

Chariho School Committee Meeting
Regular Session Minutes - September 27, 2022

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

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien 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 5:41 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 September 13, 2022 - NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Update, 2. NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Update, and 3) NEA ESP Negotiation Update); under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussion pertaining to litigation/legal update (The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation v. Chariho Regional School District, through its Chair, Linda Lyall – C.A. No. PC-2021-06474) 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 Executive Session Minutes of September 13, 2022 – Approval/Rescinding 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

The Committee returned to open session at 6:56 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 (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous (Spears was not in attendance for the vote).

2. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to litigation/legal update (The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation v. Chariho Regional School District, through its Chair, Linda Lyall – C.A. No. PC-2021-06474) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to litigation/legal update (The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation v. Chariho Regional School District, through its Chair, Linda Lyall – C.A. No. PC-2021-06474) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous (Spears was not in attendance for the vote).

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

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (NEA ESP Negotiation Update) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, McQuaide and Reynolds. Recused: Louzon. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor with 1 recusal (Spears was not in attendance for the vote).

4. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Update) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Update) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained: Day. Recused: Louzon and McQuaide. The motion carried by a vote of 7 in favor with 1 abstention and 2 recusals.

V. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Vice Chair Giusti reported that the first vote, a change to the executive session agenda, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Reynolds and Spears.

The next vote, approval of executive session minutes of September 13, 2022, Approval/Rescinding of Home Instruction Requests, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Reynolds and Spears.

The next vote, approval of home instruction requests for this evening, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Reynolds and Spears.

The fourth vote, regarding an update on RGB, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Reynolds and Spears.

The next vote, approval of executive session minutes of September 13, 2022, NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Update, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears with Day abstaining.

The last vote, to return to open session, was approved by Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Liguori, Lyall, Reynolds and Spears.

VI. Recognition – The following were congratulated/thanked:

1. High School Girls' Soccer Team – 2022 Maddie Potts Jamboree Tournament Champions and 2022 Piver Cup Champions.

VII. Public Forum

Chair Lyall noted that this is the time if anyone would like to speak on an item that is not on this evening's agenda. Andrew McQuaide from Charlestown stated that the Committee received communication from the Superintendent prior to this meeting tonight that the Town of Hopkinton regretted to inform us that, effective immediately, their Public Works department is no longer capable of providing snow removal services for the Ashaway or Hope Valley Elementary Schools. While I have a lot of thoughts about that, for the purposes of public comment and following watching that segment of Hopkinton's September 19th meeting, I want to publicly thank the Vice

President of the Town Council, Sharon Davis. I was really pleased and appreciated her comments during that conversation that promoted communication with the School Department and also just acknowledging that there is a budgeting process and this would have an impact on that budgeting process. I did want to also just clarify a few things. There was an insinuation that the Town of Richmond does not currently plow their elementary school and it was my understanding that in fact they do. To Vice President Sharon Davis' comments around promoting communication, there was a suggestion around their Public Works Department that this was a long time coming. To the extent that this was a long time coming, perhaps we could have been planful in its implementation. There was also a bit of insinuation that Chariho has both the equipment and the manpower and this is not true. He does not believe that this is the case and so to the extent that Chariho is going to be on a Charlestown, Richmond or Hopkinton Town Council Agenda, he does not think that it is inappropriate for our sister towns to communicate that to us so that things that are insinuated at the meetings we could clarify and operate with the facts and information. He wants to thank Sharon and he will make it a point to thank Sharon because Town Councilor Scott Bill Hirst made it a point to note that he looked forward and delighted in the fact that this would be something that Chariho could complain about Hopkinton about. Andrew stated that the fact of the matter is he never looks forward to any issues of contention with any of their towns and so rather than delighting in doing something that, from I guess Scott Bill's point of view, will frustrate Chariho, he would rather just thank and promote the comments that Sharon shared around promoting communication and being mindful of the budget process. Thank you.

VIII. Business

A. Perkins Grant – The Superintendent reported that back-up documentation provided at the last meeting for this grant was actually the back-up documentation for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant (next item). Therefore, this needs to be acted on again. She recommended approval to submit the Perkins Grant.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was
VOTED: To approve submission of the Perkins Grant. In favor: Unanimous.

B. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant – Superintendent Picard recommended approval to submit this grant to provide McKinney-Vento Assistant Liaison stipends (one elementary position and one secondary position), identification and awareness professional development for staff, emergency transportation funds and necessary supplies for McKinney-Vento families. Dr. Comella can answer any questions the Committee might have. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Ryan, to approve submission of this grant. Craig asked Michael to please elaborate on the emergency transportation to which Dr. Comella noted that we get students from another district who are homeless. Both districts work together to provide education and transportation for these students. Gina added that it also happens that we have students in our district who are homeless and move to areas outside our district. We are required to provide transportation if they choose to remain here. Craig questioned how long can they remain out of district before they belong to the other district. The Superintendent noted there is no timeline. This is the first grant we have had. In the past, we have had to budget for this expense. Ned added that if someone loses housing and they end up in Connecticut, we will split the cost of transportation and if we can't transport, we provide a gas card. Craig asked if a family is displaced for more than a year and have lived in the same place, why isn't the other district responsible to which Gina responded that this is legislation. It is not a RIDE mandate. Ned stated that they usually look at the distance and if it takes more than an hour to transport a student, the student will usually transfer to the new school. Chair Lyall added that they try to minimize the loss to children. Craig noted this is a long-term impact to the LEA. Donna questioned the two positions to which Dr. Comella explained that one person will be assigned to the elementary level and another to the secondary level as the individuals who take on this role know the families better. We currently have sixteen families.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve submission of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant. In favor: Unanimous.

C. Enrollment, Tuition and Budget Picture to Date – This item was requested by Andrew McQuaide. Gina noted that they are moving forward the end of this week with the budget freeze. We have unexpected things happening. Donna noted that she hopes the public is aware of the constraints as we are still in September and already have a budget freeze. Gina stated that we budget early, in December, so we are unable to plan for the increased DCYF placements or enroll shifts at CTC. She has asked Director Auth to maintain quarterly updates on enrollment. We usually can anticipate which students will leave the district but we had one more per town leave than what was budgeted. Craig commented on the classroom temperature. There is a certain temperature level that is conducive to learning. Gina noted that the District has not moved to a lower temperature yet. She will want to be in a room at a lower temp for a long period of time before she approves lowering the temperature. Andrew thanked the Chair for putting this on the agenda. Budget votes have impacts. Likewise, parents have received a recommendation to have their elementary students bring jackets and sweatshirts to school. Certainly, there are some folks who would celebrate Chariho's budget freeze. He questioned what a budget impact would be to which Ned replied this is the first level. If a school has not used money that was budgeted for a certain item (i.e. paper), they were able to spend the money elsewhere but in a budget freeze, money cannot be spent on something else. Another example is ice melt. We don't need it now but it is probably better to buy it now for a number of reasons 1) the cost and 2) it may not be available when we need it. Gary questioned personnel; will you not fill vacancies to which Ned replied that they will prioritize hiring. Clerks and custodians fall under health and safety so as vacancies come up, we will decide. Bill suggested, before going out to buy more paper, they should check with other schools. In the past, some facilities hang on to things forever. You need to explore all avenues. Ned commented that they will not let it get down that low. They will check to see what is typical use for a school. We won't take from a school if we know that school will need it and have to order more. Bill then mentioned furniture; don't overlook what is in the other buildings. Gina noted that since she has been here, she works with the principals on inventory to see what they have in stock. She goes through every budget. Donna stated she has a lot of questions about the options to consider. Regarding a vacancy freeze, if we lost three elementary teachers, would we not replace them? Gina responded if they are essential positions, we would definitely fill the vacancy. Donna asked about healthcare to which Ned noted that the District has a "smart shopper" option with a financial incentive tied to it. Craig requested an example of how staffing would be handled. Gina stated that if we have a teacher assistant who is not attached to a special needs student, this would probably be a position that would be eliminated if cuts have to be made but we can't even get people to apply for these positions because of the salary. Others are paying more. Craig then questioned the decrease in enrollment to which Gina explained that she will be moving back to two K classrooms at Charlestown next year. Hope Valley went up six students. Some of it is just clean up. We will know more after the tri-town count is done. Gary stated that it sounds like the District is not filling current positions. Gina replied, current teacher assistant positions. Pre-K enrollment has jumped and we may need to open another pre-K class. I use judgment for each vacancy. Andrew wanted to clarify that sometimes an increase in pre-K does have a downstream effect on special education costs. Gina agreed as we are required by law to educate all children beginning at age three if there are special needs. Andrew commented that he also wanted to highlight, while the paper conversation is compelling, that is the level of conversation that is occurring on a districtwide and building basis. It is beneficial for folks to be aware that is the level of granularity ongoing in our District. We are working to find every opportunity to save money; we have already implemented a budget freeze and the budget freeze does have an impact on education. Bill noted that he does not always agree with Gina on everything but this is why we hired her. We can't micromanage her. She can manage this and he is not uncomfortable with the way she is managing her team. Ryan noted that it looks like

there could be about an \$800,000 impact. He questioned where the pre-K students were from. Gina noted predominately Hope Valley and Richmond whereas Charlestown's enrollment is down. Ryan questioned the High School level. Gina stated she will have to check this to which Ryan noted that the ratio per town has an impact. Gina added that Katie is working on a \$1.2 million grant with RIDE for a mental health initiative. Betsy Alvarez questioned the freeze and the impact of snow days. Our custodial staff does an amazing job. Gina noted that she is not looking to cut custodial positions; we need more but can't hire any because of the rate of pay. The rules for DL are very different this year. The level of ask from RIDE is different so most districts will be asking for snow days. Betsy commented that this means there will be another level of service for custodians for the additional plowing to which Gina agreed. We currently do the main campus but the elementary school parking lots have been handled by each town. We do the sidewalks. We will have to get vendors. Betsy questioned if there were numbers for the TA vacancies. Gina noted there are two at Richmond and one at Ashaway that are not filled now. Ned added that as for plowing, the campus is a shelter which means the commitment for plowing will be on the campus first. This is where we will focus our resources and then move to the elementary schools. Gina noted that if there is a situation in a classroom and additional support is needed, we will change direction to which Craig replied that they cannot afford to lose a body in some classrooms. Chair Lyall thanked all for the discussion.

D. School Committee Subcommittee Discussion/Action – Superintendent Picard reported that Chair Lyall has provided her recommendations, based on the discussion held at the August 9, 2022 meeting, on those committees/subcommittees that are in need of additional members, could be added or eliminated. She is in agreement with Chair Lyall's recommendations. If changes are to be made, please vote on each one separately. Andrew questioned if the Committee had to vote to eliminate a subcommittee to which Craig responded they did because the School Committee voted to add the subcommittee. Andrew made a motion, which was seconded by Catherine to eliminate the CTC Advisory Committee. Chair Lyall stated that this was mainly related to the Perkins Grant and is not needed now.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: To eliminate the CTC Advisory Committee. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Lyall noted that the next subcommittee to be eliminated is the Marketing Subcommittee which has not met in years.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To eliminate the Marketing Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Lyall stated that the Recognition Subcommittee can be eliminated as they will be doing this in-house. Donna noted that it is good if they are going to do this internally.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was VOTED: To eliminate the Recognition Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Ryan noted that he would definitely like to vote on alternates for the negotiating subcommittees but unless they need to do the Policy Subcommittee or the District Strategic Planning Liaisons he would like to wait on these until the new School Committee is seated. Gina noted that she had no issue waiting on the Policy Subcommittee but she does need to begin the District Strategic Planning Meetings per RIDE guidelines.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To add Gary Liguori as an alternate to the NEA Certified Staff Negotiation Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To add Karen Reynolds as an alternate to the NEA ESP Negotiation Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To add Linda Lyall as an alternate to the NEA ESP Negotiation Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Lyall stated that they will need two people to serve as liaisons to the District Strategic Planning Committee. Gina noted that this is per legislation (RIDE). There will be at least two meetings here and maybe one in Providence. Craig made a motion to appoint Andrew to which Andrew stated that he would gladly serve but found this to be problematic that we have legislation to handle our strategic planning. It ridiculous how the State is mandating how districts handle this.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Linda Lyall and it was VOTED: To appoint Andrew McQuaide as a liaison to the District Strategic Planning Committee. In favor: Unanimous.

Gary questioned the position; will the liaison be responsible to bring information back to the School Committee to which Gina replied "yes". The focus is on School Improvement Plans. If we don't meet metrics, this is where our aspirations come in. We are part of the pilot program and had our first meeting last Thursday. Principals will bring this to their School Improvement Teams which is a great opportunity for parents. Catherine volunteered to serve.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To appoint Catherine Giusti as a liaison to the District Strategic Planning Committee. In favor: Unanimous.

Andrew noted that he feels the Policy Subcommittee is a good idea and agrees with Ryan to wait until a new School Committee is seated.

IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall asked if there were any items to be pulled. Craig pulled A-1 and A-2. He then acknowledged the donations and thanked the donors.

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 – Approved.
- C. Bill Review – Accepted.
- D. Budget Summary – None at this time.
- E. Balance Sheet – None at this time.
- F. Personnel Actions
- G. Permission to Issue Bids/Request Quote – Permission granted to issue the following:
 - 1. Annual Audit and Agreed Upon Procedures Request for Proposals (RFP)
- 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 of \$227.00 from First Baptist Church of Charlestown (at Quonochontaug) to Charlestown Elementary School to be used to assist needy students and families, snacks and Student of the Trimester Celebration.

2. Donation from the Downey Weaver Post Women's Auxiliary, Hope Valley, of miscellaneous school supplies (children's scissors, glue, notebooks, crayons, markers, pencil sharpeners, construction paper) to Hope Valley School.

A-1. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of September 13, 2022 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of August 9, 2022 (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 September 13, 2022. In favor: Unanimous.

X. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports

1. Special Education Advisory Committee met on September 15, 2022. Included in the packet were the minutes of the May 19, 2022 meeting.

2. Health and Wellness Subcommittee will meet on October 4, 2022 at 4:00 PM in the High School Library. Included in the packet were the minutes of the meeting held on May 10, 2022.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. Curriculum Town Hall – This will be held on Thursday, October 6 from 5:00-5:45 PM in the Middle School Auditorium prior to the High School/CTC Open House. There will be a brief presentation on the current work being done and planning ahead. The slides will be posted on the website after the meeting.

2. Opportunities for Parents and Community Involvement – There are many opportunities for parents to become active members. Interested parents should come to the Curriculum Town Hall or reach out to the Superintendent.

3. Flu Clinics: Middle School – Tuesday, October 4th from 4-7 PM; Hope Valley School – Thursday, October 6th from 4-7 PM; Ashaway School – Tuesday, October 11th from 4-7 PM; Richmond School – Tuesday, October 18th from 4-7 PM; High School/CTC – Thursday, October 20th from 8:00-10:30 AM (Staff and Students only); Charlestown School – Tuesday, November 1st from 4-7 PM.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

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

Catherine would like the letter they just received from the Town of Hopkinton regarding plowing of the elementary schools on a future agenda for further discussion. She would like the Town Council invited as well.

Bill commented on the lack of The Westerly Sun to post the Unified Sports Schedule which they can get from the RIIL. He is not sure why they do not post this schedule when they post all other High School sports' schedules. Gina noted that they did report out on the Unified Volleyball game but have not printed the schedule. She will keep reminding them.

XII. Adjournment

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To adjourn at 8:05 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk