

Cohasset Public Schools
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025
Empower Students to Improve Communities

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE
(the “Committee”)**

DATED FEBRUARY 28 2024

Location:

METCO Headquarters
11 Roxbury Street
Roxbury, MA 0211

Streamed live on:

- Cohasset 143TV
- Zoom
- Cohasset Live Streaming Facebook
(watch / listen only)

Committee Members In Attendance:

Lance Dial, Chair
Craig MacLellan, Vice Chair
Jennifer Lesky, Member
Paul Kearney, Member

Others In Attendance:

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Ms. Susan Owen, Director of Finance and Operations
Ms. Wilmary Tejada, METCO Chief Student Services and
Enrollment Officer
Ms. Alicia Gittens-Carle, Cohasset Public Schools METCO
Director
Mr. John Mills, Principal, Cohasset Middle School

Call to Order

Mr. Dial called the Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee to order at 6:03PM and requested a roll call of Committee members present:

Mr. Kearney-Present; Ms. Lesky-Present; Mr. MacLellan-Present; Mr. Dial–Present.

Mr. Dial noted that Mr. Carr was absent due to an illness, but that a quorum was present so the Committee could proceed to its business. He also noted that this was a very special meeting of the Committee, as the Committee was meeting in the office of METCO, and would be receiving an update from METCO as well as a special spotlight on learning from the newly formed Black Student Union.

Public Comment:

Mr. Dial then requested any public comment; hearing none, he continued the meeting.

Invited Guests:

Mr. Dial turned the floor over to METCO Chief Student Services and Enrollment Officer, Ms. Tejada, who provided a brief refresher on the METCO program and showed the Committee the film METCO from 1966 through 2.0, which highlighted the beginnings and progression of METCO as an organization.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Dial then turned the floor over to Ms. Gittens-Carle and Student members of the Cohasset Black Student Union.

Spotlight on Learning: Cohasset Black Student Union

Ms. Gittens-Carle lead a question-and-answer session with members of the Cohasset Black Student Union regarding their formation and some of the areas where they are hoping to see change. The discussion ranged broadly, and the student highlighted certain key areas, specifically: increasing culturally responsive curriculum, promoting a diverse staff, establishing more inclusive environments for students, and increasing student voice throughout the district. The Committee praised their efforts and asked for their continued advocacy for these issues.

The Committee also encouraged opportunities for Black students in Cohasset Public Schools and looked towards METCO connections to create these opportunities. After further discussion with Ms. Gittens-Carle, the Committee thanked both Ms. Gittens-Carle and the participating students for their willingness to join the meeting, and noted their eagerness to hear more from them.

Ms. Gittens-Carle and the presenting students then left the meeting.

Cohasset Middle School Program of Studies (2024-2025):

Mr. Dial welcomed Mr. Mills to present certain changes to the Cohasset Middle School Program of Studies. Mr. Mills walked the Committee through certain proposed changes that were outlined in materials presented to Committee members in advance as Agenda Item C-1. Mr. Mills noted that there were few material changes to the program of study and walked the Committee through the changes discussed in the provided materials.

In response to questions from the Committee, Mr. Mills offered clarifications regarding the Content Literacy changes, noting that the new course would better prepare incoming students for success in middle school.

After a brief discussion amongst the Committee and Mr. Mills, Mr. Dial noted that these changes would be required to be approved by the Committee and requested a motion to approve the program of studies with changes as presented.

Upon a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

RESOLVED, that the Cohasset Middle School Program of Studies was approved in the form presented to the Committee

With all members present voting for the resolution.

Mr. Dial directed Dr. Sullivan and Mr. Mills to implement the changes and thanked them for their presentation, consideration and work relating to the Program of Studies.

School Updates:

School News

Mr. Dial then recognized Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Scollins for general school updates. Drs. Sullivan and Scollins provided a presentation regarding sports and opportunities for family engagement, including the METCO Persuasive Communications Series. Dr. Scollins also updated on the recent Credit for Life fair, the recently released District Report Card, and the learning walk which took place at Osgood school.

2024-2025 District Calendar Preliminary Discussion

Mr. Dial then recognized Dr. Sullivan to discuss the preliminary calendar as included in the Committee materials. Dr. Sullivan led a discussion relating to the calendar, and noted that the Town of Cohasset had requested assistance in connection with voting, as the Cohasset Town Hall had become unavailable. Dr. Sullivan also noted that the Cohasset Teachers Association had received the same draft but had not yet provided feedback. After a discussion, the Committee noted that the only possible dates where the schools could accommodate voting without disrupting school operations would be in November, which would require moving a professional development day. Mr. Dial requested Dr. Sullivan to seek community feedback on that idea, as that could impact family planning.

In addition, Dr. Sullivan presented data regarding staff and student attendance on Good Friday of last year was presented. Mr. Kearney noted higher than usual absence rates, and a brief discussion ensued.

After the discussion, Mr. Dial thanked Dr. Sullivan for the presentation, including the presentation of attendance data and noted for the Committee that the calendar would be on the agenda for formal approval at the next Committee meeting.

Teaching and Learning:

Mr. Dial recognized Dr. Scollins for a presentation regarding Academic Initiatives and Updates; Dr. Scollins noted that the material items were previously covered in the School News presentation. Mr. Dial requested comments/questions from the Committee; hearing none, he moved to the next agenda item.

Budget, Resources, and Governance:

Mr. Dial recognized Mrs. Owen to lead a discussion regarding the budget.

Budget and Finance – Monthly Update

Mrs. Owen directed the Committee to the FY24 Financial Report for January that was included in the Committee materials. Mrs. Owen walked the Committee through a review of that report, highlighting the continued increase in special education expenses, noting the deficit for this school year had increased from \$544,423 to \$528,246. Otherwise, Ms. Owen noted that the budget was proceeding according to plan.

Budget and Finance – FY25 Budget Discussion

Mrs. Owen then provided the Committee with an update on the budget planning process for the upcoming fiscal year. Mrs. Owen presented a draft budget, and she and Dr. Sullivan noted that all of the proposed increases had been withdrawn. She further noted that, in discussions with Cohasset town staff, the budget

allocation to the schools was unlikely to meet this revised request, so the administration was continuing to work through other funding sources and potential solutions to reduce the requested increase.

After discussion and hearing no further questions or comments from the Committee, Mr. Dial directed Mrs. Owen to proceed to the next item on her agenda.

Transfer of Funds from Special Education Stabilization Fund

Mrs. Owen reminded the Committee of the special education budget deficit for the current fiscal year, and then provided a refresher presentation on the special education stabilization fund, directing the Committee to the Town of Cohasset Reserve Policy for the Special Education Stabilization Funds, included in the Committee packet labeled F-3. Mrs. Owen noted that, given the current deficit, it was unlikely that the schools would have resources to meet expenses and recommended that the Committee approve a transfer of funds from the Special Education Stabilization Fund to offset the special education expenses. Mrs. Owen noted that the expenses the schools are incurring are appropriate expenses for the fund. Mrs. Owen's recommendation was to approve the transfer of \$200,000 from the fund,

In response to a question from the Committee, Mrs. Owen noted that the schools did transfer money from the fund in the prior fiscal year and further noted that special education expenses continue to increase. The Committee noted that the policy limits withdrawals from the fund to \$200,000 in any one year and to \$300,000 in any two consecutive years.

A discussion ensued, and after discussion, Mr. Dial called for a motion to approve the transfer of up to \$200,000 from the fund, provided the withdrawal was in compliance with town policy. After a motion duly made and seconded, it was

RESOLVED that the Cohasset Public Schools may request a transfer from the Special Education Reserve Fund in an amount allowed under the Town of Cohasset Reserve Policy, up to \$200,000.

The motion carried by unanimous vote of members participating.

Mr. Dial directed Mrs. Owen and Dr. Sullivan to implement the motion, and requested, on behalf of the Committee, that the administration ensure that the fund is replenished appropriately moving forward.

Food Service

Mr. Dial then recognized Mrs. Owen to lead a discussion concerning food service within the district. Mrs. Owen indicated that Mr. Cordon, the recently hired Director of Food Service, has "hit the ground running" and is focusing on improving food quality and service at all buildings. She mentioned an upcoming food service subcommittee meeting at Deer Hill. Mrs. Owen indicated that Mr. Cordon was utilizing the food service revolving account to make many of these needed improvements.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Dial moved on to further business.

Community Relations / Communications:

Mr. Dial requested reports from Committee Sub-Committees and Liaisons. Hearing none, Mr. Dial moved on to further business.

School Committee Governance:

Superintendent Search Committee Report:

Mr. Dial recognized Mr. MacLellan, the Chair of the Superintendent Search Committee to provide an update to the Committee on the process. Mr. Maclellan noted that the search process is underway and on schedule, and that there would be upcoming forums to elicit staff and community input.

Topics not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair:

Mr. Dial noted that there was an item that he had not anticipated in time for inclusion on the posted agenda. Mr. Dial reminded the Committee that the administration had expressed interest in participating the accelerated repair program offered by the Massachusetts School Building Authority, and that due to the scheduling requirements with respect to application submissions as well as the timing required to obtain Town government approvals, it was not expected until 24 hours prior that the Committee would need to vote on the participation.

Mr. Dial and Dr. Sullivan provided an overview of the needs, which relate to the replacement of the roof of the Joseph Osgood School. After discussion, and a motion duly made by Vice Chair MacLellan and seconded by Mr. Kearney, it was:

RESOLVED that having convened in an open meeting on February 28, 2024, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of the Town of Cohasset, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 1, 2024 for the Joseph Osgood School located at 210 Sohier Street, Cohasset MA which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future; replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Cohasset to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

The motion carried unanimously by members present.

Mr. Dial directed Dr. Sullivan to submit the application, pending any additional approvals and executions necessary.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Dial noted that there were no minutes for which approval was requested.

Executive session

Mr. Dial noted that there was no need to move into executive session.

Adjourn

The business before the Committee complete and, with no further comments or questions from the Committee members, Mr. Dial requested a motion to adjourn. After a motion duly made by Mr. MacLellan and Mr. Kearney, it was

RESOVLED that the Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee would adjourn.

The motion carried unanimously by members present, and the meeting adjourned at 8:13PM.

List of documents used at meeting

Cohasset Middle School Program of Studies for 2024-2025	C-1
2024-2025 District Calendar Preliminary Discussion	D-1
Monthly Budget Update	F-1
FY25 Budget Discussion	F-2
Transfer of Funds from Special Education Stabilization Fund	F-3