

Cohasset Public Schools

Empower Students to Improve Communities

COHASSET SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, September 18, 2024

6:00 PM

Learning Commons
Cohasset Middle High School
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02025

Streamed Live on Cohasset 143TV
Zoom (*chat enabled*)
Cohasset Live Streaming Facebook
(*watch / listen only*)

In Attendance:

Craig MacLellan, Chair
Ted Carr, Secretary
Jennifer Lesky
Tori Hanna
Susan Owen, Director of Finance and Operations
Michael Stapleton, Director of Student Services
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Sarah Shannon, Superintendent

All School Committee Meetings Are Recorded.

AGENDA

Call to Order

Chairman Craig MacLellan called to order the meeting for the Cohasset School Committee for Wednesday, September 18, 2024 at 6:02 PM. Members of the school committee who are present are asked by the Chair to please indicate so in **Roll Call**: **Mr. Carr - Present; Ms. Hanna - Present; Ms. Lesky - Present; Mr. MacLellan - Present; Mr. Dial – Absent.**

Opening Remarks

The Chair notes for the record, the school committee has a somewhat abbreviated agenda for tonight's meeting to which all members of the school committee will be attending an unorthodox meeting and will shift locations within the Cohasset Middle High School. There is a community discussion taking place in the auditorium at 7:00 PM relative to a book called the "Anxious Generation" written by Jonathan Haight. The book discusses some research relative to the adverse impact of technology, in particular, smartphones on child development. As a school committee and as a district leadership team will relocate to be listeners to that discussion more than anything and participate if they're called upon to do so.

Public Comment

No Public Comment.

Invited Guests

- **Introduction of new Elementary School Resource Officer Greg Lowrance, (Chief Bill Quigley, Lieutenant Michael Lopes, School Resource Officer Greg Taylor, Mr. Chris Senior)**

Members from the Cohasset Police Department are here tonight to share and announce some exciting news to the community. Mr. MacLellan would like to note from the outset of tonight's presentation, the Cohasset Police Department are excellent partners with the schools and extremely attentive to all the schools needs and do everything they can in their power, and then some, to ensure the safety of the children. The Cohasset Police Department are hugely responsive to the district's leadership as every member of the Cohasset School Committee has an excellent relationship with members of the Cohasset Police Department as well.

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Invited Guests

- **Introduction of new Elementary School Resource Officer Greg Lowrance, (Chief Bill Quigley, Lieutenant Michael Lopes, School Resource Officer Greg Taylor, Mr. Chris Senior)**

On behalf of the Cohasset School Committee the Chair would like to thank the leadership from the Cohasset Police Department, Chief William Quigley and Lieutenant Michael Lopes very much for their service to the town of Cohasset and everything they do for the school district.

Chief William Quigley thanks the school committee for having him and Lieutenant Michael Lopes here tonight to announce the addition of a School Resource Officer to the Sawyer Street campus. Chief Quigley says it's really exciting and it's huge in furtherance of their agenda in enhancing and continuing to move forward with the culture of safety and security. Chief Quigley also notes this has been something the Cohasset Police Department has been doing for 5 -6 years along with Lieutenant Lopes, and just to be clear this doesn't happen, this couldn't happen, and it wouldn't happen without the advocacy from Chairman MacLellan, the town's support from Chris Senior and the leadership of Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon as well as the Town Select Board and the people here. This has been a group effort that required a lot of thought and it's nice to finally land this. There's a lot of moving parts with this where the Cohasset Police Department has to get things done, and it's done! Chief Quigley had a great meeting with Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon, and the Town Manager the other day and it's happening!

School Resource Officer, Greg Taylor has been working with Officer Greg Lowrance who is a 6-year Veteran with a number of years with the Cohasset Police Department who'll give a lot of dimensions to this work. Officer Taylor says it's been great since Officer Lowrance started working with him in traffic enforcement and says he's mostly going to miss him there because he's been very effective with traffic enforcement, which he'll still be doing. Town Manager, Chris Senior says the Cohasset Police Department are moving this to the next step and everyone is excited about it. This isn't a budget thing, even though the Cohasset Police Department are a little tight, but they're going to make it work not because it's priority, they're going to make this work and build this into the future. All 3 School Resource Officers have been fully trained and will be fully up to speed in the new year. This is the right thing to do, and again partnership is very critical for what goes on in the schools.

Chief Quigley would like to build on to what Chris Senior just stated that there's been a high level of discussions about having great School Resource Officer's like Grey Taylor and Greg Lowrance. They're just trying to figure out how to differentiate them and kids at the Sawyer Street campus have accomplished that, obviously with Officer Greg Taylor and now they have Officer G. Lo!

School Resource Officer Greg Lowrance is very excited about this opportunity and thanks the school committee and everyone for having him here tonight. Officer Greg Lowrance has already started working with students, teachers, and parents on whatever resources they need. In his short time on the job, he's given several hundred high fives to the kids just while walking in the halls. He's really excited to be working with the kids and get to know the kids as they grow up here in Cohasset.

Chairman MacLellan says the district is lucky and fortunate to have Officer Greg Lowrance as their SRO, School Resource Officer where before they had sort of 2 geographically separated campuses. This makes a lot of sense to have 2 SRO's that will help the school district a lot. Officer Lowrance's stature alone shouldn't discourage any would be problems.

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- **Introduction of new Elementary School Resource Officer Greg Lowrance, (Chief Bill Quigley, Lieutenant Michael Lopes, School Resource Officer Greg Taylor, Mr. Chris Senior)**

Mr. Carr would like Officer Lowrance to know if there's anything about the new job that Officer Lowrance needs, to please come and talk to someone on the school committee about some resources they may have, and they'll help find a solution. There were some adjustments to the front door entrance at one of the schools and this is a valuable investment and very aware of the excellent presence from the Cohasset Police Department.

Chairman MacLellan is sure that Officer Taylor's mentorship will be a little bit more incredible as he has already done developing and fostering relationships with students that goes a long way for a number of different reasons, obviously another trusted adult to go to if any problems, but also a very positive experience in relation with law enforcement early on in childhood is always a good thing. The school committee here in Cohasset have been very fortunate to have Officer Taylor serving this post for over several years. Officer Taylor has been great and actually a bit of an innovator as well with the RAD program he brought to the schools that was very responsive and unique to the community. Officer Lowrance will bring a boon to the district and will do everything to make kids safer. Thank you to Mr. Senior, Town Manager along with the Select Board for helping to make this happen, this is going to be a great thing!

Teaching and Learning

- **Academic Initiatives (Dr. Leslie Scollins)**

Schools are up and running and it's always so exciting! It's been a great couple of weeks, systems are in place, students are engaging, and teachers are smiling. Students in grades 1-8 have started Fall assessments that will be completed in October. Right now, Kindergarteners will not be going through those Fall assessments, but they'll be taking those assessments later on in the Fall, sometime in November to give them time to get acclimated that will allow teachers to get a better picture.

This coming Friday, September 20, 2024 will be their first Professional half day after health development. This is building based working with principals to address what they need for their buildings. Cohasset High School has Greg Coolick who is a technology guru in Dr. Scollin's opinion. They've had Greg Coolick before in the past, pre-COVID and then during COVID when he was part of the support team that came into the buildings and worked with teachers to help with the technology piece. Greg will actually be doing a piece on AI, the power of AI for teachers and students that will be exciting to see. Rock Roberts will be working at Cohasset Middle School on data analysis with some of the things they're working on.

The Deer Hill School has a whole day in the afternoon of collaboration which is wonderful around literacy. This will be made up of teams that come together that don't necessarily meet after school, especially at the elementary schools where they don't always have a Reading/Math Specialist, so they'll be making music using that.

At the Joseph Osgood School, they'll be looking at positive behavior support plans looking at school culture overall. The Osgood School has a new Principal there, so they're doing a lot of culture and team building around that and it'll be a great day. They also had safety care training to which Michael Stapleton has been a coordinator for this for a really long time. Dr. Scollins along with Mr. Stapleton will be renewing those certificates and also training new staff members over the course of the year.

MCAS scores are not out yet and they'll be a bit late this year because of some raw data still under wraps and when that's available Dr. Scollins will let everybody know.

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Teaching and Learning

• Academic Initiatives (Dr. Leslie Scollins)

For families who are out there and they're listening, it's early on in the year, and everyone just started. If anyone is running into any sort of challenges relative to academic, curriculum, or have any questions about that Dr. Scollins and Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Shannon are both more than happy to speak with families about any issues they might be having. Please do not assume anything, don't sit on questions. If anyone has a question, ask that question, they are both happy to help.

• Student Services Update (Mr. Michael Stapleton)

➤ Entry Plan

The school year is off to a great start! Mr. Michael Stapleton jumped right into his position as Director of Student Services on July 15, 2024 and it's been non-stop ever since. Mr. Stapleton has been within the district for 8 years now, and in conjunction with Superintendent Shannon he felt his approach should be deliberate about his role and the different school buildings that he has not been a part of. A lot of his work he's done so far since starting in the Summer was looking at some data both special education wise, and Section 504 along with building-based needs that helped him drive his entry plan on his role and responsibilities as Director of Student Services that can really comprehensively draft an overview on ways to move forward for the future.

Phase 1 - One of the most important items Mr. Stapleton would like to highlight to the school committee is his responsibility to hire a Special Education Team Chair replacement. Through the interview process they've brought in a new Team Chair at the elementary level and hired Colleen Farrow. Colleen comes with a wealth of knowledge and experience working as both as a Special Education Teacher, and a Special Education Program Coordinator working for the Whitman/Hanson Public Schools and also at Pilgrim Collaboration as the Program Director. Ms. Farrow brings a very strong skill set to the elementary level, both organizationally Program Development wise and really power her commitment to working directly with families to gain input at such a critical point for when students may be found eligible for Special Education. Mr. Stapleton would like to give a shout out to Colleen Farrow and Kathy Breen as Mr. Stapleton's Special Education Team Chairs.

Phase 2 - Mr. Stapleton has completed the summer months' work and has now partnered with SEPAC, known as Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Mr. Stapleton and Superintendent Mrs. Shannon have both met with the President and Vice President of SEPAC to talk about his vision for moving forward with SEPAC this year. Hoping families will be available to attend the first SEPAC Meet and Greet which will be hosted next Thursday, September 26th at 11:00 AM in the Community Room at Central Office. Building Principals, School Psychologist, and School Adjustment Counselor's will be attending SEPAC Meet and Greet.

Mr. Stapleton has met with Early English Learning Teachers, different MTSS Teams at different buildings and grade levels and this will be the focus this year for Mr. Stapleton to gather more data on how to drive the vision for Student Services Department as they move forward.

New IEP forms have been adopted this school year where Mr. Stapleton has been navigating the Aspen System with new IEP forms that he'll dedicate to this year as they bring the new format to Cohasset Public Schools and across the state of Massachusetts as required. Mr. Stapleton wants to make sure staff are comfortable writing these documents, so families don't feel uncomfortable at how they have transitioned from the old IEP format to the new IEP format and making sure that nothing is lost in that transition, another thing Mr. Stapleton will be dedicated too.

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Teaching and Learning

• Student Services Update (Mr. Michael Stapleton)

➤ Entry Plan

Phase 3 – Superintendent Mrs. Shannon has started the shift for a new strategic plan moving forward. The data that Mr. Stapleton will collect this school year from stakeholders both in school and out of school will help drive the vision for Student Services. They'll be looking at program development, identification of students requiring Special Education services, Professional Development for staff whether that be multisensory reading instruction or instruction in social, emotional learning. As Mr. Stapleton moves through this school year, he'll have a very comprehensive plan that aligns nicely with the future strategic plan as they move the district forward with new goals.

Chairman MacLellan asks Mr. Stapleton if he has had time to reach out to families where he plans on attending IEP meetings. The Chair is involved with the schools and was here over the summer and every single time he came into the building he saw Mr. Stapleton toiling eagerly over his work and aggressively preparing for the school year very purposefully. It's very apparent that Mr. Stapleton is very dedicated and passionate about the subject matter and the Chair just wanted everyone to know how hard Mr. Stapleton worked to prepare for the school year. With regards to Student Services, Special Education, or any sort of issue that falls within the Student Services arena, Chairman MacLellan invites families to reach out to Mr. Stapleton where he is more than happy to speak with families. Again, do not make any assumptions, don't let questions go unanswered, and don't sit on things if concerned. Mr. Stapleton has been in schools before where he was the secondary school Team Chair and he's a very dedicated member of the staff. Thank you, Mr. Stapleton for everything he's been doing for the district so far.

Mr. Stapleton has been in touch with a number of families at the Elementary level, Middle School, and High School level. As Director of Student Services, his vision is to really empower staff members through consultation meetings, meet with Team Chairs every other week to review student cases such as initial evaluations, and reevaluation meetings. His plan is to really share the vision for moving forward for how Student Services will collaborate with families. Mr. Stapleton would like to add that he plans on sharing out similar data to how Mrs. Barbara Cerwonka shared out data about annual review meetings, and initial evaluation meetings and will have this data to share for his next update in the month of October.

Ms. Lesky would like to know more about IEP meetings that linger beyond due process in terms of needing to negotiate around services over the typical time frame of settling on an IEP. For Special Education parents in general the understanding of how that process unfolds is what sometimes causes the most aggregation.

Mr. Stapleton is looking at this area, it's a great time, especially with the new IEP format as Student Services move through and regenerates new documents for each individualized education plan. Mr. Stapleton will monitor the acceptance rates and navigate to the next step.

Budget, Resources and Governance

• Deer Hill School Voting Site January 25, 2025

The Town contacted the schools and requested to use the Deer Hill School for an election on January 25, 2025 which is on a Saturday. From the perspective of the Principal of Deer Hill School, Mrs. Sullivan, who is in support of. Ms. Owen and Superintendent Mrs. Shannon talked about it and show their support for it. If the schools can help the Town out this way, it would be nice. This doesn't impact students in any way, so the election will happen on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at the Deer Hill School.

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Community Relations / Communication

• The Anxious Generation Community Forum

Chairman MacLellan states this portion will be the last formal part on the agenda for the Cohasset School Committee meeting for Wednesday, September 18, 2024 where all members of the school committee will relocate to the auditorium in the Cohasset Middle High School to attend a Cohasset community event hosted by Buttonwoods Books & Toys for discussions on “The Anxious Generation” a book written by Jonathan Haight and will adjourn the school committee meeting thereafter. This event features a panel of various individuals including a faculty member and a student from Cohasset Public Schools with over 150 people attending.

For Folks watching virtually or at one point watches the recording of tonight’s School Committee’s meeting, the school committee meeting will be moving to a different room to attend this community event. The recording of the Cohasset School Committee meeting will be shutting off and will not be recording for the latter part of the meeting so the School Committee will adjourn from the auditorium and the recording of this meeting will shut off.

Transcriber notes time at 6:38 PM for the Cohasset School Committee meeting streamed live recording stopped.

****Requires Committee Vote / Action**

Respectfully submitted
By *Kathy Bock*
September 22, 2024