

Chariho School Committee Meeting  
Regular Session Minutes – March 22, 2022

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

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, High School Principal Andrea Spas, Middle School Principal Greg Zenion, CALA Director Brian Tetreault, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, STEM Fellow Susie Scanapieco, NEA ESP President Tom Pirnie and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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

Chair Lyall called the meeting of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho High School Library, to order at 6:45 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)(2) for the purpose of discussion and/or action pertaining to collective bargaining (1. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of March 8, 2022 - NEA Chariho Contract Negotiation Update and 2. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of March 8, 2022 - NEA ESP Contract Negotiation Update); under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(3) for the purpose of discussion regarding the matter of security (Approval of Executive Session Minutes of March 8, 2022 – School Security); 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 March 8, 2022 – 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

The Committee returned to open session at 6:51 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 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 (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, approval of executive session minutes of March 8, 2022 – NEA Chariho Contract Negotiation Update, passed with Callahan abstaining, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor and Louzon recusing.

The second vote, approval of executive session minutes of March 8, 2022 – NEA ESP Contract Negotiation Update, passed with Callahan abstaining, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor and Louzon recusing.

The next vote, approval of executive session minutes of March 8, 2022 – School Security, passed with Callahan abstaining, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

The fourth vote, approval of executive session minutes of March 8, 2022 – Home Instruction Requests, passed with Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

The next vote, approval of Home Instruction Requests for this evening passed with Callahan Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears voting in favor.

The last vote, to return to open session, was unanimous with Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Louzon, Reynolds and Spears all approving.

VI. Recognition – The following were congratulated:

1. Charlestown School Grade 4 Teacher Heidi Gonzalez-Fee on her selection as the Rhode Island State Finalist for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teacher. She will move on as a National Finalist representing Rhode Island in Mathematics. Good luck Heidi!

2. Richmond School PE Teacher Kim Daigle received the Golden Apple Award. She was nominated by her colleague Kristen Anderson. The presentation aired on Channel 10 on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

3. Post-Season Awards: High School Wrestling – Corbin Maraia (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-State, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division, 4<sup>th</sup> Team All-New England); Gary Gardiner III (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-State, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division); Wade Husing (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-State); Noah Dinucci (Academic All-State).

High School Gymnastics – Lauren Hubertus (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division); Bella Santos (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division; States for Beam, floor and vault; New England's for floor); Brooklyn Vacca (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division, States for bars and floor); Randi Swenson (1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-State, States & New England's for All-Around).

High School Girls' Basketball – Keira Frias (1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Division II-A); Jules White (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division II-A); Britney LaBelle (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division II-A).

High School Boys' Basketball – Jeremiah Graham (1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Division II, 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-League Division II-D); Tyler LaBelle (1<sup>st</sup> Team All-League Division II-D); Liam Flynn (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-League Division II-D).

High School Girls' Indoor Track Team - Sullivan Division Championship Meet Runner-Up; Margaret Weeden (All-Division – 1<sup>st</sup> Team High Jump, All-Class B – 1<sup>st</sup> Team High Jump, All-State – 2<sup>nd</sup> Team High Jump – New England Championship Qualifier); Erin von Housen (All-Division – 1<sup>st</sup> Team 1500m and 1<sup>st</sup> Team 1000m, All-Class B – 1<sup>st</sup> Team 3000m, All-State – 3<sup>rd</sup> Team 3000m, 3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division 4x400m Relay, New England Championship Qualifier in the 3000m and 1000m, school records set in the 3000m, 1500m and 1000m); Weeko Thompson (All-Division 1<sup>st</sup> Team Shot Put, All-Class B 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Shot Put, New England Championship Qualifier, school record set in Shot Put); Emily Brown (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division 300m), Brooke Kanaczet (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division 600m, 3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division 4x400m Relay), Grace Gillett (2<sup>nd</sup> Team All-Division 3000m); Anna LaCroix (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division 4x400m Relay), Maya Weathers (3<sup>rd</sup> Team All-Division 4x400m Relay).

VII. Public Forum

Chair Lyall informed all that this is the opportunity for those wishing to speak on items not on this evening's agenda. Please come to the mic and state your name and town of residence for the record. Goldie Williams from Richmond stated that bullying is rampant in the Middle School. Goldie was asked to please hold her comments as this is a Business Item on this evening's agenda. Tom Pirnie, a resident of Charlestown and the NEA ESP President, commented that it was nice to be in person. ESP members have been hard at work during the pandemic and are an instrumental part of the work environment. They are hard-working; many of them members of our community in which they pay taxes. They deal with daily struggles with some wages that are way below a living wage. This wears on us. The School Committee is disinterested in seeing through the negotiation process. ESP

members feel there is a lack of support. There is no valid reason to ignore the process as the District will have a budget next year. Offers were made and there has been discussion acknowledging issues in hiring and retaining of staff. He respectfully requests that we get back to the bargaining table. Chair Lyall made note of his comments and thanked Mr. Pirnie.

#### VIII. Business

A. Bullying Report – This item was requested by Bill Day. A compilation of reports for the past ten years was included in the packet. The Superintendent noted that High School Principal Andrea Spas will provide some brief context as she is also a school psychologist by training. Andrea stated that she was asked to speak a little about bullying and provided an overview and the Rhode Island State definition of Bullying. Bullying is not just a one-time event. It could be any or a combination of acts. She noted the reason bullying tends to hit its peak in Middle School is due to the developmental stages students are going through at this time. Their brains are still developing and they learn by trial and error. Their pre-frontal cortex is still developing which affects their decision-making ability. This is a major factor in why they do not think before acting. They are easily influenced by peers and have less experience employing skills we are teaching them. Our schools do inform and provide parents and students with a bullying form but often they are not completed. We do try to employ strategies, for instance, the High school employs mediation and conflict resolution. We teach role playing and utilize strategies to diffuse situations. All are preventative measures and we have interventions in place. Donna complimented Andrea – that was great – does mediation usually work to which Andrea responded that it depends on the situation; each one is unique. Giving students an opportunity to talk it out is effective as sometimes they just want to be heard. endawnis questioned, in terms of mediation, how long has it been implemented and has data been tracked? Andrea replied there is no specific data or tracking. They have employed it for around six years, since she was Assistant Principal, but they do not have any hard numbers. Social media is a big part of this. Bill commented that he was expecting to hear a report on how the Middle School was successful or not successful. This did not tell him anything. Is this the only report we send to the State; no letter saying we have turned it around? What have we done to minimize bullying? Gina responded that the ask was for discussion on the bullying report. The State does not require us to talk about successes. This will always be a topic of concern. She will ask Greg to talk but she wanted Andrea to provide context. Bill replied that the State will only use this report against us. It would behoove us to follow up with justification or incidents where we have made improvements over the years. He has no confidence in the State to be friendly with any school district especially Chariho. He asked Mr. Zenion to explain it. Greg noted that one thing the Middle School does every time a parent or student mentions bullying, is to give them the form. This is instilled in the staff at the Middle School. That might be why we have a higher number as we are probably the only one in the State that does this. We have 1,000 students; most of the others have around 400 so based on size, one would expect higher numbers. Our children are modeling the behaviors of adults. Bill stated that he appreciates the job Greg is doing; he wishes he had the same confidence in the other administrators as he does with him. Greg commented that the Middle School does mediation as well with parent permission. If the budget is approved, the Middle School will have an additional .5 dean. Currently they only have a 1.0 dean. Smaller schools have more support. There are preventative actions but these are harder to take with less staff. Bill noted that the High School and CTC have numbers but these don't tell him if the incident happened at the High School or CTC. These are two separate buildings. He hopes Mr. Auth doesn't have to confer with the High School Principal over bullying. These are two different working situations – CTC is more hands on. Gina clarified that the High School and CTC are considered one school. Andrea is the Principal to all students including those attending CTC. Mr. Auth reports directly to her (the Superintendent). He is responsible for CTC pathways. While there is a separation of the two buildings, it is one building. Chair Lyall asked Andrea if Mr. Auth does confer with her to which Andrea responded that the High School has two deans who handle this. We work as a team. Ryan asked Greg to clarify incidents versus bullying to which Greg explained that when something is reported, it is an incident but if found to be bullying, it is then recorded that way. Ryan stated the numbers are not surprising and are much lower than the numbers in previous years. Incident rates are much higher which goes to Greg's point (striking the

second semester in 2021). Greg noted that there are 1,000 student and we started with 770 in-person. You also need to remember that most schools did not even open but our Superintendent allowed us to take in students when they requested to return. They were brought back within 48 hours as we wanted the kids in the building. Some went back to DL while others stayed. Andrea added that this was a critical time for Middle School and we will see repercussions from kids coming and going. Greg commented that it helps if we are aggressive and if we can stay in front of it. We cannot keep up with social media and in 20 minutes it's gone. Rumors start and we see more issues around social media because kids have become more tech savvy during COVID. Gary noted that his take on this is that we do not know the numbers from other schools in the State. Ms. Spas' background on developmental stages was good. This is a most awkward time of a Middle School student's life. He feels the numbers are very good. He cannot think of a more dangerous environment than Middle School when 4<sup>th</sup> grades are out with COVID for two years and when they return, they are now in Middle School. He is pleased with the High School numbers. Whatever efforts you are doing are working. Goldie stated that she was told by a parent that there is a pervasive amount of bullying. Her son had to help others then he was bullied at RYSE. Chair Lyall asked if she reported it to which Goldie responded that she did not find out until two years after it happened. Donna commented that they need to let these parents know that there is an avenue; a form to fill out and students can fill it out as well. Goldie questioned how many students with special needs are bullied. Chair Lyall replied that they would not know in this data. Elaine Ricci has a daughter in the Middle School and she came to speak on this. Her daughter had an issue with bullying and this may be recorded as an incident. Ms. Ricci was very disappointed with the meeting she had with Mr. Zenion and Ms. Picard. She realizes it is not her right to know what happened to the other student and they claim they found the incident of threat was unfounded. She was told the State does not allow us to keep a child out of school. She appreciates the safety protocols that were put in place but claimed she was never offered a bullying report or to speak with the Resource Officer. She went to the Richmond Police to file a report. There is a problem when you can't discipline a student. Her daughter was never offered a bullying report. Other students have been told that some issues were not bullying. Her other child in the High School was being harassed by others – sexual intimidation. It takes a lot for a student to reach out and then be told it is not bullying. COVID is being used as an excuse. You are not doing anything to prevent it; this is a problem. She hopes changes can be made. She was not called by the High School and this was supposed to happen within 48 hours. Please don't make excuses; we need action. Kids are being made to feel unsafe. It is happening in schools and it is being brushed off. Betsy Alvarez, a parent and a teacher, noted she is speaking as a parent. Elaine is her sister. This is a pre-COVID problem. Her son is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and they filled out bullying reports; the reports were dismissed. Her son does not take the bus, she drives him. He is proud to be Mexican but he is bullied on the bus because of this. Nothing has been done about it. There are continual problems in the classroom. Her husband went to the Middle School and Mr. Zenion kicked him out. Ms. Picard did talk to him and her son. Her son will not fill out reports. The reason the numbers are low is because kids don't want to fill out the reports. Her family is having problems. One family dealing with issues of race, threats, sexual orientation. Catherine stated that this will be followed up but they cannot discuss other students. Her husband is an educator and there is not much he can do. What is the remediation if we have a child who is disruptive? The Superintendent responded that we cannot remove students from school. We implement a safety plan. Bullying has a very specific State definition; it is not random. It is serious and it is taken care of. A student can only be suspended in or out of school for a total of ten days. Both the victim and the aggressor have rights. We provide information to teachers and we initiate a safety contract with the aggressor and victim. Every parent has a right to advocate for their own child but cannot say what should happen to the other student. Every incident case is different. She has full faith in our administrators. We are seeing a lack of kindness across the nation. We are teaching kids how to cope, to advocate, and we are providing additional support around mental health. Donna noted she was floored by this. When we had a situation on CRT, we were told we did not have bullying, racism, intolerance here. We have to work close with the Task Force. Kids are intolerant with each other and we need to address this more. This is not acceptable in this school district. Bill stated that he has heard a few people state that they were told by professionals that it

wasn't bullying. How does a teacher automatically refer this to a professional? Gina replied that teachers refer directly to a dean. There are other incidents reported to the State. Notes are taken on any incident or report. Bill felt they should be told or a letter stating it is not bullying. Elaine Ricci commented that she did state students are told it is not bullying. They should have them fill out a form when they come forward with a report. This will show a pattern. School shootings don't happen overnight. We can do better. She is not faulting any one person. Gary commented that the form is on the website. It can be downloaded, filled out and given to someone. Elaine stated that her daughter was looking out for another student who acted out on her. Gary asked if there is an opportunity to make it so this form can be submitted online to which Gina responded she would look into this. They also have the See Something, Say Something app. Donna stated that she will suggest this item be on a future agenda. We need to get a handle on it and become more proactive. Craig noted that the last eight months we have seen different sides of Chariho and this bothers us. Both ladies were thanked for speaking.

B. K-8 Mathematics Curriculum Revision – Susie Scanapieco reviewed the revisions. She noted this is the end part of the revision with the first part being approved last fall. She thanked both teams that have worked on this. She reviewed the goals which were set up uniquely for all stakeholders to understand. Ryan stated that he enjoyed looking through this; it is very challenging and aggressive. He likes that statistics and probability are being introduced at a younger age. He noted the great job that was done and thanked Susie and the teams. Susie stated that the books are more rigorous and it will take time for parents and students to shift. Students who normally get straight A's may not as this could get a little messy for a little while. Catherine noted that this is a little difficult and a struggle but her daughter is getting it. We have lagged behind in math in this country. This is completely different from what she learned. Susie added that there is a lot of reading comprehension and they will look to see where errors may be coming from. Goldie wondered about students who are good to which Susie replied that students can test out to get to a harder math. endawnis stated that any framing they can do is comprehensive and integrated. She applauded the work the teams have done and educators who will need to learn this. Susie responded that they have received a lot of support. Donna thanked Susie and all involved for again doing excellent work to which the Superintendent added that a lot of work went into this.

C. 2023 School Committee Meeting Schedule – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the 2023 School Committee Meeting Schedule.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was  
VOTED: To approve the 2023 School Committee Meeting Schedule. In favor: Unanimous.

#### IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall requested items to be pulled. Ryan pulled A-1 and A-2; Bill pulled B – Transfers. Craig acknowledged the donations and thanked the donors.

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

- C. Bill Review – Accepted.
- D. Budget Summary – As per enclosed.
- E. Balance Sheet – As per enclosed.
- F. Personnel Actions
- 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 Marjorie Aubee, Richmond, RI of a new Prom Dress, valued at \$70, to a junior or senior in need.
2. Donation from Rudi Hempe and the Foundation (URI Master Gardeners) of a Shade Cloth for the Richmond Garden, valued at \$419.33 to Richmond School.
3. Donation from Daniel Fowler, Westerly, RI of a John Deere La 125 Riding Mower, valued at \$900, to the Chariho High School Baseball Program to maintain their field.

#### A. Minutes

A-1. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was

VOTED: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of March 8, 2022 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of February 8, 2022 (minutes not sealed). In favor: Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained (due to absence): Callahan. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor with 1 abstention.

A-2. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was

VOTED: To approve the Regular Session Minutes of March 8, 2022. In favor: Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained (due to absence): Callahan. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor with 1 abstention.

#### B. Transfers

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was

VOTED: To approve the Transfers. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained: Day. The motion carried by vote of 8 in favor with 1 abstention.

#### X. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports – Nothing to report.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. Kindergarten Registration – Kindergarten registration opened on March 14<sup>th</sup>. We have digitalized and centralized registration for all new students. As of today, there are 28 K students registered in Ashaway, 5 in Charlestown, 7 in Hope Valley and 12 in Richmond.

2. Peer-to-Peer Mentoring – There was a presentation at the Health & Wellness Subcommittee meeting pertaining to reducing stigma around mental health. Young adults will listen to one another and the feedback has been very well received. We are excited to begin working on this; more support with less stigma.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

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

Donna requested that they carry on discussion on bullying or more so, lack of tolerance in our children. Maybe peer-to-peer mentoring is one possibility. Gina noted that the ESSER work is on student/teacher needs – that is our larger plan – so we will start at the beginning by looking at how we structure advisory. Chair Lyall noted that the April Agenda is quite full so requests may have to wait until May. Gina responded that there will be talk at the April meeting around this. Donna suggested they bring in the Anti-Racism Task Force. Bill commented on discussion in May to which the Superintendent noted there are two meetings in May. Bill felt there was not a lot of time left to which Chair Lyall replied they will make this a priority.

#### XII. Adjournment

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

VOTED: To adjourn at 8:35 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

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Donna Sieczkiewicz, District Clerk