



Cohasset Public Schools

143 Pond Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

Empower Students to Improve Communities

Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Zoom Video Call

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

Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Steve Rotondi, Athletic Director

Call to Order and Roll Call-Chairman Craig MacLellan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

This meeting is being live streamed on Cohasset 143TV and Facebook.

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

Public Comment - None

Superintendent's Report- Dr. Patrick Sullivan welcomed Mrs. Laura Soderberg, a parent and very involved community member to The School Committee. Mrs. Soderberg has done some great work in promoting volleyball within our district. Also, joining by zoom is Steve Rotondi, Athletic Director for Cohasset Public Schools. One of Mr. Rotondi's plans is to always expand and bring new sports to Cohasset and this was a goal for him as the Athletic Director. He wouldn't be where he is in the process with it, without Mrs. Soderberg's help, the sports community and the student athletes that have rallied around this to make what volleyball would be Cohasset's **27th** sport offered at Cohasset High School. So impressive for a school with 460 kids to offer these sports. These programs need to be self-funded. Steve Rotondi would like to thank Laura Soderberg for presenting a gift she funded and raised \$14,822.00 to bring a volleyball sport into The Cohasset Public Schools. Laura held an amazing two (2) day event in Boston. Lots of manual labor, but such a great event! Funds were raised. Our Junior Varsity girls' team should start volleyball this coming Fall. Laura Soderberg and her daughter Taylor were welcomed by all school committee members present. Laura states how proud she is, and an honor to pass the check gift onto the Athletic Director in Cohasset Public Schools and The School Committee. Thank you to Mr. Steve Rotondi for his hard work in putting together a very detailed budget so we know where all of these funds were going in order to support this new program.

The committee thanks Mrs. Soderberg for her involvement and fundraising. The committee is very excited to see Volleyball added as a JV sport.

Diane Lawson, 433 King Street in Cohasset - Thanks to Mrs. Soderberg's tireless efforts to bring volleyball to Cohasset Public Schools. Fantastic coach and fabulous person and thanks Taylor. My



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daughters can't wait to participate. Thank you Mr. Steve Rotondi and Dr. Sullivan and the entire School Committee for supporting and approving the volleyball program.

Motion to accept gift for the Cohasset Volleyball Program made by Paul Kearney, seconded by Lydia St. Onge. Roll call vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

Hiring Update (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)

One of the wonderful things we do here at Cohasset Public Schools, we always assign a mentor/coach to any of our new staff members and new teachers. Not a lot of turnover here, since our teachers love working here. Added a new Kindergarten Teacher for new additional enrollment. A new Math Teacher for the high school. We added a Reading Specialist up at the middle school, a position that is near and dear to Dr. Sullivan, and thanks the School Committee for this, and Ellen Maher. We have also added an Instructional Technology Specialist Teacher which completes the triangle we just designed into our Strategic Plan. We have advocated for all these new school positions that are referenced here on the dashboard. Many roles have been filled and a few newer openings have been posted.

The committee engages in discussion and asks clarifying questions about staffing that are answered by Dr. Sullivan and Mrs. Cerwonka.

Dr. Scollins explain the induction program. Our new hires on board spend 3 days with Dr. Scollins and then she brings in Barbara Cerwonka and Lisa Radden to talk and work with some with these new teachers. They're actually not all new teachers as Dr. Sullivan mentioned. Some of them are very established teachers here in Cohasset. We give mentors/coaches to all, very important because they too to Dr. Sullivan's point, they have to learn the culture. They have to learn the policy. They need to learn what happens here, and how we do things. This is all brought to them in the 3 days in the Induction Program. We have a new teacher program and they meet with Dr. Scollins monthly. Sometimes they meet with their mentors, with particular topics that we go over, but we also have time for them to work things out. One of the nice things that happens at the table is we have such a diverse group of individuals with varying experiences. They all share, and this is very helpful, because we have our brand-new teacher's coming out of school, and we have some veteran teachers who also bring things to the table.

Student Services Overview (Ms. Barbara Cerwonka)

Mrs. Cerwonka gives an overview of the purview of the Office of Student Services. They oversee IEPs, 504s, home and hospital tutoring, therapeutic programing, civil rights laws, the MTSS process.

Jean Healy, 93 South Main Street - last year questions were asked about data collected about the tiered approach including data on those in child study and out of those children studied, those referred by the administration versus parents for an evaluation and the outcomes in pre-qualified for disability or not a zone IEP and their progress, etc. We know there will be unusual focus on children struggling due to the pandemic. So, it will be important and helpful to have comprehensive data collected from the start, including if and when advocating for more resources across the various sources of school and town funds.

Barbara Cerwonka answers question.

Abigail Sullivan, 87 Pleasant Street - I am very encouraged to see MTSS and literacy for all listed as priority goals for the district. I think your idea to create a process guide for the district as a whole is an excellent idea. What specific steps is Cohasset Public Schools taking to discuss practices after the



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release of the dyslexia guidelines from DESE this Spring? Can we expect all kindergarten kids at Osgood to be screened for dyslexia as outlined in the guidelines?

Dr. Scollins answers that we have DIBELS 8 which is considered a dyslexia screener. We also are going to be using iReady and their assessment that will be new for us and that going to be K-8. Looking at reading and mathematics. That also has a dyslexia screener in it.

Elizabeth Frasier, 27 Windy Hill Road - Would the School Committee consider improving the social and emotional health of the special education students by eliminating the masks and distancing this Fall which directly impacts the mental and emotional health of all students. Kids are currently attending extended school year and summer school mask free. Progress has been night and day compared to the lack of progress last year for special education students. The masks are even more to their mental health as the struggle in the classroom and baseline. If masks are a must, will The School Committee, consider allowing elementary, middle and high school special education students on an IEP and others to forego the mask as it directly impacts their education negatively. OT Speech Services, speech and other therapies and specialized instruction.

Chairman MacLellan answers Ms. Frasier's question. Where your question really focuses on the mask issue we will address that at our special meeting addressing all COVID related issues.

Ms. Frasier follows up with answer. Her point on the mask is to make The School Committee aware of the extra difficulty the mask has presented to special education children.

Abigail Sullivan, 87 Pleasant Street follows up with question/comment. So, encouraged to hear about the dyslexia training in September. Sounds Great. Love it!

Cassie Muir - thank you Craig and School Committee for taking an interest in this topic. There's a disconnect and a personal experience in our district with kids who are struggling, and the ideal presented timeline today as a parent who had to seek outside testing to get my child assistance during COVID, it would be great to continue this discussion with more details and data to support the other families who are also new to our district, or who will face learning difficulties that are still unknown. It would be too difficult to weed out COVID slide versus learning different possibility especially this past year. Because so many kids were behind where the number of child studies hired this past year because of learning concerns, or are there more to complete when school begins?

The committee has a lengthy discussion and agree to revisit this issue when data is available.

Dr. Scollins answers to Abigail Sullivan at 87 Pleasant Street, that Cohasset Public Schools will be working with teachers to help them with better knowledge to our students. Long term project when involved with Special Student Services. Dr. Scollins mentions 2.5 reading specialist. Dr. Sullivan states this was a major concern, to our specialist.

Ms. Magee, 9 Orchard Drive - The graphic and explanation on the slides that shows the process to identify evaluate eligibility to find and then deliver necessary services may seem like a long time especially to parents who are watching their child struggle. But there are timelines defined by law. So, might be helpful to include also special education, parent advisory Council, MTSS multi-tiered system supports. We need that list of acronyms. Sort of a key to those is that is.

Chairman MacLellan responds, so true. He too sort of has to decipher those and he forgot this time around for everyone's that watching. That's a good point, and we should do that! Barbara Cerwonka



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also responds. True, the Office of Student Services will definitely include what all these acronyms mean in all of our things and also updating the website to the timelines involved.

Jenna Cunningham, 15 Hill Street - Responding to Ms. Colleary's question earlier. Her experience at the Osgood School is that families have to ask specifically for test results regarding progress monitoring discussions about progress are standard, but many families do not know they can ask for the results of tests (scores). If their looking for something more objective, especially when their child is not meeting the benchmarks. This information is very helpful to families.

Elizabeth Frasier - That Dr. Sullivan is the quickest responder of all times. Question Cohan, can the child study portion of the funnel be eliminated? It takes time and it doesn't provide any useful data struggling student's need to be assessed in a recent SEPAC meeting in the Spring. Parent's has asked how many teachers had recommended a full battery of academic testing for a student struggling in their classroom? Do we have it?

Barbara Cerwonka response to Ms. Frasier is that certainly the child's study model cannot be eliminated. MTSS comes to us from DESE. It provides us with a lot of information and data on children in terms of needs, in terms of strategies that work and in terms of interventions that can work that might not necessitate special education services, but also that data is used in the pre-referral process.

Cassie Muir. - I think there is a disconnect in our district. We need more support.

Ms. Cunningham - *should* have asked earlier about monitoring! Will families be aware they can ask for objective progress? Monitoring, testing information she received a progress report from a reading specialist that my 2nd grader worked very hard. Nothing objective she asked for the objective test, and she's a full year behind in 3rd grade. Dr. Scollins wants to address answer to Ms. Cunningham that she doesn't have the objective scores and she would have to look into what conversations were had, but maybe there's something that we need to be sending out that's a little more of a report form, but have to talk to our principals, our reading specialist, and our teachers just to look at what would that look like and also to the families.

Dr. Sullivan notes our Strategic Plan is preaching to the choir. We're clearly looking to refine our benchmark assessments and that's something we've looked at the data that came out of that. We need to attend to that. Dr. Sullivan states absolutely and this is really a good conversation. It's very healthy to get all of this out so we know, but just understand that we're preaching to the choir where we know we need to refine that and move forward in that way, and we're going to. Thank you for that comment and question.

Chairman MacLellan states part of this meeting is to identify areas of improvement, not just today, but to acknowledge that there are areas for improvement and invite members of the community to participate in that exploration of areas where we can improve.

Barbara Stefan, 260 Jerusalem Road - Hi Craig, and The School Committee, thanks for holding this meeting. Dr. Scollins just referenced data that indicate that most of our students landed out where she would have expected, COVID, or non-COVID. Will that data be shared in a future meeting (preliminary MCAS results, or in-house assessments, or both)? Dr. Scollins answers that MCAS data is raw right now and it's a little bit hard to read. It's not great. She is hoping to get this in a couple of weeks. We will get something the way they give us more information. It's a raw score and some of it was actually around the benchmark assessments that we did in reading and then looking at our math assessments at the end of the year from Bridges. The reading specialist and math specialist gave her



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some information at the very end of the year with what those results look like. Will be able to give you some percentages around where we've landed and will do MCAS. As soon as she gets that information, will absolutely do it. Sometime in the Fall when MCAS comes in.

Chairman MacLellan along with Barbara Cerwonka, Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Scollins states on how important these meetings are to facilitate a healthy discourse on this as it is to inform and educate about the process. A really complex area of education. Chairman MacLellan states how important that we have a meeting that really focuses on the entirety of our Student Services Department was because that it's as important.

Ms. Frasier comments, thank you Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Scollins and Ms. Cerwonka and a special thanks to the School Committee for this platform. This is an important discussion and looks forward to seeing some changes discussed implemented particularly at the elementary school level.

Abigail Sullivan states no need to read this aloud but thank you. This is a big deal to a lot of people in the School Committee and Cohasset Public School administrators, your time is appreciated. Understands the concerns of the community and working to fine tune what happens in the Cohasset Public Schools. Excited for everything that was outlined and the plans for improvement. *Yes, Craig, let's be on the crest of the wave.*

Policy Sub Committee Recommended Policy Revisions - Policy Sub-Committee would like the mask requirement to be added to the category of public health to create longevity in our policy. Committee members comment and discuss.

Non-Discrimination Clause - Committee members comment and discuss. On the updates presented by the subcommittee.

Motion to approve The Non-Discrimination policy made by Lance Dial, seconded by Paul Kearney. Roll call vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

School Facilities Committee -

Six of Nine members have been approved to select board. Thank you, Keri Thompson.

Select board appointed: Alethea Harney, Jason Earls and Marty Mehn. Town monitor nominations will be forthcoming in the near future.

Reports from Sub-Committee and Liaisons (Policy & Standards, Budget Finance, Special Ed, PAC, Legislative Liaison - Safe Harbor Event and coalitions with Hingham underage drinking campaign is coming up soon.

Lance Dial attended a Finance Meeting on July 29, 2021. Accomplished with projects on maintaining our schools. Lance Dial will address in next forum.

Facilities/Capital Projects/Technology/AEC, Collective Bargaining, Security, Superintendent Evaluation - Paul Kearney would like to do a walk through again. Wants to reiterate to keep things going, things to go forward, we agreed to be proactive. Lydia St. Onge asks to make sure latches are workable in school's restrooms. Dr. Sullivan ensures to School Committee Members that our custodians are making sure our facilities are safe.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chairman 48 hours in advance of meeting - None



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Courtney Ness, 210 Lamberts Lane - the word requirement is concerning, versus recommendation.

Chairman MacLellan answers they are requirements and one is where there would be recommendations and if there are requirements, then the requirements. If they are recommendations, then this document has changed as we're discussing, we would give us discretion to address them but maybe that's not what you're talking about.

Ashley Colleary comments currently DESE is not mandating us to have masks in schools. They are leaving it up to School Committee to decide whether they'll be mandating masks for any kids in their district. So that would be recommendation versus requirement?

Courtney Ness follows up with comment. Is this committee deciding? Would include language on how you are making that decision as a committee. Our local virus virology is very different from the state.

Chairman MacLellan states the term virus virology relates to infection rates. Don't think that would be, that would be too specific. Would try to contemplate too many variable situations and so the discretion is, it's in our discretion and you elect your School Committee, and hope that they're going to make reasonable and informed decisions in the manner that we're going to address the mask requirement next at our special meeting.

Ms. Cunningham comments is there still an application for a waiver process even if mandated as Mr. Dial noted if we are required to follow that disregards that process. *Ashley Colleary disagrees.*

Approval of Minutes - Minutes from 12/16/2020 have been shared with the committee.

Motion to approve minutes from 12/16/2020 School Committee Meeting made by Ashley Colleary, seconded by Lydia St. Onge. Roll call vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

Motion to adjourn meeting made by Lydia St. Onge, seconded by Ashley Colleary. Roll call vote: Ashley Colleary-Aye, Lance Dial-Aye, Paul Kearney-Aye, Lydia St. Onge-Aye, Craig MacLellan-Aye.

The meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Documents used virtually at the meeting:

Volleyball Gift Raised/Funded by Laura Soderberg, presented to Steve Rotondi, Athletic Director

Hiring Update for SCM - Dashboard - Superintendent

Student Services Overview - Dashboard - Barbara Cerwonka

File- EBCFA Policy

Non-Discrimination Clause