

# *Cohasset Public Schools*

143 Pond Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

*Empower Students to Improve Communities*

## **REGULAR MEETING OF THE COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

### **School Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

6:00 PM

Learning Commons

Cohasset Middle/High School

Virtual Meeting - Cohasset 143TV/Zoom/Facebook

### **In Attendance:**

Lance Dial, Chair

Paul Kearney

Jennifer Lesky

### **Also, In Attendance:**

Nathan Askjaer, CHS - SSAC Liaison

Ms. Sarah Anthony, CHS Teacher - Commercial Design and Students, Annabelle Martin, and Libby Schiffmann

Keith Grasmann, CHS Foreign Language Teacher

Chris Luvisi, CHS – Model UN Conference

Michael Welch, CHS – Model UN Conference

Sue Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

All school committee meetings are recorded.

## **AGENDA**

**Call to Order** – Chairman Dial welcomes everyone to the Wednesday, November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee at 6:02 PM. The Chair was informed that Mr. Carr is, or maybe attending virtually. Vice Chair, MacLellan is absent. **Roll Call**: Mr. Kearney-Present; Ms. Lesky-Present; Chairman Dial-Present. With 3 of the 5 members who are present the school committee has a quorum so they can conduct some school committee business.

**Opening Remarks** – Chairman Dial states this should be relatively widespread news around the Town. The Town held a meeting Monday evening, November 13, 2023 and there were two (2) specific school warrant articles. The first one was a \$1.5 million dollar Stabilization Fund up for discussion at the Town meeting. The second was a \$400,000 movement and authorization of a free fund for a feasibility study. Thanks to the support of the Town, both of these articles passed, which is fantastic news! For those in the audience and those who are watching at home, the story is not yet done! There's a ballot they need to vote on this coming Saturday, November 18, 2023 and the Chair asks everyone to please, please, please, please go to the polls to show your support for these measures, or not. Mr. Dial is not campaigning, just telling folks that they should go vote, it's an important step in the process so we can move our Town forward. We have lots of plans and we'll be able to hit some of the maintenance issues that we are currently having to defer on in our schools with these new funds, and we're all very excited about that.

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**Public Comment** – Adam Norman (no address given) chimes in to remind everyone the school committee funded more hydration stations.

Ms. Owen replies Facilities is still waiting for a quote, the company has reached out to put additional hydration stations in.

The Chair states the reason we ask for addresses along with your full name for Public Comment is to be recognized by the school committee, thank you Mr. Norman for your comment.

**Invited Guests**

- Superintendent Student Advisory Council (SSAC) Liaison Report (Nathan Askjaer)

Nathan is a junior who attends Cohasset High School, and this is his first time as a Liaison on Dr. Sullivan's Superintendent Student Advisory Council. Nathan also plays on the Cohasset Boys Soccer team and does Track in the Spring. Nathan unfortunately says the Boys Soccer team season just ended. We have a bunch of school sports teams here in Cohasset such as volleyball and it was their first season for the Girl's Varsity Volleyball team which is huge, and they were able to make it to the playoffs and even making it to the round of 16. Nathan talked with some of the girls on the Volleyball team and they're over the moon about that! Ms. Spencer and one of the teachers, Ms. Alvarez, who also coaches Volleyball this year, were super excited about this season, specially making it to the playoffs!

It was a good season for Field Hockey that also made it to the round of 16 which any year that we're able to do that especially to make it to the playoffs is a good year! The Boys Soccer team had an amazing season, they were the one seed after the regular season across Division 4 in the entire state. They had high hopes, but unfortunately, they were knocked out in the elite 8. On that same night with the Boys Soccer lost, the Girls Soccer unfortunately, lost as well too. Nathan says that was a terrible night for him and for both teams, it was just a bad day to be a Skipper, but we moved on.

Our high school Football team is the only Fall sports team still in, they play Amesbury this Friday in the semi-finals and Nathan was told by someone that we're the only team in the state across all Divisions to have all three (3) of those teams have home advantage. Cross-Country had their D3 state meet and Maggie Brizzi, and Sarah Scott qualified for the State Championship scheduled for next week. Boys Golf had an awesome season, it was a great experience and they all had so much fun.

Our first quarter just wrapped up and our grades are coming through and closing out., and everyone seems to be in the swing of things. One of the things Nathan observed that was talked about at the SSAC meeting was a general consensus among everybody that transitions from summer vacation to school this year felt a lot smoother than prior years. For Nathan personally this was the smoothest transition he's ever had yet. All of Nathan's teachers have been great so far with understanding and caring about the way he and his peers feel, which is always a good thing.

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Nathan also reports CHS has a lot of new clubs. This year Nathan along with some of his buddies founded the Pickleball Club which by far is the biggest, if not, one of the biggest clubs in the school, so far, it's been awesome, and they have so many members who've joined.

On the Superintendent Student Advisory Council Nathan along with other Liaisons on the SSAC have been working with the new Chef for Food Services who is coming in. He's from Guatemala and once owned a restaurant here in Massachusetts. Nathan and other Liaisons on the SSAC met last Friday and the Chef asked us what we wanted to see change, what we wanted him to do when he comes in and takes the job. He wants to know what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities that may endanger our prior system that we have in the cafeteria. What the cafeteria does well with strengths because he wants to build off of that, but also wants to be careful that he's not coming from something that we're used to, maybe our whole lives and completely changing it up, we don't want people to stray away from eating cafeteria food.

Mr. Kearney just has a couple of comments. First, great, great job Nathan! Our Food Services will be great, we're all looking forward to that. It's nice to see some of the clubs elevate because there's a lot less activity with our winter sports. For Fall Sports, there's a lot of kids who play football, basketball, soccer, field hockey, and so on. However, with Winter sports it's just basketball and less kids playing. Mr. Kearney asks Nathan if he sees kids participating in these clubs more?

Nathan says he's also a member of the student council and we meet weekly and we're working on some winter clubs. We have a lot of fun annual events such as a pickleball tournament, a ping-pong tournament, school dodgeball that's towards the end of the winter. From the first two years of high school Nathan's had, these events have always been awesome, it fills in the winter weeks well and gives people something to look forward to.

Nathan recently talked with Mr. Kearney about the new fitness center that Nathan has already used several times. It's super nice and to have gym classes there, he likes it a lot. When Nathan was in middle school, the fitness center wasn't really utilized, but when he goes there now after school there's always a good group of middle schoolers and there's always an adult supervisor which is good and very important for everybody.

Ms. Lesky loves the fact that there are more clubs and is wondering how those new clubs come about! Is that from student's interests, does it require faculty interest to supervise those clubs.

Dr. Sullivan notes we have stipends that were negotiated with the CTA that started running these clubs from student interest, and now we have so many new clubs coming in.

Nathan says he took over the Chess Club with a friend and some of his other friends along with him founded the pickleball club.

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The process is a little different for those clubs because the Chess Club had already been an established club and the student who ran that last year graduated, so Nathan inherited it. They work with Mr. McCabe, who is a teacher that sponsors that club, and have meetings with Mr. McCabe every Thursday. We found that the most successful thing is having a pretty loose group club join our Google classroom where students can come by or play when they want. We were invited as a whole to come to a tournament and compete. At some point we'll try to implement a field trip and have some sort of competition which would be fun.

Nathan says if people want to sign up for pickleball all they have to do is email Ms. Noyce and fill out a club form that she'll give you. Students talk to adults for them to be their supervisor to sponsor the club and once they've applied, it's all lined up.

Ms. Lesky asks Nathan if he could share some of the feedback that the Advisory Council gave to our new head of Food Services. She's wondering what were the two things that the new Chef really loves about what the Food Services does right now and the things that he is looking to add, whether it be actual things students want to eat, or is it the size of portions.

Nathan says things in the cafeteria are going well right now, and he liked the fact a new snack line was added that diverged the flow of traffic. There's also a snack room that's separate that splits the traffic a little bit, it's made the process a little quicker. Another thing that we elected that Nathan liked was there is no back-to-back days serving the same thing. Food Services recently has done a really good job of mixing it up, there's good variety with some things needing a little work, but the new chef will do a great job serving fresh foods and fresh salads. We also talked about portion sizes which is a hard balance of serving people fast when the line is moving and serving equally which is hard. Nathan says the new chef will be introduced to members of the school committee at the next school committee meeting.

We're looking at things where all student athletes and sports being Cohasset's thing and for anyone who's in a club, with a teacher, or has practice for a game they can get a snack at school instead of having to pack a snack for after school activities.

Chairman Dial says that was a great first report and was very much appreciated. There seems to be opportunities for improvement that is coming from the student body to the new Food Services Chef. The Chair asks Nathan if we're where we want to be, or could we be doing better on anything that Nathan and his peers would like the school committee to address that can maybe help.

Nathan responds that the first quarter has been going really smoothly, but if he was asked this question in quarter 2, or after the winter break, he'd probably have something bigger to come up with, but there aren't a lot of glaring concerns right now.

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## **Invited Guests**

- Cohasset High School Spotlight on Learning: Commercial Design and Student Lobby Spaces (Ms. Sarah Anthony, Annabelle Martin, and Libby Schiffmann)

Ms. Sarah Anthony thanks the school committee for having her along with Annabelle Martin and Libby Schiffmann this evening, Ms. Anthony says it is a privilege to be here just as it is a big privilege to be a teacher here in Cohasset, especially with her amazing students Annabelle Martin, and Libby Schiffmann who are both juniors at CHS and both students who were in Ms. Anthony's Commercial Design Class last year. Annabelle and Libby will talk about the amazing work they both did around the interior design of the student spaces in Cohasset High School.

Annabelle and Libby want to thank Ms. Sarah Anthony and Principal Scott for listening to their presentation this year in the Commercial Design course that they took, and they were both lucky enough to be part of this course and to be given the opportunity of designing the lower lobby of CHS because it hasn't been done before and seeing the lower level before they definitely saw there was some room for improvement. Some of the things both Annabelle and Libby did in the Commercial Design course was to create and build logos, focus on creating architectural designs which were the aspects that were brought into a final project of redesigning the lower lobby for not only their own benefit, but a school wide benefit. The main goal was to create a proposal for a fun and functional space for everyone to enjoy. Students can come there after school, whether they're eating, or just hanging out there, or doing homework. They were given a budget that they had to follow, come up with a creative name, a logo design, and create 3D renderings of this space. Basically, they were given free will to do whatever they wanted to do with this space.

There were groups of five students that were split up with projects so that everyone was given something they could work on using their own strengths so that we could build off of and work together. They used software to create furniture for the spaces and had to choose colors for the atmosphere, and they chose blue. The final outcome was placing couches as seating areas for people to hang out and collaborate in the upper and lower lobbies in CHS.

Mr. Kearney was blown away when he walked into CHS. He could not believe how nice they incorporated the colors and furniture there, it was actually comfortable to sit in there too! Great job! Looking forward to seeing more designed spaces.

Ms. Lesky has been smiling from start to finish the whole time of Annabelle and Libby's presentation. This was such an amazing project they were able to complete with their group, but also an amazing assignment. To ask students to work with some real-life parameters such as a budget, such as the given space that we have, such as a huge population of students moving around and using the furniture in this space. Ms. Lesky loved the fact they were able to make their ideas fit into some of those parameters that was really a good challenge, and they did beautifully. A wonderful assignment, kudos to Ms. Anthony too for giving children a real challenge that gives a real-life application to allow these student spaces. Students will take care of the spaces they have, a stake in what they've helped to create that reflects their needs and things they like.

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Dr. Sullivan says this was a very high-level assignment in terms of the skills it takes to actually bring very much to creation on the home scale, it's really nice to see that. Also, kudos to Principal Scott and the team for allowing this, it shows that they were very invested in the students' leading this.

Principal Scott is super proud of what these students did. Last March, Principal Scott heard they had some money to redo some spaces and Principal Scott knew about this project and the pitching the students were trying to do. We gave our student work to WB Mason who gave it to their architects and said our interior designers did exactly what we were looking for, it was perfect, it came in, and it's fantastic!

The Chair says he couldn't count the number of compliments he heard people say when they came into Cohasset High School. The entire town appreciates their efforts, so thank you very much for that and from an administrative perspective, this is exactly what we should be doing. All the Chair can say is "more," this is taking skills and turning them into reality, and that's really real learning. There's a friend of Mr. Dial who says, "life is lived, and not learned," and the more we can have our students live these things, live budget constraints, live space constraints, live seeing a project in fruition and all the speed bumps that happen, the better that education is going to be. One of the things that we're investing in is furniture and if there's an opportunity to reprise this for other areas in this school or other schools in the district, that's an opportunity to see if we can capture that.

## **Invited Guests**

- Cohasset High School Model UN Conference (Mr. Chris Luvisi and Mr. Michael Welch) C-1

Mr. Luvisi says so many kids expressed interest this year, too many students for one (1) Model UN Conference, so they're doing two (2) Model UN Conference's. One of the Model UN Conferences will be for grade 10 students and the other Model UN Conference will be for grade 11 students. All returning students will go to the New York Model UN Conference, mostly juniors and seniors, a large number of students are returning students. The Model UN Conference is a simulation program where the students roleplay actions as diplomats from different countries which gives them an opportunity for different perspectives in the world where they're goal is to work on issues diplomatically and follow the rules of diplomacy, obviously acting like respectful people who disagree at the same time, this is very suitable in today's world.

Mr. Kearney says his kids loved this experience, and what they got out of it was incredible stuff. This is fantastic that Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch made this happen, he's excited for the kids that will be going.

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Ms. Lesky thanks both Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch for traveling with students and appreciates their willingness to do that. Ms. Lesky asks if these 2 Model UN Conferences are all 2-day events, or are they separate, going concurrently.

February 2-4, 2024 is the trip to the Boston University Model UN Conference. In years past, they've done the Harvard Model UN conference. The way the application process works they have a long wait list, and it was on the waiting one, and maybe not get in and have no conference. So, they moved to the Boston University Model UN Conference this year. This will be held in the same location at the Copley Marriott in Boston, and it's just different colleges and different universities on foreign policy that students run. This will be a Friday through Sunday UN Conference to be less disruptive for students to their schedules.

Mr. Welch says the other Model UN Conference will be held in New York at the Mid-Town Hilton and will be on March 13-16, 2024. All activities are held in the conference rooms at the Mid-Town Hilton where the students stay. It's a nice chance for the students to see New York. Mr. Welch says that last year the students were the best group they've ever had. They met with students from other places and other countries and really reached out to people that turned out to be a friendly experience for them all.

Mr. Luvisi explains the Model UN Conference in New York that distinguishes a bit on the final day, the students get to do the closing ceremony at the actual UN building. We get to go into the UN and students get to walk through all of it and see some of the history up on the walls, it's a really cool experience. The students get to cast their votes from the actual chairs in the real UN, that turns out to be a fun experience for all of them.

Chairman Dial totally supports this trip, it's exactly what he talked about earlier "life being lived and not learned." One thing the chair didn't see was the cost.

This trip is announced to students in school, and the students communicate this with their parents at home. Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch are happy to send emails out if they're not communicating this at home. They need to get in an early deposit to secure their spot, and at this point they don't know the actual cost yet because some students will articulate an interest and then they don't follow through. The cost for the Boston University Model UN Conference is \$300. Once they know how many rooms are needed, the second cost is only \$50. The total cost per student is \$350 that covers transportation, 2-nights hotel, conference, and delegate fees, this doesn't cover any food expenses. The kids are more than happy to go to Chipotle or Chick-fil-A, some kids prefer to go to Star Market that's close by to get their bananas and granolas, etc....

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Mr. Welch says the other trip basically runs the same way. They have to pay a fee for the conference itself, this year it was \$5,000, and we have 40 students going. They break the cost, divide that by 40 and in addition to that they have rooms, which is being worked on right now. In past years, the cost per student has been \$600-\$700, that includes the conference fees themselves, and hotel room. In addition to the New York trip the students will take a charter bus, a nicer bus so the kids are comfortable.

The Chair asks about the plans with supervision to student ratio. It would make Mr. Dial feel better knowing another supervisor went along and kindly ask Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch if they can find an extra supervisor for the New York trip, that would be great.

Mr. Luvisi, Mr. Welch, and Ms. Hanson, another Social Studies teacher, will be supervising the students for the New York Model UN Conference. Ms. Hanson came last year and she's familiar with this program as well. For the Model UN Conference in New York trip there will be two (2) teachers for twenty (20) students. The New York trip is very strict about a lot of things, one particular is the curfew. The people who run the Model UN Conference have their people in hotel hallways to make sure the kids aren't roaming in the hallways. What makes Mr. Welch feel secure about this trip is the people who run the Model UN Conference in New York also have an Advisor that has a zero-tolerance policy to drugs and alcohol where if any kid is caught, the entire group is kicked out of the conference. For the Model UN Conference at Boston University, they'll have an extra chaperone if Mr. Welch's wife joins them.

**Motion made by Mr. Kearney to approve the Model UN Conference in Boston as presented by Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch, seconded by Ms. Lesky.**

**Aye – All**

**Motion made by Ms. Lesky to approve the Model UN Conference in New York scheduled for March 13-16, 2024 as presented by Mr. Luvisi and Mr. Welch, seconded by Mr. Kearney.**

**Aye – All**

**Invited Guests**

- Cohasset High School French Trip to Guadeloupe (Mr. Keith Grasmann) C-2

Mr. Grasmann is a new French teacher and a tremendous addition to our staff at CHS. In past years he has led 12 trips to Italy, Quebec, and France. He traveled with students around the West Coast, Alaska, and Hawaii for a month. The purpose of the Guadeloupe trip is to immerse Cohasset French students in a French speaking environment where they will have all experiences and interactions using the French language.



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C-2

Another goal of this trip is the learning and integration of social justice, and the 17 UN Objectives for Sustainable Growth and Development are really the forefront of this trip for a more educational trip where they travel, not tour.

Mr. Grasmann is here proposing two (2) dates in April, 2024 for the Guadeloupe trip because there's such a vast difference in the cost. Mr. Grasmann would like to leave the dates and cost decision up to the school committee.

Cost based on 1<sup>st</sup> date: 4/13/2024 – 4/20/2024:

\$2,506.90 En-Route Carib Education Land Operator

\$2,294.00 Harbor Travel Flight (estimate)

\$ 295.20 Allianz Insurance (estimate)

\$5,095.11 TOTAL

Cost based on 2<sup>nd</sup> date: 4/17/2024 – 4/24/2024:

\$2,506.90 En-Route Carib Education Land Operator

\$ 646.40 Harbor Travel Flight (estimate)

\$ 181.20 Allianz Insurance (estimate)

\$3,233.50 TOTAL

The lower cost one would mean they would leave halfway through Spring break and arrive on the Wednesday after Spring break. Mr. Grasmann says he doesn't take this likely, because missing school means that it really needs to be important. The student to teacher ratio would be 1.5 teachers with 10 students, and 1.6 teachers with 12 students and Cathy Sanchez would be another chaperone in which she has agreed to do so far. We'll be staying in our own Villa, which means no worries about interactions from other students in other groups. They'll have their own minibus for the duration of the trip. Even though this trip is to the Caribbean, this is no way of a beach vacation. Students will be visiting banana plantations to learn about the problems of citicoline, a pesticide that was outlawed in France but still allowed in Guadeloupe. Students will learn about colonialism, and the rise, and the escape from slavery.

Mr. Kearney thanks Mr. Grasmann for his great presentation. Mr. Kearney asks if students will need a passport or a visa for this trip.

Ms. Lesky thanks Mr. Grasmann for being willing to travel with children. This trip is fabulous for students and a wonderful gift he's potentially giving them. Ms. Lesky has two (2) quick questions to ask. Is this trip open to all French students in CHS, or just the senior class. Ms. Lesky's second question is there any sort of mechanism in place for any student who would love to go, but it's not financially feasible. This is a travel trip with an understanding of the geopolitical world that we live in, and she appreciates that.

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C-2

They already have 10 students who are interested, some sophomores, juniors, and seniors. They just have to see who will actually put down a deposit and many families already have. They haven't heard questions from families about the cost yet.

Dr. Sullivan says they're trying to flip that to provide a wide diverse experience for our students. We're trying to allow trips for every student that may not do any of these trips, but maybe there's something with one of these trips that appeals to a particular student. Obviously, this trip is designed for French students. Another service trip we have to Guatemala might be designed to really tie into another student and their interest. The class trip which we debated at the last school committee meeting regarding the trip to Puerto Rico is a little different in his estimation than these other trips. Dr. Sullivan says not to sidestep the Chair's question, he can absolutely gather information on the number of students who are participating in this wide variety of school trips.

Since this is Mr. Grasmann's first year here at CHS, he thought of something like a crepe sale. But he's learned from Halloween that they're not supposed to be selling those things during a school day, so he'll be relying on Senor Karina Nelson for advice and assistance to offset the costs specifically for kids who would love to go who may not be able to financially afford this. So far, ten (10) students signed up, mostly sophomores, juniors, and seniors that show interest. Cathy Sanchez, Keith Grasmann, and the owner of the company will actually be accompanying the students.

The Chair took Mr. Grasmann's initiative especially for foreign languages, there's really nothing better than being in a community where that's the primary language. The Chair can say that from his experience because he only knows English! We have a lot of trip opportunities for our high school and our middle school. Chairman Dial says we have a lot of trip opportunities for the high school and our middle school, and he asks if Dr. Sullivan could gather all the aggregate asks of families if they've already gone on these trips. The chair feels parents whose students would like to go on the Guadeloupe trip and want to go to the UN Conference in New York too. Also, the Chair would be interested if there was any initial feedback from students or parents as to their interest levels, and could he tell us where that is.

Mr. Kearney reminds everyone we worked on a donation page on the school's website, maybe this could help the kids with some of the trip cost.

Dr. Sullivan says he likes the idea of our students having the ability to fundraise on their own and for us to provide some pathways for them to work their way to a lesser cost experience. Some kind of offsetting that can really make a difference.

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C-2

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\$3,233.50 TOTAL

**Motion made by Mr. Kearney to approve the Guadeloupe trip as presented on the dates as selected by the administration in their determination for the best interest of the students, seconded by Ms. Lesky.**

**Aye - All**

**School Updates**

• **School News (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

Deer Hill school had a lovely Veteran's Day ceremony on Monday. We had five (5) essay award winners that read a lovely rendering of the National Anthem that was read by one of our ESPs who was fantastic. We had Mr. Phil Mahoney, who is the Town's Veterans Officer who is really an asset to the Town. Dr. Sullivan can't count the numerous amounts of speeches he has made for our students. Mr. Mahoney was our honored speaker last year who spoke at our National Honor Society banquet, and he plays a huge role in the Town's Veteran's Day ceremonies. Dr. Sullivan wanted to thank Mr. Mahoney publicly for doing that. We're all looking forward to a short week next week with Thanksgiving and some family time.

• **Discussion regarding Halloween Costumes / Celebrations (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

Chairman Dial states this discussion came up at our last school committee meeting and was the subject of some community discussion. The question at issue is about Halloween costumes, the process for the rationale specifically around the elementary school level. The concerns the Chair heard that were raised from parents is they would like their child to wear Halloween costumes in school a fun thing for kids to do that were unclear and felt that there was some sort of inequity when they saw either faculty, staff, or students in the upper grades wearing costumes. Parents were under the impression that their students in elementary schools could not wear costumes and the Chair would like to address this here tonight.

Superintendent Patrick Sullivan says first of all he would like to thank those families who reached out, it's open communication that's really important in these matters.

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**School Updates**

• **Discussion regarding Halloween Costumes / Celebrations (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

To clarify there is no district edict about Halloween one way or another and it should be clear that it's really about the celebration of our students and allowing them a spirit day at a time when as a country, we dress up on that day! There's no rule that says students can't wear costumes. It's very important to Dr. Sullivan there are school spirit days for us, it's very important as part of the culture we allow kids to express themselves and allow kids to have fun throughout the year for various reasons. We do have spirit days at every level, and we do have dress up days at every grade level. Often, we do 100 days at the Osgood School where they dress up for that. We have a Readathon where students dress up as their favorite character, with some light academic activities around those. The high school and middle school tend to have more spirit days around Thanksgiving for our homecoming.

Dr. Sullivan really leaves it up to the principals to determine what is a distracting situation and what isn't for their own students, that's really all it is! We did have Fall activities throughout both our elementary schools and at the middle school they decorated doors which was shared in Dr. Sullivan's newsletter. Nothing prohibits a student from being able to wear a costume necessarily. Although it might not be something that is celebrated as a spirit day by a particular building.

There's been some talk around inclusivity, we are always trying to be inclusive, but quite frankly in this particular situation if it was a situation where it was in some way offensive to anyone, we would present an alternative activity that really isn't a prohibited factor in Dr. Sullivan's estimation. There's some growth element here that in giving people autonomy to make choices. We want to make sure that we're delivering the same message about what we're doing, but no one to be on the record is prohibited from wearing a costume. It's certainly a fun day but we do have to be conscious of what's happening in the school buildings. Sometimes these costumes can cause anxiety and then sometimes a student who has a lovely costume, and another student might not have the wherewithal, or the means to have that costume as such. At the younger grade levels that can be a drain, and Dr. Sullivan can understand that having been a middle school principal we did happen to have a dress up day when he was principal of that school. It's not foreign to have this kind of debate back and forth, but Dr. Sullivan just wants to make it clear that there's no policy and to remember, the only one that sets the policy is the school committee. There's no policy prohibiting costumes! There is a policy that does indicate about dressing that won't cause a distraction.

We don't want students wearing masks or bringing in a simulated weapon or something to that degree because that could be a distracting factor. This particular situation fits a prohibitive based on that policy.

Mr. Kearney says that was a good explanation by Dr. Sullivan, he appreciates it being addressed.

*Cohasset Public Schools*  
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**School Updates**

**• Discussion regarding Halloween Costumes / Celebrations (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

Ms. Lesky says talking through the thinking behind it and actually the flexibility around the dress code because at a certain point it comes down to the dress code where sometimes that's relaxed for a spirit day and sometimes it's not. There are just certain things that students shouldn't wear.

Superintendent Patrick Sullivan says he agrees with the way we handle this as a district. The policy just talks about distraction from the academic environment.

Kristen Quinn from 219 Sawyer Street chimes in to thank the school committee for their time and everything they do for our students. Speaking for a larger audience, we receive very specific emails from teachers that costumes are not allowed. We find it confusing to tell our children, it's okay to dress up for events like 50's days, Diwali, 100 days for a holiday where 90% of our kids celebrate, and they can't do it! We are proposing we do something where there is an hour within the day where costumes are allowed on Halloween and a parade situation. We took a look at the surrounding towns where that is allowed.

Dr. Sullivan says he doesn't want to dictate that from his principals. Once again, it's based on their academic day and a day that they're doing it. Thank you, Ms. Quinn, for acknowledging that there are other days when we do dress up so it's not a matter of dressing and not dressing. We can be more communicative with our staff about what we're doing around Halloween and why we're doing it. In terms of a parade situation, Dr. Sullivan wouldn't want to dictate that from his level. Also, the PSO may have conversations about what they might add to that. Dr. Sullivan says he would stay firm to support any principal who didn't want to do a parade because of the disruption for that particular day.

The Chair supports Dr. Sullivan's comments and thinks that's fair. He would like to build on a little bit of what he's hearing from the community. It's the school committee's job to pass this on. There are fairly numerous groups of parents who would like to see some recognition and celebration of Halloween, especially in the lower grade levels. Given that it's not a school committee policy, and it's not the realm of the school committee to dictate what we celebrate and what we don't, certainly not to the level of whether we have a parade. Those parents should have their avenue directed toward their building principal to say they would appreciate some recognition of this holiday for their kids to create. Principals should have more open discussions with parents about this and about their choices for this, or any spirit day here, it's important.

Kristen Quinn from 219 Sawyer Street chimes in once more to say the parade allows an hour of time out of the school day, so costumes won't be distracting throughout the entire school day. The "Trunk or Treat" is great, but it does make it hard for our METCO students to participate. It would be helpful to understand the policy, and yes Dr. Sullivan, Spirit days are great, thank you.

# *Cohasset Public Schools*

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## **School Updates**

### **• Discussion regarding Halloween Costumes / Celebrations (Dr. Patrick Sullivan)**

We do have transportation available, but Dr. Sullivan does agree with what Ms. Quinn just stated. Once again, Dr. Sullivan says there is no policy. The policy is just about the dress code in general and it's a school committee policy.

## **Teaching and Learning**

### **• Academic Initiatives / Updates (Dr. Leslie Scollins)**

The Chair states Dr. Scollins is not here at this meeting for personal reasons. We had a great meeting at our last school committee meeting on MCAS and we're expecting some follow-ups on that.

Dr. Sullivan says it's been great seeing Mr. Roberts in action doing data dialogues with various groups around all sorts of data. That's such a nice thing to have here where we're really sitting down with teachers, showing them data, talking about what we see and really probing into what we can do to improve particular data points. That's happening all throughout the district and we're sort of hitting a stride in that.

## **Budget, Resources and Governance**

- Budget and Finance
  - Monthly Update (Ms. Susan Owen)
  - Capital (Ms. Susan Owen)
- Food Service
- Transportation

Mr. Kearney states to Chairman Dial he thought they'd have a quorum tonight, because Mr. Kearney needs to be at another meeting regarding some financials that has to be done. Mr. Kearney asks the Chair if we could table this for the next school committee meeting because there's so much information.

The Chair would like to table the Capital list, he was going to propose this to members of the school committee. The reason being, we did have the Town approve the Stabilization Fund and Chairman Dial would like members of the school committee think how we can incorporate that assuming it passes the ballot. The monthly update is in the school committee's materials and asks if Ms. Owen could have this abbreviated because we're about to lose our quorum.

Ms. Owen just wanted to address that last month we fell short on SPED tuitions with a deficit of **-\$502,000**. Now we're into the next month and that **-\$502,000** deficit is brought to **-\$473,000**. That's why it's fluid, it can change day to day, week to week, depending on students coming into the district, students going out of the district, students changing schools, students not attending schools, and students' transportation, so many factors go into the costs of the situation. Ms. Owen says it's not down by much, and next month it could be up again.

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**Budget, Resources and Governance**

- Budget and Finance (Ms. Susan Owen)

We do need to have conversations about it and stay on top of that throughout the year. We have a Capital walk-through on Tuesday that will give us a little bit more information. Other than that, we're watching our utilities, obviously Boston utilities are up, there up every year. We're right on target with 33% throughout the year.

**Motion made by Mr. Kearney to table the following two (2) items, the Capital presentation from Ms. Owen until the next school committee meeting and the Approval of Minutes, then for us to skip Food Service, Transportation, and School Committee Governance, Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair, which the Chair just did, Future Agenda Items and the Chair states There's No Reason to go into Executive Session, seconded by Ms. Lesky.**

**Aye – All**

**Budget, Resources and Governance**

- Budget and Finance
  - Monthly Update (Ms. Susan Owen)
  - Capital (Ms. Susan Owen)
- Food Service
- Transportation

**School Committee Governance**

- Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair
- Approval of Minutes\*\*
- Future Agenda Items
- Executive Session<sup>1</sup>:

**Motion by Mr. Kearney to adjourn the November 15, 2023 Regular Meeting of the Cohasset School Committee at 7:23 PM, seconded by Ms. Lesky.**

**Aye - All**

*Submitted by  
Kathy Bock  
November 21, 2023*