



## Cohasset Public Schools

143 Pond Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

*Empower Students to Improve Communities*

### Cohasset School Committee Meeting

#### **School Committee Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

Willcutt Commons

91 Sohier Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

Virtual Access via Zoom and Facebook

6:00 P.M.

#### **In Attendance:**

Craig MacLellan, Chairman

Ashley Colleary

Lance Dial

Paul Kearney

Lydia St. Onge

#### **Also, in Attendance:**

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent

Barbara Cerwonka, Director of Student Services

**Call to Order and Roll Call** - Chairman Craig MacLellan called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Welcome to the September 8, 2021 meeting of The Cohasset School Committee Meeting on this first day of school for students. This meeting is being held in person and will continue the utilization of Zoom as to allow for remote participation. The meeting is, as always, being streamed live on Facebook and Cohasset 143TV. Would all members who are present, please indicate so in roll call:

**Roll Call: Ashley Colleary-Present, Lance Dial-Present, Paul Kearney-Present, Lydia St. Onge-Present, Craig MacLellan-Present.**

**Public Comment** - Mr. Ray Molnar of 303 Forest Avenue - I believe that we should review the decision to decline the State's routine on COVID safety checks, COVID screening program.

Dr. Patrick Sullivan reminds everyone the one of the areas that was recommended by the State for schools to consider is doing screening of students and staff coming into buildings to determine if we'll be in a pool testing format, to determine if there are folks coming into the building with the COVID virus.

Chairman MacLellan comments towards Mr. Molnar's statement that Dr. Sullivan and himself, exchanged some emails and correspondence as well, and both invite Mr. Molnar to make this comment. Absolutely to address this publicly and appreciate Mr. Molnar's willingness to do so and he is an active participant in the school community.

Dr. Sullivan summarizes what has been communicated with Mr. Molnar, prior to the meeting when we did discuss this. Basically, there are districts around us who have done that and are doing it. Their results have been very negligible in terms of the amount of folks who have been positive. When we pool tested our staff, we actually had individual testing. We had no positive testing. This one, it is advertised as them giving us some help with staffing to do it, and believe it's still going to put a big tax on our staffing. Also, don't want to encourage folks who may be feeling kind of on the fence, ill or not ill. If you are feeling ill, please stay home. Please have you kids stay home, your child to stay home, and don't want to encourage folks to come into our buildings *with negative results, but to rely on that*. It's really just a matter of time at this point, don't think for our community, it's a necessary endeavor. We had very low rates. We have high vaccination



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rates for our middle and high schools. It's in elementary we don't, because we aren't able to, but we found through like districts around us. Through our own experience that it's the amount of folks who are testing positive. We have none. It's an operational decision at this point that we don't need it.

The committee has a lengthy discussion.

We have that review coming up on October 6, 2021 at our School Committee Meeting, held on October 6, 2021 and think that's a good time to review how things are going, see where we are, and to determine if there are any other safety measures.

#### **Superintendent's Report-Review of Teachers Opening Day and First Day (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

We had a wonderful first day of school today. Was so impressed with the focus of the staff to make sure that everything was accounted for. Teacher's made the students comfortable and this was happening all over the place. This all extends to getting our teachers prepared at our two teacher induction days. Our theme for the year is working together to place students first, which is really the first line in our district mission, which is what we do, and what we are about. Wanted to make sure the staff had a good sense of an overview of it, which of course, we are unwrapping in our buildings more thoroughly. A very striking line that stands out which was a collaborative effort that the first line in *Our Mission*, is that we place students first in our Cohasset Public Schools. ***The theme is, Working Together to Place Students First.*** We have a community where we are growing, we are learning. Our kids are helping each other grow in the classroom and their all growing individually. As an educator, it's a wonderful thing to help foster that growth and help them to understand their strengths as well as their weaknesses. The Best Part of Me screen shot presented is a project that's done quite often in our elementary schools where the student talks about The Best Part of Them. Binding us all together and letting the staff know that we are here in such a kaleidoscope of wonder with our amazing kids. To help them and meet them where they are, that is really part of the theme working together to meet them where they are. Kids are coming in this year from more places than they ever came from. There are some anxieties and depression. This real feeling of returning back to a normal way. We have to meet them where they are. This production was done by Jake Powell who is a senior, very talented young man. Also, Adam Sasso who is a great teacher in our high school. Jake put this together and Adam guided him in some ways. However, this can be seen on the navigator on our school's website.

Shout out to Chris Kennedy who did great work at The Deer Hill School, it really makes a difference.

The DPW did a wonderful job. They do every year, making sure our outside grounds are ready. Protocol for our safety measures is that on every door has a sheet of paper to indicate when the rooms are cleaned, when their thoroughly cleaned and that goes for the restrooms as well. Also, shows when the filters are changed in our portable air cleaners. Superintendent Patrick Sullivan states to anybody out there who is watching and didn't have a good day today, please reach out to us.

Paul Kearney is still concerned about the temperature in the classrooms. It's hot in the middle and high school, they don't have air conditioners. we're going to try to make that a priority to go forward. Nice to see the kid's outside today.

Chairman MacLellan reiterated the success of the first day and noted to efforts and enthusiasms of teachers, principals and staff and all of the schools.

**District Student/Parent Handbook (Dr. Leslie Scollins)** - All of the changes really aligned with our buildings. It changed the non-discrimination policy and replaced it with the new statement in all the handbooks. Put an executive summary to the Strategic Plan. Added Charting the Course and prominently



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placed on our website for whichever place this doesn't decide. The school department personnel, we're updating the School Committee Members and School Personnel. Our district calendar, we replaced it. Those of you may have seen that there was a change of Yom Kippur and Dr. Sullivan did announce that to the community about that at the Osgood open house and apologizes for that. We do want to make sure we are being mindful of those. The policies and procedures that are referenced in the other handbook. Ashley Colleary suggests we vote to approve the handbook with these changes and create an opportunity at the next meeting to have a follow up discussion if necessary. The biggest change is really adding the Strategic Plan to it.

**Motion by Lance Dial to approve The District Student/Parent Handbook with the changes described here by Dr. Sullivan as presented at the meeting to approve those changes, seconded by Ashley Colleary.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Chairman Craig MacLellan-Aye.**

#### **Expectations for Handling Mask Refusal (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

What would be the expectations if someone did not wear a mask and how would we be handling it? The idea here is that we want to work with you. These are tough times and we are really looking to work with families. We know this is difficult, we just want to work with you and try to have conversations so that we have understanding about what we're being told we have to do, what's best for their students. That is really where we are.

It does mention that we want to try to have those conversations, we do it to follow. It felt strange to send this and not have a conversation around it. It was strange timing on the other alternative. Didn't have a separate School Committee Meeting for it and it is sort of an operational thing. It's certainly an impactful conversation with the community. From Mr. Dial's own perspective, likes the way Dr. Sullivan tied this to an existing process which is a school readiness matter. That's a familiar pathway so that we're not creating a whole new over process. If people are familiar with that and the staff are familiar with how to deal with that. Think Dr. Sullivan struck a nice balance creating this process that you are required to do. I do agree the language came across a little cold in a way but think that's probably appropriate for what we are talking about. This is a process for dealing with the situation we hope doesn't occur. We want to be very clear and that clarity sometimes comes at the expense of the warmth that you are actually trying to give to the community.

**High School Student Parking Fees (Ms. Susan Owen)** - Susan Owen is not present today. Dr. Sullivan is presenting on her behalf. The next two items are memos from Susan Owen, both are financial matters that should be voted on by the School Committee before we implement them. The first one is about high school student parking fees. The high school is recommending reinstating a student parking lot. Dr. Sullivan has been told this predates there was a parking lot system that there was a high school parking fee. There are short spots and not all students are able to park. If there is a spot, they're not in the same spot all year. There is a limit on your household and the fee will be \$50. There is always financial aid available.

There are 2 reasons to charge a fee. One is to ration, the other one is to raise revenue. There are 2 ways to ration charging fees and there's a lottery system. What problem do we want to solve with the fee? Is that there are not enough spots, or is it that we would like additional revenue to put towards other things? Or are there other alternatives? Dr. Sullivan comments that this definitely needs to be addressed and answered by Susan Owen. It is not really a shortage issue; it basically gives students a definite spot. In other words, if you are a senior you are pretty much guaranteed a spot. Lance Dial asks, can they do that without a fee



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charge? Give students a lottery and state to seniors to put their name in the lottery and they get one. Correct, answers Dr. Sullivan. This provides some revenue for other things. For instance, we are right now outsourcing a place for our buses. This is where it's costing us.

Dr. Sullivan receives a question from member in the community from Jeff Moy at 302 Ledgewood Drive. What is the money used for this particular year? Is this a slush fund?

Dr. Sullivan answers, it's not a slush fund it is going too. Dr. Sullivan actually had some conversation with Mr. Moy, and really appreciate him emailing me. It provided some clarity since don't know too much about the fee. The fee isn't going for a specific thing unless it's offsetting our buses in a separate place which we do have to pay for. There isn't a specific pay for service. Mr. Moy asks, why don't they target the fee the same way as sports user fees and bus fees when their being charged to specific user? Dr. Sullivan reiterates from what he understands this has to go into a property revolving.

Chairman MacLellan states, it seems really nickel to dime. Even if we doubled that, we're talking \$12,500 and what are we really going to do, if it's half, like \$6,000. Depending on what other districts do, imagine a \$100 per car. All the benefits that were listed and in Ms. Owen's memorandum could be as Mr. Dial pointed out, it could be accomplished without a fee. Especially right now, with the students have had a lot taken away from them, now we're going to make them pay for having their cars there. Not really against this, but why fix it if it isn't broken. It's working fine. The kids are doing fine. If you want to establish some situation like a lottery where the kids get the parking passes, you know what parking space there at, that might help safety because they know what space their driving too. They're not racing to get a spot and that everyone knows that. That can be accomplished without a fee. Why are we making the kids pay?

Chairman MacLellan would accept either a motion to accept the proposal or a motion to table the topic for another time. Paul Kearney states clearly the message is no. Chairman MacLellan states, it can always be revisited. Speaking my language in terms of addressing things now Mr. Kearney, but is there a motion? Lydia St. Onge suggests moving to not have a fee and just assigned parking spots. Dr. Sullivan doesn't want to speak for Principal Scott and his team. He would like to talk to Principal Scott about how he would like to go about doing that. Think what's on the table right now is the fee. That can be placed on the agenda another time states Chairman MacLellan.

**Motion to reject the high school student parking fees proposal by Paul Kearney, seconded by Lydia St. Onge.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Chairman Craig MacLellan-Aye.**

**Reduced Kindergarten Tuition (Ms. Susan Owen)** - In the opinion of Dr. Sullivan, this is in the spirit of what the Committee has charged us to do which is to look at eventually moving to a situation where we haven't full voted on this yet, but we can. Obviously involves an incremental decreasing. Susan Owen has figured a way to cut the tuition. The recommendation is we reduce the FY22 Kindergarten from \$3,500 to \$3,300.

The idea is that we believe we can budget it off the tuition.

**Motion to table this topic on reduced kindergarten tuition to another time by Lydia St. Onge, seconded by Paul Kearney.**

**Roll Call Vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Chairman Craig MacLellan-Aye.**



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**Special Education Update (Barbara Cerwonka - Director of Student Services)** - Barbara Cerwonka conveys how wonderful the first day of school was with students. Ms. Cerwonka toured around to all of the schools today. It was wonderful seeing the students and teachers and being in all of those spaces with everyone. It was a great day as we have already noted. Ms. Cerwonka has a couple of things she would like to present and go over tonight. One of them is some of the new special education staff within her department. Wanted to let people know at the Osgood School; we have a new teacher for the Stars Program which is wonderful. We have 4 new ESP's at the Deer Hill School. All of whom we are very excited about, great hires. We have a new 8th grade middle school teacher which was approved in a previous School Committee budget discussion and we are very pleased to have him on board. We also have a new .4 occupational therapist at the middle and high school as well as a new ESP at that level as well. We are just thrilled to have all of these people on board. They're all going to be great compliments to our already existing staff and bring a lot of energy to the school departments. We're very happy about all of that. A couple of things that we have talked about in previous School Committee Meetings that she would like to circle back to with the families and make you aware of what we are doing. There is a new Cohasset Public School Student Services Parent Questionnaire for the Special Education Department. This is going to be posted on her portion of the website and it is going out with every IEP that goes out following a meeting. Envelopes go out for parents to return the signature pages and this will be able to be put in right with their signature pages. It covers the areas of school's efforts to partner with parents, feedback on teachers and administrators, feedback on the school itself, and feedback on the impact of Special Education Services on family. Participation in the process and then an area in which people can share and write in any information that they choose to about their experience. This will be collected as stated when the IEP signature pages are returned. If parents choose to return them separately and anonymously, that is fine as well. They will be done over and all those comments taken under credit, some work done on the part of the department to continue to improve as some of our Strategic Plan, our communication, and our relationships and their input with families.

Active IEPs:

The Joseph Osgood School, we have about 11.3% of students on IEP's.

Deer Hill School 15.5% of students on active IEP's.

16% of students at the middle school and 11.5% of students at the high school.

A data collection sheet here that is going to talk about the initial, the reevaluation, the review meetings, any additional evaluations, the eligibility or the ineligibility on a monthly basis.

Another thing that we did this Summer is she partnered with the Principals on The Massachusetts Tiered Supports and talked about how we are going to as we have talked in the past achieve some more horizontal and vertical alignment in our child's study teams. All of those teams have been renamed the *MTSS* teams and the Principals and I work together about how to have the existing forms really do match every school as well in terms of the level of the grade level of students and the ages of the students for that school and complement each other as they move up to each other's school. We did talk about the sharing of that information moving into Google Docs to be shared across schools from every level, one to the other. One of the pieces that the Principals were very interested in that Ms. Cerwonka is very excited to work on with them is parent letters, introducing the system and also at each of those tiered support systems that parents receive some notifications and communication around what that means. That is something that we are working on and going to be implementing and that we are all very happy about. That is a great step forward.



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MTSS will continue to be a process that we continue to work on and develop as a team, myself, the Principals, and Dr. Sullivan as well. This is our first step in that. Other pieces of information to share with you as Superintendent Patrick Sullivan showed, we have the dyslexia professional development on the second teacher's workday. It was a 3-hour training on both dyslexia and on the screeners that we are going to be using. All of the Joseph Osgood and Deer Hill School staff participated in that training.

SEPAC presented at our opening day to the staff, and there is a calendar of events that will take us through the Fall, as well as meetings that is also being posted. It's being shared through SEPAC, but also being posted on Ms. Cerwonka's part of the website.

One very exciting piece of news is that while we are still interviewing for this position. We are interviewing to hire a .5 Social Workers to the middle school, high school level and what that is going to do is, it's going to give that added mental health, and social emotional support for students, particularly in our BRITE Program. The BRITE Program is a program in which we participate and collaborate with a group on the South Shore that works with building resiliency with youth and transition. We have actually increased over our baseline model with them to some upgraded service with them. So we have much more access to them 6 times a year, as opposed to once a year and to really partner with them as we did when we started talking about the potential of hiring a Social Worker find out from them what other districts do, what they recommend, get an entrance and exit criteria around the right model which is really a classroom for students who are experiencing distress coming to school and attendance issues. Sometimes for kids just having to be medically out of school and that re-entry and give support around that re-entry.

We had a great deal of success with our virtual IEP meetings last school year. It really enabled greater participation at these meetings. We do, from DESE, have the right to continue in a virtual meeting format and therefore, we are going to be offering that to families, that we will continue to offer this as our motive meeting and as always, we welcome in-person meetings if parents would prefer an in-person meeting. We will absolutely conduct an in-person meeting and in a space in which people can be comfortably and safety distance met and move ahead with that.

Abigail Sullivan at 87 Pleasant Street comments, thank you for the updates and the great work over the Summer. It is clear that you have heard the voices of SEPAC and other concerned citizens regarding data reporting, concerns about child study, or MTSS. This communication between grade levels and teachers and understanding dyslexia. Can you share the name of the presenter in the dyslexia training?

Barbara Cerwonka states, yes. The name of the presenter, and not sure of pronouncing his last name correctly, but his name is Chris *Luzhineac*. He was from Pearson and Pearson told us who he was going to be the presenter. They said he was very skilled in his background on dyslexia as well as in screeners themselves. It was clear from his presentation that he really was.

The committee asks questions and has a lengthy discussion.

**Preliminary Food Services Discussion** - We will keep it on there as a rolling item because it is important. Obviously, what goes into our students is an essential part of their health. Paul Kearney comments, We are working with the sub-committee, and Mr. Dial is involved too. Please bring feedback about food services to Mr. Kearney and himself so that we can help improve these discussions.

**School Committee Goals Review** - We discussed the importance of maintaining our focus on the district mission and vision. We love them and their important and they should guide all of our work and so we thought it best to start our presentation with them. We approached our goal setting with the Strategic Plan



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that guided us and so we wanted to make sure that we had goals that were specifically aligned with each compass point.

For the first compass point, teaching and learning, we would like to host 4 student-led project-based learning presentations at School Committee Meetings with an emphasis, cultural, competence and inclusion. Most of our presentations that we have had historically have fit all of those. All of that sort of fit the criteria, but we really appreciate the opportunity to have confidence in the fact that this is in a very attainable goal and we are looking forward to presenting to you. Feel like we just green lit this! We want to include a data-driven Student Services presentation at one meeting each month you can see that we have in parenthesis the exact Strategic Initiative that we feel like these are meeting. We are confident that this is going to be very achievable too, which is very exciting, and we are grateful for all of your hard work in that area. We would like to include 2 presentations at meetings from the district technology director. Specifically, we want to also include information about how we are using technology in our Student Services and educational inclusion initiatives. Dr. Sullivan comments, that is actually really interesting because we have this on our digital learning team. We have a member of the SEPAC team, a great team. We haven't launched it for this year, but it's coming.

Ashley Colleary continues to Compass Point 2, which is social and emotional wellness. Last year we had a conversation about how important it is for us to acknowledge the excellence in our district in athletics, but also to place an emphasis on other activities. We want to host 2 presentations that are focused on the arts and other extracurricular activities and we want this to be inclusive as well. We have made the commitment to those members who were at the workshop who made the commitment for other members who weren't able to be there. We made the commitment that each committee member will support at least one event celebrating student achievement in the arts over the course of this school year. We would like to host a special public forum and discussion centered on our Student Services Department and this would be something that we would love to collaborate with you on and that it will be really awesome. The tone will be really wonderful because you have all of this progress happening in your department and feel like it will be a really wonderful event. What we thought would be like in our imagination, it's in a setting like the learning commons or maybe a courtyard, if that's safer. There would be an opportunity to have almost like a panel of different folks who are involved with Student Services in different ways. From your perspective, from an educator's perspective, from a specialist's perspective, from a parental perspective, maybe even from a student perspective, if that's something that we feel like is appropriate. It would give an opportunity for families who are interested to ask questions and provide feedback and get information and it would create an open line of communication, like a town meeting. Hopefully, we can collaborate with Student Services on that.

Compass Point 3 is Resources. We are very excited that we have a school facilities committee that is in need and we would like to invite them to present at 2 School Committee Meetings on their progress. Though we have deferred that agenda item for this week, we would like to have a public review of our food service options, menu development and food sourcing. We would also like to mobilize the finance and facilities sub-committee, and our School Committee as a whole to work throughout the school year, beginning now, to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for all specifically as it relates to climate control.

Compass point 4 is Communication and Engagement. We would like to support, update and redesign of the district website. We anticipate our communications sub-committee being able to provide support in that way and we look forward to collaborating with district leadership and staff on that. We would like to collaborate with town leadership to create a community resource guide for use by schools and building leadership. Our vision for that is there's a lot of really, very varied skill sets and expertise in the community



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and a lot of people who are really very generous with their time, treasures and talent and we thought it might be nice for the schools to have that at their fingertips as a resource if they need Chairman Craig MacLellan for example, use of the Mock Trial activity that he participated in. There are lots of folks in town who would love to lend their expertise or services. We also thought that this ties in with the prior hosting media forum, maybe a community volunteer resource forum designed to increase support for experiential learning opportunities for students. It's bringing that second bullet point to life and really creating a way for the community to be involved in the schools. To help our fabulous leadership, and educators to provide more resources, to more students. We do understand that there is a certain amount of effort that we will need to be made by leadership and staff for a couple of these bullet points, but we want to collaborate with you all in a way, that is not going to put an extra burden on anyone.

Dr. Sullivan comments, what's so great about this is that it's exactly what we're doing. It fits perfectly because it's all under the Strategic Plan, this is exactly what we wanted. Don't see it being a major problem. Actually, almost set even before I knew these goals here. We have a lot of these things cooking. It fits perfectly with the community engagement goals. Really excited about this.

**School Facilities Committee** – The committee is constituted. It met and we had our first meeting on August 31, 2021 over the Zoom and Chris Senior the town manager was also there. The committee as we have discussed is 9 people. Mr. Earls is the chairman. He was elected chairman and a chairperson. Dr. Shubert was elected to be the Vice Chair of that committee, and Nan Roth was elected to the secretary position. We have the officers and we basically reviewed the charge and we are at the very early stages. Next meeting is September 28, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. Not much to report, just the fact that it's going is as itself is a tremendous victory as far as he's concerned. Thank you to all who worked to make that happen including our town leadership. Special thanks to Kerry Thompson. Kerry Thompson and the town moderator for getting his nominees.

**Reports from Sub-Committee and Liaisons (Policy & Standards, Budget Finance, Special Ed. PAC, Legislative Liaison)** - Ashley Colleary has a couple updates. There is a new recreation center now, right near the parking garage. A new team focus has a Rec Center and opens Wednesday, September 8th. The first ground level cafe from Safe Harbor is going to be on Friday, September 10th at 7:00 p.m. and students can register on The Safe Harbor website. There's an exhibit at the library called, Spiral Upward from Addiction to Healing, and that is there from September 7th to October 1st in the meeting room and then there is going to be an artist reception and live reading that will take place on Thursday, September 16th from 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the meeting room. Another interesting thing that is happening is in Hanover but thought it relevant. There's going to be some active bystander skills training for adults and high school aged youth presented by True Story Theater. True Story Theater does performances. Basically, act out performances of real-life situations that people have experienced. Tomorrow, September 9th they are training virtually from 6:30-8:30 p.m. You can register on Eventbrite if you just look for Hanover Unity Council. They're going to be doing a performance and then they're going to do an interactive introduction to active bystander skills.

**Facilities/Capital Projects/Technology/AEC, Collective Bargaining, Security, Superintendent Evaluation** - Lance Dial has quick update on Finance Facilities. We are looking to schedule a couple of meetings on food services and climate. Those may come before the next meeting. Just wanted to get that out there.

**Approval of Minutes** - None





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#### **Executive Session –**

**Motion to move into executive session for reason, number three which is related to Bargaining PAC by Paul Kearney, seconded by Lydia St. Onge. Roll Call Vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Chairman Craig MacLellan-Aye.**

**The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.**

#### **Documents Used at Meeting**

Working Together to Place Students First- Charting the Course

"The Best Part of Me" [video] [technical difficulties, couldn't view]

Snapshots of First Day of School in the district

District Student Parent Handbook Changes 2021-2022

Expectations for Handling Mask Refusal

FY22 Student Parking Fees Memo - Susan Owen

FY22 Kindergarten Tuition Memo - Susan Owen

Cohasset School Committee Goals