sure all of these are included for our students. Gina agreed with Bill and stated that they will add any that are missing. Bill stated that they have to toot their own horn because we don't seem to get the recognition. It is a feather in our cap. They may decide to come to our CTC because we have a hockey team. This could bring in students. Craig noted that Field Hockey was listed twice. This will be corrected. Chair Lyall asked all if they were comfortable voting on this and having the changes made that were noted. Craig stated that because the changes have been brought up, he feels he can vote on it tonight. There were no other concerns noted.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was
VOTED: To approve the 2022-2023 High School Program of Studies with the changes as noted. In favor: Unanimous.

C. High School Mathematics Resource Selection – Superintendent Picard stated that Dr. Comella and Susie Scanapieco will provide an overview. Susie noted that they are here tonight to review the selection process and new Math Curriculum for the High School which, per legislation, will be required by June 2023. The State has provided a list to choose from for universality across the State. We need to all be on the same page. They narrowed the list to three selections, two from McGraw-Hill and the other from Carnegie Learning. They created a team of volunteers, representing all stakeholders, so there was different vantage points. She shared the team action steps that were taken and the end result was Reveal by McGraw Hill for receiving the highest score. Reveal offered both paper/pencil and online and was user friendly. There are practice problems and it offered a balance between theory and fluency. In addition, there is also a supplemental package – Aleks – which allows students to work at grade level and places where they need to be (additional help). We are already seeing gains at the Middle School with a similar program for gap students. Once the selection was made, a group of teachers have volunteered

for a spring pilot. Customer Service at McGraw-Hill is unbelievable; they are quick to respond and exemplary in service. She is most excited because teachers seem engaged in the process. The pilot really helps and she is hearing good things. Linda McAllister noted how impressed she was with the amount of work that went into the selection process. It was put together very carefully and she thanked all who worked on this. Chair Lyall added that the work was very thorough and thoughtful and she, too, offered her thanks. Donna loved the presentation. She has some of these math books that she got at a convention. They are very deep and comprehensive; an excellent choice. Susie noted that the real want of the teachers was to utilize both paper/pencil and online – they wanted the flexibility. Chair Lyall thanked Susie and Dr. Comella for the phenomenal presentation.

D. FY23 Budget

1. Adjustments to FY23 Budget – Superintendent Picard reported that this is an opportunity for adjustments to be made prior to approval at which time it then becomes the Committee's budget. Fund balance was reduced to 2% at the last Budget Workshop. This cannot go any lower per policy. This is not the last time the Committee can lower the budget. If adjustments are made, she is requesting the Committee take a short recess so Ned can recalculate figures. Craig questioned additional revenue to which Ned explained that the language is inclusive. We did not have additional revenue but when we adjust the fund balance, it is treated as revenue. Catherine commented on a discussion taking place regarding class size, specifically in Richmond. We may want to add back to the budget if another teacher is needed. Gina stated that the budget was figured in consultation with school principals, based on projections. We added an additional K teacher so Richmond numbers are now the lowest. The other reduction was in grade two and was based on numbers. She has been talking with Mrs. Martin about her comfort level and if and when we see the numbers getting closer to 23, we will look at this again. She does review the numbers every month for all schools. Look at the data. We are seeing huge growth in all the elementary schools and students are surpassing goals. Chair Lyall asked what the cost to add a teacher would be to which Gina replied that it would be around \$154,000 if the teacher, who has the right to this classroom, remained. Catherine stated she would like to see how the rest of the conversation goes. Bill again reminded everyone that they tried a few years ago to balance classes and the only way this can be done is to change the Chariho Act. This is the way to have smaller classes and it will cost less to transport kids if they are transported to the school closest to their home and not necessarily the school that is in the town in which they live. This was not welcomed by the towns. We will continue to have spikes; some low, some high until the towns get together and decide we are one community. Craig wanted to note that it is not just Richmond School that is the issue. Charlestown School's first grade classes will be pretty tough next year. He questioned if they will be in a 'pickle' if they have to add back three teachers come September 1st to which Ned replied they will be in a pinch. Gina added that they also have to review home school numbers as we have already seen three of Charlestown's students leave to be home schooled. Charlestown was at 66 and they are now at 63. It is hardest to predict K. Ryan stated that he is hearing from folks in town and it is a big difference having a class of 20 versus a class of 23 with challenges. They may have a discussion with Mrs. Martin. Gina reminded all that Richmond added a BMA last year in lieu of an Assistant Principal. She is seeing a lot of support there. Mrs. Martin felt comfortable with the structure – adding student service specialists across the District. She has talked with some parents. The parents are more concerned with the shift from five classes to four classes in grade three. Mrs. Martin advocated to keep the five classes in grade three for the upcoming grade two students. Ryan felt this was OK for now as he needs to think a little more on it. Donna stated that we have had an unusual number of kids homeschooled. If all came back, we would be in trouble. Gina stated that when looking at the numbers, they factored in those parents who homeschool long-term. Amanda laDuke from Richmond asked for clarification on what was changed in the budget this year. Gina reviewed

the grades in which teachers will be removed or where the number of classes will be cut. Amanda asked if now is the time to make classes bigger – with the stressors of the pandemic. She pays a lot of taxes in Richmond and class sizes of 25 are hard. Gina noted that there are no classes with 25 students. Amanda's first grader is going into one of four classes next year to which Amanda replied that she is advocating for others. She thanked the Committee for listening. Tom Pirnie, from an educator's perspective, returned to Ryan's point regarding the behavioral challenges. We should put money in the budget to cover additional staff and/or training as not all are certified in de-escalation. Goldie Williams asked if administration had figured in those who will leave to go to The Met, Compass, Kingston Hill? Gina responded that we do have those numbers. Catherine noted that she is leaning towards adding to the budget. One cut makes sense but the other one she is leery of at Richmond. She realizes this is not the only opportunity to make adjustments to the budget. She is not sure she has the support tonight if she moves forward with a motion. We have cut a fair amount from the budget and no one asked us to. She is more comfortable, because of this, adding back but she is not quite ready to do that tonight. Ryan thanked Catherine and noted that he shares her opinion. He would like to think over the numbers. Karen stated that she is leaning with Catherine and Ryan. We don't know if those outplaced may come back. She is not sure that this is the time to cut. Gary agreed with them. He would like the opportunity to think about this far deeper. It is also an opportune time to track what happens when kids go from a smaller class to a larger class. We should also track behavioral issues. He is leaning toward the same direction but he needs some semblance of evidence. There is never a time to cut staff or classes. Donna concurred with all that was said. She reminded all that they have cut the fund balance. She would rather overstaff than understaff and then scramble for the money. Linda McAllister asked if there was a chart where these numbers are put together; last year's versus this year's numbers. Gina referred Linda to Section 7 in the Budget Book. The cuts were in K and grade 2. Grade 3 roll-up to grade 4 is the concern. Linda McAllister felt that grade 3 students going into grade 4 are much more able to deal with a larger class size but again this is without a pandemic. Gina noted that Ms. McCue's class is incorporated in these numbers. There may be two students in grade 4 who are included in the count but are in Ms. McCue's class. We can review current numbers and seats. Craig again reminded everyone that this is not just about Richmond. Charlestown grade 1 next year is a very large class. He wants to address all the needs. He would like to see the numbers and how they affect all classes. Catherine agreed. She was looking at Charlestown as well. Chair Lyall clarified that there are no changes being made this evening but changes could be forthcoming. Thea Brennan, a Richmond parent, emailed the Superintendent as she is concerned as a parent about Richmond's grade K, 2 and 3 numbers. Historically, in Richmond when a class is cut, this is problematic. She did look at the other schools and noted a concern for Charlestown as well. Ashaway always has two classrooms so nothing was cut there. She thanked the Committee for taking the time to listen and for their concern.

2. Approval of FY23 Budget – As there were no adjustments made this evening, Ned reported that the total amount of reductions (including additional revenue) to date is \$500,164 which leaves the budget at \$55,693,405; an increase of 1.81%. Impact to each town is as follows: Charlestown - an increase of 2.59%, Richmond – an increase of 2.05%; and Hopkinton – an increase of 1.05%. Superintendent Picard recommended that the Committee approves the FY23 budget in the amount of \$55,693,405; an overall increase of 1.81%.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: That the Committee approves the FY23 budget in the amount of \$55,693,405; an overall increase of 1.81%. In favor: Unanimous. Chair Lyall noted that this now becomes the School Committee's budget.

IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall requested items to be pulled. Craig pulled A-1 and Bill pulled Item E. Craig acknowledged the donation and thanked the donor.

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.

- A. Minutes – Approved the following:
 - 2. Regular Session Minutes of January 11, 2022.
 - 3. Omnibus Meeting Minutes of January 19, 2022.
 - 4. Special Meeting/Budget Workshop Minutes of January 25, 2022.
 - 5. Special Meeting/Budget Workshop Executive Session Minutes of January 27, 2022 (MOAs – minutes unsealed).
 - 6. Special Meeting/Budget Workshop Regular Session Minutes of January 27, 2022.
- B. Transfers – Approved.
- C. Bill Review – Accepted.
- D. Budget Summary – 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 – None at this time.
- I. Home Instruction – Action taken in executive session.
- J. Grants – None at this time.
- K. Donations – Accepted the following:
 - 1. Donation from Staples (North Kingstown – Rebecca Gwaltney) of miscellaneous school supplies to Richmond Elementary School.

A-1. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of January 11, 2022 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of December 14, 2021 (minutes not sealed). In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained (due to absence): Day. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 1 abstention.

E. Bill stated that he is not concerned about the first part of this report; he is concerned with the Chariho Student Activity Funds. Look at the balance of some of the teams at the Middle School. We discuss equality but this is not equal. He will put this on a future agenda item for discussion. What are the other kids getting on the teams that do not have these funds?

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To accept the Balance Sheet as per enclosed. In favor: Unanimous.

X. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports

- 1. Anti-Racism Task Force met on January 31st. The next scheduled meeting will be on February 28th.
- 2. Special Education Advisory Committee met on January 20, 2022.

B. Superintendent's Report

- 1. Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program – The Health and Wellness Subcommittee will discuss this at their next meeting. It was brought by Ms. Nelson who is a strong advocate for the needs of our students. More conversation on this already exists in South County. The meeting is on March 8th at 4:00 PM.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

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

Chair Lyall noted Mr. Day's request to discuss the equitability of Student Activity Funds; what is this money used for. Bill added that he would also like, on March 8, a discussion in executive session on school safety. He questioned the Bullying Report that was included in the packet. Do we have a problem at the Middle School as there were eight reported in the second semester and zero reported in the other schools? He would like clarification on this.

George noted that he read the Attorney General's clarification recently issued about Public Forum and is it appropriate for School Committee members to answer someone in Public Forum. The Clerk noted this should be voted on as the Committee takes its guidance from Attorney Anderson. Any legal opinions need to be voted on.

George Abbott made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To request a legal opinion from Attorney Jon Anderson regarding the appropriateness of School Committee members replying to questions/comments during Public Forum. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears. Opposed: Day and Lyall. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 2 opposed. Jon will be asked for his legal opinion.

XII. Adjournment

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To adjourn at 8:21 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna Sieczkiewicz, District Clerk