

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

Cohasset School Committee Meeting

School Committee Minutes

Wednesday, September 6, 2023

6:00 PM

Learning Commons

Cohasset Middle/High School

Virtual Meeting - Cohasset 143TV/Zoom/Facebook

In Attendance:

Ted Carr, Secretary

Paul Kearney

Jennifer Lesky

Craig MacLellan, Vice Chair

Also, In Attendance:

Adam Norman, Cohasset Recreation Committee

Jean Healey Dippold, Select Board Chair

Ellen Maher, Select Board Clerk

Barbara Cerwonka, Director of Special Education

Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

AGENDA

Call to Order: Vice Chairperson, Craig MacLellan welcomes everyone and called to order the Wednesday, September 6, 2023 meeting of the Cohasset school committee at 6:02 P.M. Chairman, Mr. Dial will not be able to be here, due to a personal engagement this evening. Vice Chair, Mr. MacLellan, will be filling in for Chairman Dial in his absence. The Vice Chair asks for all members of the Cohasset School Committee who are present to please indicate so in roll call.

Roll Call: Mr. Carr- Present; Mr. Kearney- Present; Ms. Lesky- Present; Mr. MacLellan- Present. Chairperson Mr. Dial- Absent.

Opening Remarks: This is the first school committee meeting since the start of school, and it has been a great start to the school year, and Vice Chair MacLellan would like to thank the leadership team and wonderful staff for making that possible for our students. This meeting is being held at the Learning Commons at Cohasset Middle High School and is virtual for folks who can attend via Zoom and Facebook. The Zoom feature allows live chats for comments and Facebook is watch and listen only.

Public Comment - None

Space Recreation Committee Hydration Stations: Adam Norman, Co-Chair for Cohasset Open Space Recreation Committee, is here to address the school committee on the need for additional hydration stations.

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Invited Guests - Additional Hydration Stations: For those who may not know, the Recreation Committee serves as an environmental initiative around the Town of Cohasset. The Recreation Committee sponsors cleanup for Earth Day every year in April and recently received grant funding for the Pollinator Meadow Garden outside of Wheelwright Park.

The Recreation Committee is also raising awareness to the Cohasset community about an invasive plant to species specified as the Black Swallowwort. The Recreation Committee is trying to get Cohasset citizens who own their property to help eradicate it.

Adam Norman is here as a private citizen and filing a petition to vote at a town meeting to add a bylaw that would ban the sale of single-use plastic water bottles. Mr. Norman reached out to Nick Berardi, Facilities Director at town hall and Mr. Norman was informed that the high school and middle school and Deer Hill actually do have sufficient hydration stations that were installed in recent years. The Osgood School could use two (2) more hydration stations along with the addition of the number of fields owned by the town, and used by students that could use outdoor hydration stations at the Alumni Field, Deer Hill, and potentially the Barnes Complex that is run by the CYSBA for the Cohasset High School softball team that use that field potentially. The Recreation Committee would like to partner with the CYSBA to add a hydration station there.

Mr. Norman has been meeting with the town and just met Chris Senor today to potentially have a municipal ban on the distribution of single-use plastic water bottles. The Recreation Committee would then install additional hydration stations in various buildings around town, whether it's the town hall, library, and a couple of other buildings potentially. Mr. Norman is hoping that this school committee will support the insulation of additional hydration stations so students can refill their reusable water bottles and not rely on single-use plastic bottles. The Recreation Committee is potentially looking into funding options to receive some grants and they are in the process of applying to them to advance this that would help offset cost and soliciting bids. Potentially partnering with Weir River Systems who supplies water to Hingham and some Cohasset residents.

Vice Chair MacLellan notes that one of our committee members, Paul Kearney, and champion of the installation of many hydration stations throughout the district property is taking notes when Mr. Norman mentioned there were some shortcomings at the Osgood School and he's sure Mr. Kearney will be right on top of that. In all seriousness, what we will do is keep in touch with Mr. Norman through one of our sub-committee meetings to explore more. Mr. MacLellan notes this matter will be overseen through one of our sub-committee meetings on this topic that has always been taken seriously in the past and does not see any opposition happening in connection with this. In the meantime, Mr. Norman can keep in touch with either Mr. MacLellan or Lance Dial who is the chairperson and they will provide updates as to the progress they'll make on this issue, it's just a matter of planning a meeting and talking about this.

Dr. Sullivan mentions this is a super idea and the hydration stations that we have are very heavily used. This is a good lesson for students in conservation and also the need for fresh water and he fully supports this from an administrative one.

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Invited Guests - Additional Hydration Stations: Mr. Kearney thought they were all set with the hydration stations at all the schools! He would also like to thank Mr. Norman because the outdoor fields were blocked off our radar and Mr. Kearney is very appreciative for Mr. Norman bringing this here to the school committee's attention.

Mr. Carr mentions there is a company here in Cohasset that founded a single-use carton and asks if this would help the ban of single-use plastic bottles in any way.

Adam Norman says it would help because the commercial ban would cause stores to seek alternative avenues, and anything is better than plastic. Mr. Norman prefers aluminum because it tends to get recycled and will still degrade in landfills in a short amount of time compared to plastic bottles that will take thousands of years to degrade.

Ms. Lesky is fully 100% behind this in terms of the trash and recycling flow at our fields, in particular where things sort of get blown away and blown out of trash cans. From Ms. Lesky's understanding if we had hydration stations and people brought their own multi-use bottles, we could avoid some of that additional sort of pollution going into the school areas.

Invited Guests - Select Board Representatives: Vice Chair MacLellan welcomes Ms. Jean Healey Dippold, Select Board Chair and welcomes back Ms. Ellen Maher who was former chairperson on this school committee who now serves as Clerk and sitting member of the Select Board. Both Ms. Dippold and Ms. Maher are here to address to this school committee some district relevant issues that are being actively considered by the Select Board who govern our town.

Ms. Dippold addresses that they have a very ambitious agenda this year in terms of their goals to really focus on ways to address their infrastructure needs which are relatively well known whether it's the schools, town hall, police, fire, roads, sidewalks, fields, courts. With respect to the schools, one of things that they have been considering for quite some time is a School Stabilization Fund. They began a long-term financial planning committee last year and after some back and forth, in terms of trying to get it up and going in which Mr. MacLellan and Mr. Dial were on, we were making some progress, but we didn't get there quickly enough for our annual town meeting. One of the things they discovered in the course of their research was that the state allows what is called the School Stabilization Fund. They expect this to come out with some projects that they're going to propose which have associated tax increases to them. The Special Purpose Stabilization Fund is one of those projects. One of the other projects is they're hoping to get significant CPC funding for the fields and courts. This is a project that they've been working on for many years at this point relating to the Deer Hill field that is currently right next to the softball field. The Select Board is going to have more information about that, but there is an overarching project relating to the Deer Hill and the field lacrosse wall and renovating all of the tennis courts which are in desperate need of repair as well as a Beechwood Playground.

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Invited Guests - Select Board Representatives: Ms. Healey Dippold mentions that the Select Board voted yesterday to move forward with a bid to get real prices for all of that to see exactly what they're talking about. In the course of that discussion, they also asked their Procurement Director to look into water filtration systems at the various fields as well. If we're going to be doing significant renovation, it would make sense to build that in as well given the town demand. The Select Board expects to have more information on this, and they are hopeful for the school committee's support for that project particularly because it does involve the Deer Hill field.

As of right now, the cost is approximately \$4 million dollars for all those projects combined and that's an estimate, but trying to get precise pricing in part so they can go to different committees including this school committee as well as CPC to make a presentation on that, their Select Board Liaison, Chris Plecs, will be working on that. Representatives on the Select Board wanted to give the school committee a little preview at tonight's meeting.

Ms. Ellen Maher mentions there was a community forum on fields and courts a few weeks ago and this can be found on the town's website, just google it and find the replay of it. It goes through all the details of each of the sub-projects for the whole project.

Vice Chair MacLellan asks to step in on this just for a moment to say that he omitted inadvertently at the beginning. One, Ms. Maher, is the Liaison on the Select Board to this school committee as well. Two, these are fairly robust topics that are being introduced and it's really meant to be sort of a preliminary introduction tonight. Mr. MacLellan is sure there's a lot of people who may have a lot of opinions and he is speaking not only to members of the school committee but anybody that is watching or listening to this and maybe they have some concerns, as we just heard Ms. Healey Dippold say, they don't even have necessarily all the figures in line yet. We don't even know exactly what we're talking about if these are some rough draft concepts that the Select Board is considering and some of them relate to the schools, that is why Ms. Dippold and Ms. Maher are here tonight. There will be many more discussions about this to expose everyone to these concepts. *The Vice Chair wanted to note this onto the Select Board presentation.*

The Stabilization Fund works with quick points of discussion: The one funding mechanism under state law that initially is created by both a town meeting vote as well as a vote on the ballot which is two-thirds, in which they have to because it will come along with the tax increase. A Stabilization Fund can be done without a tax increase and be funded in different ways but given the size of the fund work they are considering they believe they'll need a tax increase in which they already have one, which is the special education fund. This is a required state law and appropriate from the fund expenditures for items. Examples would be if you need a roof, you can use the fund to pay for a roof, but it has to be through a town meeting vote for the particular items. The typical processes will apply to those items, for example, the Select Board has to put it on the warrant, then it goes to Capital budget and the Advisory. It does follow the standard processes for capital items and the state statute sets out that it has to be through a town meeting both as subsequent expenses that are paid out from the stabilization fund.

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Invited Guests-Select Board Representatives: Ms. Healey Dippold apologizes she misspoke with Dr. Sullivan yesterday when they met and she didn't think this had to go through Capital, but as she read the bylaw today it does have to go through Capital, the same way.

The funding is a tax increase subject to proposition 2^½ of the Massachusetts law. The Select Board can increase the amount of the fund, but only by 2^½ percent because of proposition 2^½. The amount can also be decreased by a vote of the Select Board which is an unusual feature of the fund. Whatever you decrease it to becomes the new basis for the fund.

Special Purpose Stabilization Funding

- ➔ Gives local control and amounts can vary.
- ➔ Funds can be placed into the Stabilization Fund, earn interest, and not be appropriated until ready to spend.
- ➔ Not a good fit for large long-term Capital projects requiring all funding up front.

Example

- ➔ Year 1: Votes at the Ballot and Town Meeting to raise \$200k for sidewalks.
- ➔ Year 2: Vote from Select Board to transfer \$205k into the fund; Town meeting vote to appropriate \$205k from the fund.
- ➔ Year 3: Select Board vote to decrease transfer \$50k, Town meeting votes to appropriate \$50k.
- ➔ Year 4: Select Board votes to spend \$0.

It is the Select Board vote that decides on the future amounts of the fund. In terms of the Select Board research and from discussions with their finance director, the benefit is that it gives them local control so the amount can vary, it is not necessarily a good fit for large long-term Capital projects requiring all the funding upfront. The Select Board is looking at a \$1.5 million dollars Stabilization Fund that would pay for \$21 million dollars in projects. This would increase taxes by \$400 for the median home. (*assessed at \$1 million dollars.*) The Select Board is reviewing the list of repairs and also reviewing a Feasibility Study to obtain the school committee feedback on all projects. Place the Stabilization Fund on the Warrant and Ballot and place the Feasibility Study on the Warrant.

Ms. Maher would like to discuss what was on the AI3 list and how Nick Berardi, Director of Facilities for the town had really taken the list apart and looked at it and Mr. Berardi knows the buildings intimately, inside, and out, as opposed to the AI3 walk through in which they see what they see! There's a lot of things Mr. Berardi has taken off the list because they've already been addressed. Part of this was on maintenance of a major repair and maintenance program, but it's still a big number! It's a more realistic number in terms of from where we were and from all the encompassing AI3 had on the report to know something that the town had actually looked at and quantified.

Dr. Sullivan states there was a lot of heavy degree of collaboration with Sue Owen, Director of Finance and Operations, and they felt comfortable with the list. It's a good list with the \$1.5 million dollar amount in mind, these are big-ticket items that we need, and we need to advocate for other ways for that particular amount.

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Invited Guests-Select Board Representatives: Dr. Patrick Sullivan's conversations had to do with the grounds and the need for safety improvements on those grounds. There were broken, curving fences that needed to be replaced that were also not securing some of our athletic fields, and also upgrades in security.

Mr. Kearney asks what's the security end of it is and what are just the basic needs that are part of the school facilities committee which consists of 9 members. There were some discussions that they want to make sure that money goes directly to the buildings. As Dr. Sullivan just mentioned and as a school committee, we're looking at spending almost all of that on security for three (3) schools too. We still have to be mindful of the fact that Osgood School and Deer Hill already need that money too and we need to take care of the school grounds themselves. Perhaps that \$1.5 million dollars can be spent towards security issues and then try to go to Capital for the other. Mr. Kearney asks how we can get the community together to attend these meetings because this is really important, and we need to move forward on this.

The Select Board is planning on doing an engagement plan starting with core stakeholder committees. As of right now, Ms. Dippold notes that this is the first committee they have gone to in terms of the school committee. They would welcome it particularly if the school committee would support the Stabilization Fund whether it's on roads, sidewalks, schools, etcetera. They would also welcome support from the school committee including attending forums and videos they're planning on doing and sending postcards, and some social media rollout to the community.

Ms. Maher expresses a special town meeting is probably the most significant one.

Dr. Sullivan says his administration would certainly entertain advertisement of any Capital need that we have here in a very transparent way. We've done walk throughs before with the Capital Committee that we typically do every year. To advertise to the community so folks understand the value of proposing these funds, we would absolutely do that.

Ms. Lesky expresses huge thanks for a very clear, transparent, and helpful presentation by Ms. Healey Dippold and Ms. Maher. Hopefully, anyone watching is feeling educated and excited about what's to come! It feels like a very thought-out plan to go forward.

Vice Chair MacLellan thanks Ms. Healey Dippold and Ms. Maher for coming here tonight and to keep us posted with these things as they unfold.

For the record, Vice Chair MacLellan notes Mr. Kearney is being excused from this school committee meeting at 6:37 p.m. and will return so we can proceed with a full quorum.

School Updates -School News (Dr. Patrick Sullivan) – We had a wonderful opening for the school year and Dr. Sullivan feels really lucky to be working in a district where the community and those who work here come together to make sure the start of the school year is special for our students.

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School Updates - School News (Dr. Patrick Sullivan) - The degree of energy before school and our opening teacher days were palpable. If someone is watching from home, Dr. Sullivan says we love your kids and we really want to be there to support and help them in every way we can, which was on full display during the first days of school. Hopefully, your child came home after the first 2 days, and they were excited about the year to come. If they weren't, hopefully it gets better soon and if it doesn't, let us know. We're here to help and to please contact your child's school principal, contact the teacher directly if you can and we'll make sure that we support your student. Our theme for the year which is "Follow Your Compass" comes directly from the NEASC visit with our vision of the graduate and as we move into our 3rd year of our 3 year strategic plan and makes sense to continue with that nautical theme "Follow Your Compass", and understanding as a student what their strengths and weaknesses are at this point in their academics, and social emotional life for our staff to build support around them.

Dr. Patrick Sullivan and Dr. Leslie Scollins will be combining their items on the agenda today into one presentation.

Dr. Sullivan would like to publicly thank everyone in our community including our teachers, our technology staff, our food service workers, our ESP's, our administrative assistants, our bus drivers, and our school nurses. It really takes a village to make such a wonderful school district tick. We were very lucky to have some of these groups working over the summer to get our buildings prepared. Dr. Sullivan says he doesn't know that he's seen our buildings look better since he's been here! A tremendous job by our custodians, our facilities team, and our technology crew to get things ready where there's always things to work through. Of course, our teachers were preparing over the summer for the beginning of this school year as well.

We had a lot of summer happenings! We now have a beautiful, new spot in our Deer Hill Innovation Commons, that is actually called the "Susan B. McNamara Innovation Commons". The school committee did approve naming it after Susan B. McNamara, who was a great contributor to Cohasset Public Schools in many ways, including founded the CEF and our PSO here in Cohasset. This is going to be a gorgeous space we're just waiting for furniture at this point to come in. We're hoping the furniture will arrive by the end of this month or the beginning of October at the latest.

We also have a new fitness center thanks to Mr. Paul Kearney and our Athletic Director, Mr. Steve Rotondi, for both their extraordinary efforts for this lovely space, and to everyone who worked to help create this beautiful fitness center for our students. From what Dr. Sullivan was told we went from having one of the most outdated facilities to now having one of the best facilities on the South Shore in terms of what we offer to our students.

We have a new fleet of buses under a new lease, and we have an electric bus coming from the many efforts of Ms. Tonya Bodell and the Alternative Energy Committee. Thanks to the generosity of the town and the Capital committee we have a new vestibule at the Osgood School which just enhances our security measures entering the building so that we can have face-to-face interactions with anybody who enters before we allow someone into the building.

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School Updates - School News (Dr. Patrick Sullivan) - We were always using the camera system, but this is a much more secure state-of-the-art way to handle school security coming in. We also have new Raptor Technology that allows folks to put their license in to enter the building that actually changed from the lobby guard. We now have standardized approaches in all our buildings.

Our Kindergarten Jumpstart Program was wonderful. Based on feedback Dr. Sullivan received from kindergarten families this was very positive and this is a tribute to Principal Farrell and her team. We had a lovely ice-cream social with our National Honor Society students helping there. We had a teddy bear picnic and Dr. Sullivan is happy to say that all teddy bears are healthy in Cohasset! Thank you to the families who came out to that.

We had a ceremony commemorating the Susan B. McNamara Innovation Commons at Deer Hill along with reading activities happening at the Osgood and popsicles with the principal over the summer along with our annual summer staff cookout with all our staff.

We had a lovely 6th grade orientation and 9th grade orientation. We had training for our new math program in middle school and we'll talk about this with our families regarding that program shortly. Our school sports are underway, and we're very excited!

We held our leadership retreat which went really great with icebreaker activities where our Athletic Director, Steve Rotondi organized everybody making ships out of various materials that was put out on Cohasset Bay to see who would win. Dr. Sullivan won't say who won, but two of them made it with one that sank at the end. Dr. Sullivan would like to thank all the leadership team for all they do starting with Dr. Leslie Scollins, our Director of Student Services, Barbara Cerwonka; our new Director of Curriculum & Evaluation, Rock Roberts; our Director of METCO, Aleisa Gittens-Carle; our Principal of JOS, Lisa Farrell; our Principal of the Deer Hill School, Alexandra Sullivan; Principal of CMS, John Mills; Assistant Principal of CMS, Dr. Kate Salas; Principal of CHS, Brian Scott; Assistant Principal of CHS, Tara Noyes; and our Athletic Director, Steve Rotondi.

We had a great Superintendent's Coffee meet today and Dr. Sullivan would like to thank everybody who came. Our Open Houses are scheduled for 9/19/23 at JOS; 9/21/23 at Deer Hill; 9/27/23 at CHS, and 9/28/23 at CMS.

Teaching and Learning

➤ **Introduction of New Staff and Programming:** Dr. Scollins say this year we decided to really think about how to do things a little bit differently for our Professional Development Orientation days along with our new educators, and Leadership Retreat. We had 3 great days of orientation with all our new staff. Marilyn, our Food Services Director always had a nice breakfast and lunch every day for them. Thanks to the generosity and approval of the school committee we were able to add an additional grade 5 Math Specialist at Deer Hill.

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Teaching and Learning

➤ Introduction of New Staff and Programming:

<u>Osgood</u>	<u>Deer Hill</u>	<u>Middle School</u>	<u>High School</u>
Caitlin Conrad Special Education	Meg Sandblom Grade 3	Ellen Collins Grade 6 Math	Keith Grasmann French
	Taylor Benoit Grade 4	Kaitlin McCormick Spanish	Madeline Nielsen Math & Computer Science
	Shauna Decoteau Grade 5	Jill Weller Special Education	Dave Richardson Science (LTS)
	Mairead Roche Grade 5 Special Education	Catherine Yindra Grade 6 Science	George Stamides Special Education
	Courtney Sullivan Special Education		
	Alison Varney Math Specialist		

Dr. Scollins says they did a lot of work around team building and around educator evaluation to make sure they understand the process and to really understand the rubric that we all use as teachers. They also had a tour of the town and Dr. Scollins took them to J.J's Ice Cream, which they absolutely loved! We had a celebration breakfast for them on the last day and they went off with their departments or their principals. One of the things we talked about was the hopes and dreams that students and staff often have when starting school. Their hope for their students is they want them to feel valued, feel loved, and be heard.

Dr. Sullivan is so pleased with these teams. We hire through teams now and these are the top candidates in every single one of these positions. Dr. Sullivan is very proud of Our Mission, in Charting the Course particularly the first line which is Cohasset Public Schools places students first to guide Our Vision, which is to *Empower Students to Improve Communities*. Our Compass Points and our Core Values all come together and really set the district's plan, and this is good to remember at the beginning of the year too. The Strategic Plan guides the school committee's goals, which of course the school committee guides Dr. Sullivan's goals that guides the leadership and the teacher's goals collaboratively working together which ends up creating student's focus for the year. This is really a nice tool for articulating our School Improvement Plans and all of this is looked for in our administrator and teacher evaluation. They're all held accountable for following these plans and we're required to give all new teachers a certain amount of time for educator evaluation but outside of that it's so important to make sure we're all moving in the same direction and that we all understand that process. Our staff was told that we really believe in a degree of teacher autonomy and Dr. Sullivan believes that with the leadership team.

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Teaching and Learning

➤ **Introduction of New Staff and Programming:** Dr. Sullivan notes that the school committee will see over and over again how we're really going to work examining and evaluating our curriculum from a vertical and horizontal perspective. This is the year for real deep curriculum work across the district. We do curriculum every year, but this is a year to really get our documents together to have front-facing documents out to the public and be able to make sure we have that. We have a lot of new programs we've adopted, and we just need to put a lot of these pieces on paper. We're also developing Benchmark Assessments so that we can point to show student growth and achievement.

There was a publication by the *USA World News Report* recently that voted Cohasset High School the be the top 16th high school out of 50,000 high schools in the country and what a wonderful achievement to know we're very high up in Massachusetts Schools and some of these measures are starting to take ahold according to that article. We're going to analyze our data based on MTSS Interventions, the system we have in place to help students who might be struggling with something, whether it be social, emotional, or academic. We need to collect data that will help us drive to be more formal with the data. Mr. Rock Roberts will help guide us in some of that but we're really going to look at what we need to advocate for making our district better based on this data, and how we can help students piece by piece with that. Then of course developing and implementing a plan for increased student voice. This is a big part of what we're doing right now for the implementation of culturally responsive practices.

We had a student voice presentation to start off the year with a sit-down panel on stage that was very casual. All of these students spoke so eloquently about what works for them in classrooms to help reflect who they are and some practices we should avoid that staff might alienate and we may not know that we're alienating them with that. It was very well taken by staff and lovely for our staff at the elementary level to see some of these students and the amazing people that they're clearly becoming, and we'll check in with these students moving forward.

We talked a bit about Continuum of Voice of students from expression to leadership and encouraging student voice and this is something we challenge staff to do where students offer their opinions, answer questions, and create personal learning profiles moving to consultation where students actually take the surveys and provide input and feedback, share their personal learning profile and work on that profile with their teachers to participate where students attend activities with a role in decision making and articulate action steps to meet learning goals.

They talked about activism where students identify problems, generate solutions, and advocate for change inside and outside of school and finally to leadership where students guide groups as leaders of change, co-plan to make decisions and accept responsibilities for their outcomes. Our students really modeled that very well for the staff during that presentation.

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➤ **Introduction of New Staff and Programming:** Dr. Sullivan wants to educate more authentic learning opportunities which by definition is an instructional approach that allows students to explore, discuss, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationships in contexts that involve real-world problems and projects that are relevant to the learner. Possibly, anytime in the next 3 years, Dr. Sullivan sees Cohasset Public Schools moving in that direction and they're already doing this.

Dr. Leslie Scollins would like to thank all for their time and coordinating these activities. *Ron Ford; Deb Beal; Kevin Dykas; Brett Youmans; Al LaFontain; Kevin McGowan; Mike Pimental; Torin Sweeney; Nina Berkowitz; Abby Arenstam; Laura Swartz; Lisa Sugrue; Steph Moriarty, and Sarah Anthony.*

We also did our annual ALICE training with the Cohasset Police Department with Detective Lieutenant Lopes, Detective Hall, and our School Resource Officer Taylor so that everyone knows the protocols to know exactly what's expected because the more we practice, the more we do it right, it's muscle memory.

On the 2nd day of our Educator's Orientation was mostly building based. However, we did have Julia Campion from the Riverside Trauma Center/Mind Wise who did a whole 2-hour presentation that was really interactive on the toll of working with trauma, understanding self-care as an ethical imperative. This helped them learn how to use those tools within the classroom for their students. Dr. Leslie Scollins sent out a survey and received some amazing feedback from the staff about how they felt about these 2 days. They felt that they had so many things to take back with them into their classrooms and felt like they had time to be them. They also loved the opportunity to be with their colleagues and work together and the power behind the panel was extraordinary. A lot of them said the highlight for them was to hear what the students had to say. One of our educators said the word they'll use for the year is listen and they plan to spend a lot of time listening to students and how they think, feel, and what they need to help them continue to grow. This summarizes what a lot of people were saying that gave them a perspective. They were so impressed by the students and how they were not afraid to share out.

Teaching and Learning

Academic Initiatives / Updates (Dr. Leslie Scollins) – For our Student Assessment in the Fall Assessment, we'll be sending home a family report for the I-ready Diagnostic for grades K-8 and DIBELS for grades K-5. This year we'll be adding a new component because we have a number of requirements we do around dyslexia screening, and this will be added to the family report in October. The days for student assessment can be found on the school website.

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Disposal of Surplus Materials ** (Dr. Patrick Sullivan) – This is a request put in from Principal of the Joseph Osgood School, Lisa Farrell. This is for the disposal of certain items that are outdated related to the ELA curriculum with a value under \$5,000.

Motion made by Mr. Carr to approve the disposal of these materials as presented by Principal Farrell, seconded by Ms. Lesky.

Aye-All

Teaching and Learning

Special Education Update (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka) – Mrs. Cerwonka has four (4) important topics that she would like to discuss with the school committee tonight. One of them is not about special education, the other three (3) are.

➤ **MTSS - An overview, especially for our new families:** A letter went out to the entire district, and all families about the MTSS system, the multi-tiered system of supports that guides families through and explains what MTSS is as well as the different tiers. All students participate in tier 1 of MTSS in the sense that all students are able to receive what they need from the basic level through their classroom teachers and through their differentiated instruction as well as some other tiers and services through the MTSS system. If families did not receive this letter, they can reach out to the Office of Student Services.

The Multi-tier system of support is a “comprehensive continuum of evidence based, systematic practices to support a rapid response to students’ needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making.” All students, regardless of disability, English languages proficiency status, income, race, or academic performance can receive Tier 1, 2, and 3 services.

MTSS TIERS

TIER 1 – whole class data-driven differentiated core instruction that all students participate in.

TIER 2 – whole class differentiated instruction + small group targeted instruction.

(In addition to core instruction)

TIER 3 – whole class differentiated instruction + additional targeted instruction.

(Often small group in addition to core instruction + intensive support)

We have an MTSS team at every school and students may go to the MTSS team which can be the principal of the school, guidance, school psychologist, reading or math specialist. When students are starting to experience difficulty, this might lead them more to a small group with targeted instruction. Families would be notified in the form of a phone call and a letter if their student is shifting towards a different tier. Some students that have targeted instruction services might not go through the MTSS process because we really strive to meet the needs of all students.

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Cohasset, MA 02025

Empower Students to Improve Communities

Teaching and Learning

Special Education Update (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)

➤ **MTSS Overview:** Tier 3 is a little bit more additional targeted and intensive support. If students are perhaps not responding that we would have hoped to in a Tier 1 intervention that's because we circle back in those MTSS teams to revisit this student on their progress, we want them to be, or is the student able to be pulled off of that and move forward on their own. Inclusive practices are part of Tier 1 and really for all students to provide a high-quality curriculum with differentiated instruction to give all students what they need to learn. Tier 2 occurs in addition to Tier 1, usually in small groups and perhaps extra opportunities to practice certain skills. Tier 3 is more explicit and focused interventions, sometimes individuals are in smaller groups, not necessarily, but that is when we start discussing special education and initial evaluations.

Mrs. Cerwonka talks about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that is for all students. The UDL is a framework that reduces barriers in instruction, proactively provides appropriate accommodations and supports, and allows for high achievement expectations for all students regardless of their unique strengths and challenges through multiple means of engagement, representation, action & expression where we talk about the why, the what, and the how of learning. The MTSS can be found on the school website and on the Office of Student Services website as well.

Teaching and Learning

Special Education (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)

➤ **Focus areas: New IEP Roll-Out, Continuing Program Development:** The focus areas for this school year is partnering with students and parents to make the best decisions. Using data from differential curriculum and assessments to help drive those decisions and to continue developing our programming to meet the changing needs of our students. Within the letter that the Office of Student Services sent out to families identifies all of the staff who are present at each of the individual schools. The Office of Student Services has hired new staff members that Mrs. Cerwonka would like to share with the school committee tonight. They have doubled preschool offerings at JOS with the addition of Michelle Joyce, Kim Kurker who originally was at Deer Hill, and Caitlin Conrad our new grade 2 Special Education Teacher. Marina Lebreux is our Occupational Therapist who was with us last year, and this year her role has increased and has been encompassed taking partial inclusive programs which are higher needs programs and also being the Occupational Therapist in those programs as well.

At the Deer Hill School, we have Courtney Sullivan as our new ILC Teacher. Mairead Roche as our grade 5 Special Education Teacher and Kim Vilia who joined us last year as our Physical Therapist. Jill Wellner at CMS who joined our TLC Program and they've been working very hard on developing Therapeutic Learning opportunities for students. At CHS we have George Stamides our AIMS Program Teacher for grades 9-12 and Nick Sullivan our High School Liaison/TLC who will partner with Jill Wellner for our TLC Program.

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Special Education (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)

➤ **Focus Areas: New IEP Roll-Out, Continuing Program Development** – Jill Wellner has a larger cohort of students, however her primary focus with them is to look at the health and/or social emotional needs and/or disabilities of the students to really approach their access to their education with teachers through that lens. We are continuing to grow Therapeutic Programming and really feel like we're in a place where we can say we have it. We're very transparent with families about any type of programming we're offering to their students, that is really crucial to us, and we always make sure that communication piece is in place.

The Special Education Department is adopting a new IEP for the 2024-2025 school year, and they will use this year to train staff. Mrs. Cerwonka and 2 of her co-chairs on the team will be going to a DESE training in October to help train staff and roll this out to families in the district for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Mission for the Office of Student Services is a lot of student and parent voice in the new IEP. It's not drastically different in what we provide for students, we always need to legally provide for students, but some parts of it are flipped a little bit so that students transition ideas, student voice, student wants and needs are that drive the IEP to where it's supposed to go.

Mr. Carr asks if there's a summary sheet on the IEP changes so that we could take a look at these points of change, it would be helpful and great.

Mr. Kearney thanks Mrs. Cerwonka and her awesome staff.

Ms. Lesky asks how the Office of Student Services informs parents. She understands the child goes through the MTSS team and how parents will be informed at that point. It sounds like children can also be at Tier 2 without going to the MTSS team.

Dr. Leslie Scollins reiterates if the Math and/or Reading Specialists are actually going to pull that student out of that classroom, then parents would be notified.

Vice Chair, Mr. MacLellan thanks Mrs. Cerwonka for sending out the introductory and notification letters related to MTSS. It's directly responsive to the need that was expressed to two (2) groups that Mr. MacLellan is involved with, one being with the school committee here and also SEPAC. Mr. MacLellan would like to clarify the IEP structural changes and asks Mrs. Cerwonka if this is a mandated shift or are we as a district deciding that unilateral change in the district by choice. Just for clarification to anyone that is watching this because this is something that the state is mandating. Mr. MacLellan would like to double down to Mr. Carr's point and asks if Mrs. Cerwonka can reduce the change to the IEP to a concise and intuitive format to incorporate this into one of her presentations here to show families exactly what this change is, literally putting them side by side. Here's what we had, and here's what the new IEP structure is, and here are the changes.

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Teaching and Learning

Special Education (Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka)

➤ **SEPAC- Join Us!** – The Special Education Parents Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Office of Student Services will be hosting a meeting like they held last year with a coffee greet and meet for some time in September to continue their growth with SEPAC this year. Sara Davis and Alison Bryant are the people that folks can reach out to if anyone is interested. Once Mrs. Cerwonka finalizes the date in September, this will be posted on the school website.

Budget, Resources and Governance

• **Budget and Finance (Ms. Susan Owen)** – Ms. Owen, Director of Finance and Operations says this is how FY23 closed out. As of June 30, 2023 the school department has expended \$22,332,330 out of the \$22,345,352 budget awarded (99.99%). We are carrying \$12,282 in encumbered purchase orders that will be paid as the delayed supplies and materials arrive. There is a remaining balance of \$739.59 which will be returned to the Town. Any additional savings realized from the encumbered purchase orders will also be returned to the Town.

All salaries have been paid out, with no areas of concern. The SPED tuition was budgeted at \$1,149,811 and tuition was paid in full. Our transportation had a deficit in the amount of **-\$58,661** which was due to a shortage of drivers with our need for a contract for two (2) additional school bus drivers and two (2) school buses with First Student Transportation.

The utility budget accounts were budgeted at \$735,008 and we spent \$773,402. This led to a shortfall in the amount of **-\$38,394**. We will be watching these accounts closely and may need to request an increase in the utilities budget during the FY25 budget cycle.

The custodial supplies/materials accounts were budgeted at \$61,250 and we spent \$110,341. We had to purchase lawn mowers, weed whackers, shovels. This led to a shortfall in the amount of **-\$49,091**. We will be watching these accounts closely and may need to request an increase in the custodial supplies/materials budget during the FY25 budget cycle. The school custodians have taken over DPW responsibilities of the landscaping of all the courtyards which includes mowing, weed whacking, cleanup of leaves in entry ways, pathways, and flower beds which have absorbed the cost up to this point which shows our deficit.

Ms. Owen notes there were no changes to Circuit Breaker. The FY24 Voted Capital List is well in place, and our grants for FY23 were all expended down to zero. Capital Outlay Funds for projects that were needed at all our schools for FY23 in the amount of **\$484,500** have been completed.

Capital Outlay Funds for FY23

School Bus Lease.....	\$ 90,000
Middle/High Paging Zones.....	\$ 75,000
Furniture Replacement For student & staff (DH cycle).....	\$ 35,000
Replacement of aging Chromebooks (540 - 3-year lease \$143,000).....	\$ 52,000

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Budget, Resources and Governance

• **Budget and Finance (Ms. Susan Owen) – Capital Outlay Funds for FY23 (cont'd)**

Retile some classrooms at Deer Hill.....	\$100,000
Field Lights.....	\$ 60,000
Locker Mechanisms for Middle School.....	\$ 12,500
Install A/C Heater Split Middle School-Health Clinic.....	\$ 20,000
Create hallway at Middle School (To access bathroom in Room 223).....	\$ 40,000
TOTAL	\$484,500

Ms. Owen would like to briefly touch base on the Revolving Accounts because there were questions or concerns about the balances that we’re carrying in those accounts. In those accounts we have definitely expended quite a bit of them. One question Ms. Owen was asked is on the School Athletic Revolving Account with a balance of \$36,627 to start our year and something on our School Transportation Revolving Account with a balance of \$20,177. Our School Facilities were still running a deficit of **-\$15,000** and our school lunch program does carry quite a bit surplus funding that will go back to free lunch once it’s free and every district is going through the same thing. Typically, we’re scraping for money and now it’s free lunch. We have an encumbrance which has been very helpful for us. We have purchased all new equipment for the kitchens, all new furniture at JOS, cafeteria tables. We’re furnishing the upper and lower lobbies at the Middle/High School lunchrooms, our Senior Café, and the teachers café. We’re definitely reinvesting back into the program which is where it has to go. We’re going through it since it is the beginning of the year, and this is how we ended the year. The plan moving forward is we’ll be researching different areas of purchasing different types of foods that are a little more costly that will help spin this down. We’re desperately looking for staff, so if anyone is listening and looking for a quick position or just wants to be a cafeteria helper, we’re definitely, definitely looking for staff.

Ms. Owen has a few highlights to share, one being the Fitness Center is complete at the Middle/High School. We’re opening it up on Tuesday and Thursday 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. The Learning Commons we’re sitting in tonight for this meeting has already started the process to be open Tuesday and Thursday from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. At the Osgood Elementary School, we have a new vestibule, and the window will be installed within a couple of days. Even though it was a fiscally challenging year we were able to close the year with a very minuet balance of \$739.59.

Mr. Carr is thankful for the electric bus, this was a challenging, but it will be a good thing for the Town. This took lots of effort, and the school did a very nice job with the media release on that, and a lot of people are very excited about taking this step forward in the Town and Mr. Carr personally feels the same. Mr. Carr was also pleased to see that the curbs were also fixed, it looks very nice.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

• **Budget and Finance (Ms. Susan Owen)** - Mr. Kearney would like to express his thanks to Vice Chair MacLellan for all the hard work that he has put into making sure our kids have the best education of their life. Mr. Kearney also notes the new school buses are beautiful, it shows a little pride that we have in this Town with these brand-new school buses.

Mr. Kearney would like to talk more about the A/C in all the schools. He's been hearing this from the kids and the parents that when they come out of school, they're hot. He would like Mr. Carr to put this on a sub-committee meeting agenda to talk more about the really hot classrooms that we have right now. Mr. Kearney would like to share out a study from Harvard University on every 1% of overheating, a person loses 1% of education. Statistically, we're losing 10% because our classrooms are 10% too high. This definitely affects the learning experience, and Mr. Kearney would like to make this a priority if we could on the next agenda and invite Nick and Michelle from the Town into the fold. Mr. Kearney feels like we've been sitting on this for years and we haven't done anything. If we have funds for air handlers, maybe we can look specifically at what they're talking about, because it's hot. He would personally like to make this a goal, that we have this problem solved by next May, 2024.

Ms. Lesky thanks Ms. Owen for the budget and finance materials received. The fact is that even though our utility bills are going up, our usage is actually going down. This kind of ties in with Mr. Norman's presentation about having more of an environmentally conscious operation was really encouraging news to her.

Mr. MacLellan thanks Ms. Owen for a well-managed fiscal year. He has a question for Ms. Owen that is related to the deficits. Transportation is explained because of the school bus driver issue. The Custodial deficit to him explained the way we have additional duties for outdoor grounds. There may have been additional costs incurred because that's sort of an additional duty. On utilities what does Ms. Owen think was encumbered there?

Ms. Owen says it was the cost, our utility bill is going up, but our usage is going down. When we compare year to year usage points, we're lower.

• **Gift **** – We received a gift from CEF that was an unused grant fund from FY22 in the amount of \$8,065. In order to make this up to the district, CEF wrote out a check for \$4,820.10 to make that \$12,885.10 grant complete to cover that grant for this past Spring.

Motion made by Ms. Lesky to accept this generous gift from the Cohasset Education Foundation, seconded by Mr. Carr.

Aye - All

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Budget, Resources and Governance

- **Superintendent Evaluation**** – All members of the school committee received a conglomeration of all our input that the Chairperson puts together. Mr. Dial has completed this for us to review. All school committee members will obviously need to approve this at this meeting tonight. Mr. MacLellan presumes that all school committee members reviewed it, and notes for the record for everyone that is watching or will watch a recording of this meeting later, that every year it is the school committee's responsibility to evaluate the performance of our Superintendent. It is one of the school committee's primary charges and duties to oversee the Superintendent and each of us independently fills out this prescribed form which has certain rating criteria's and compares it to the Superintendent's goals and strategic initiatives and discuss generally the Superintendent's performance, in addition to whether or not he achieved his goals.

Vice Chair, Mr. MacLellan is not going to go through the entire Superintendent Evaluation, but wanted to read this into the record because this is sort of a summary of what our collective position is in terms of Dr. Patrick Sullivan's performance is preceding the 2022-2023 academic school year.

Although, not unanimous, it is the collective position of the Cohasset School Committee (CSC) that throughout the 2022-2023 academic school year, the Superintendent of Cohasset Public Schools Dr. Patrick Sullivan exceeded the rigorous level of performance expected of Superintendent. This conclusion is based on Dr. Sullivan's overall professionalism, compassion, and dedication to the district, in addition members of the Cohasset School Committee recognized Dr. Sullivan's student centric approach, the high priority he places on community input, engagement, and the high expectations he places on himself and his staff. Dr. Sullivan is zealous in his mission to build the Cohasset school district into the best school district in the Commonwealth and the CSC fully supports his efforts. School Committee members also commented favorably Dr. Sullivan's humility and willingness to accept and respond to feedback both from the CSC and from the community at large based on these characteristics the CSC views Dr. Sullivan as a strong leader pushing our schools to become better and better. Coupled with a litany of specific achievements towards state goals and navigating through several challenges, the CSC believes that Dr. Patrick Sullivan has earned an Exemplary rating for his performance over the prior school year.

One member from the school committee specifically noted their view that Dr. Sullivan's response along with his staff to underwhelming MCAS results in the Fall with strong, decisive, and direct responsiveness from the CSC and the community requests.

Vice Chairman MacLellan congratulates Dr. Sullivan on this, it's a major achievement he has received with this rating which is very high. This school committee believes and has believed for the past 3 years that Dr. Sullivan has received an Exemplary rating. To Mr. MacLellan personally, and as a school committee member, and a parent really value Dr. Sullivan. He is exemplary in a lot of ways and brings in a lot of positive energy. Dr. Sullivan is truly an agent in change, and more than anything as it says there, he always considers the needs of our students first and foremost in everything that he does.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

- **Superintendent Evaluation**** - Mr. Carr would like to comment on the process of the Superintendent Evaluation with this being his first time doing this. Mr. Carr wishes more executives in the Town had a similar aggressive evaluation. Unfortunately, in the category of one, he kept using the word “compassion,” and he’s glad it hung in there because it’s very clear to him that Dr. Sullivan really cares about this Town. It’s been an honor to get to know him this last year and this just an example of how well Dr. Sullivan is doing his job. Thank you, we’re very lucky Dr. Sullivan is here.

Mr. Kearney echoes what Mr. Carr stated and appreciates that. Mr. Kearney says that sometimes we get overwhelmed, we get passionate about something, and there’s always something, especially from him. Mr. Kearney feels like he really gets a voice with Dr. Sullivan who is always hearing what he has to say. As a school committee when we talked about Special Services and how we needed someone to fill the position, or a Math Specialist, or whatever it was, Mr. Kearney feels like Dr. Sullivan is all hands in and able to show us that he can do it. With this being said, Mr. Kearney is excited to have Dr. Sullivan here and excited to continue to work with him because we still have a lot of work to do. Dr. Sullivan’s team is awesome as well, it makes it for what it is! From what Mr. Kearney hears from parents here in the district, they’re very happy with this school system.

Ms. Lesky congratulates and thanks Dr. Sullivan. Ms. Lesky feels very lucky as a parent to have children in this district, it’s a district that’s continually reflecting and growing and that is probably one of the most important things educators can do because of the understanding of these wonderful little minds. We’re also working with changes constantly as to always really being willing to change and grow with these wonderful students Dr. Sullivan has.

Motion by Mr. Kearney to approve this year’s Superintendent Evaluation as presented at the September 6, 2023 Cohasset School Committee meeting signing an Exemplary rating to our Superintendent of Cohasset Public Schools, seconded by Mr. Carr.

Aye-All

- **Food Service:** Mr. MacLellan would like to have a sub-committee meeting scheduled because the sub-committee has requested and wanted a Food Service Improvement Plan for the elementary levels from the Food Services Department. Mr. MacLellan would appreciate it if Mr. Kearney could start talking to the Food Services Department about getting that on a document and the dates whether it’s for September, or early October.

Ms. Owen says that October would be better for the Food Services to present this. Their department is short staffed and has no cooks at the Middle/High School right now. The Assistant Director and Director are both filling in and cooking.

- **Transportation:** Our 8 new buses have arrived and are ready to go. We are awaiting the arrival of our new electric school bus which should be here by December.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

• **Report from School Facilities Committee:** Mr. MacLellan says he'll be talking with Mr. Dial about removing this standing item from the agenda. It will probably be more along the lines of once a month or something like that because it was easier when one of our committee members was on the school facilities committee, we can't expect one of the school facilities members to come every single time we have a school committee meeting. Mr. MacLellan does know that they're developing a list of priorities based in terms of connection with the Stabilization Fund we heard about earlier today. We can start figuring out how we're going to apply that money appropriately that way.

Community Relations / Communication

• **Reports from School Committee Sub-Committees and Liaisons:** Mr. Carr notes for the Select Board it's really hard to manage everyone that is supposed to remember being invited to meetings.

School Committee Governance

• **Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair:** None

• **Approval of Minutes**** - We have 2 sets of minutes to approve. One being a June 7, 2023 meeting and one being a June 21, 2023 school committee meeting. All members that are present here and who were present at these meetings can vote.

Motion by Mr. Carr to approve the minutes for the June 7, 2023 meeting of the school committee as submitted by our Secretary, Mr. Carr, seconded by Ms. Lesky.

Aye - All

Motion by Mr. Kearney to approve the minutes for the June 21, 2023 meeting of the school committee as presented by our Secretary, Mr. Carr, seconded by Ms. Lesky.

Aye - All

Mr. Carr has several outstanding minutes up to this school committee meeting to edit. Kathy's done a great job and continues to be his personal superhero in this process and is wonderful. Mr. Carr will get those final edits done and then we can vote on these. We are now caught up both on the Town website and the school website for posted minutes and that's wonderful and Mr. Carr would like to thank Jennifer for doing that. He talked to the Town Clerk at large so he'll send a note out after we vote on these for approval. Mr. Carr spoke to the Town Clerk, we have up to 6 months to catch up on meeting minutes, just so everybody knows that's actually the time frame from the state.

The Vice Chair, Mr. MacLellan can't thank Mr. Carr enough, that's a herculean task and honestly it was one feeling as Chair when he was Chair there was a great backlog when he was managing the committee and there were distinct circumstances at that time, but this is amazing. It's hard to do, it's really, really excellent work, and we're fortunate to have Mr. Carr.

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• **Future Agenda Items:** Mr. Kearney would like more discussions on preventions from happening. We need to address some of the concerns of parents and to be honest, Mr. Kearney says he is one of them. Mr. Kearney would like to as a community to kind of say “It’s ok to say no.” Mr. Kearney is a Liaison with Safe Harbors, and they have some ideas they would like to bring in to let teenagers know “It’s ok to say no,” that they’re still invited to the party, and they still can drink, but not alcohol! There are other drinks they can choose to be sociable. Mr. Kearney would like to hear from our kids also, they’ve been advocating for a Wellness Day with Safe Harbors. From what Mr. Kearney heard it didn’t go where they wanted it to go. Mr. Carr and Mr. Kearney were talking about this with our school council and that we’re going to be able to advocate for that.

Dr. Sullivan says we do have an alcohol awareness event that’s being organized at our high school through Safe Harbors and that would be a nice springboard for Mr. Kearney’s point. Perhaps with permission from the Vice Chair to bring Safe Harbors here to talk a bit more about that and reference this to our principals where they could add some value to that.

Mr. Carr states that earlier this year we heard from an outside group that was going to organize a trip for Spring and there was a fundraising opportunity to go to Latin America and build a school. It would be great if we could have this group come back and talk with us about this.

Mr. MacLellan would like to ensure that we have the METCO panel again like we had at METCO headquarters.

Dr. Sullivan would love to see some technology to some future meetings we’re going to handle at various schools. We’re going to have these poly devices that will make for a really nice community event, as the school itself is highlighted.

No Reason to go into Executive Session:

Motion made by Mr. Carr to adjourn the September 6, 2023 meeting of the Cohasset school committee at 8:24 p.m., seconded by Vice Chair, Mr. MacLellan.

Aye – All

*Respectfully submitted by Kathy Bock
September 15, 2023*