

Cohasset Public Schools
143 Pond Street
Cohasset, MA 02045
Empower Students to Improve Communities

Regular Meeting Minutes
Cohasset School Committee
Wednesday, April 2, 2025
6:00 PM

In Person Participation

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

Virtual

Zoom (*chat enabled*)
<https://zoom.us/j/93210720844>
ID: 932 1072 0844 / Password: 461964
Dial In: +1 929 205 6099

Televised

Streamed Live on Cohasset 143tv

Facebook (*watch / listen only*)
Streamed on Cohasset Live

All Cohasset School Committee Meetings Are Recorded.

In Attendance:

Craig MacLellan, Chair
Lance Dial, Vice Chair
Ted Carr, Secretary
Mrs. Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations
Mr. Michael Stapleton, Director of Student Services
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Sarah Shannon, Superintendent

AGENDA

Call to Order

Mr. Craig MacLellan called to order the Wednesday, April 2, 2025 regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee at 6:02 PM. Members who are present are asked by the Chair to please indicate so in roll call.

Roll Call

Mr. Carr -Present; Mr. Dial- Present; Mr. MacLellan- Present; Mrs. Hanna– Absent; Mrs. Lesky - Absent.

In- person attendees who are able and willing are asked by the Chair to please rise to the recitation for the Nations Pledge of Allegiance, following Call to Order, and Roll Call at all Cohasset School Committee meetings.

Opening Remarks

Chairman MacLellan would like to remind folks that the school committee meeting is broadcast on Cohasset 143tv and live streamed on Facebook. One can participate virtually by logging onto Zoom using the link that appears at the top of the school committee agenda. If one would like to comment at any time during the meeting, a member of the school committee will be monitoring the Q&A feature to reply.

Public Comment

Collin Smith, 171 Sawyer Street, parent and community member attended a Town meeting 3 years ago where unanimously there was a vote to accept full day kindergarten that required the entire town to vote. Mr. Smith understands this past Monday, March 31, 2025 the school committee voted to impose that back and the cost back onto certain members in the Town of Cohasset.

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Public Comment

Mr. Collin Smith has two 5-year-old children and actually knows a lot of other people in town who are in a really unique situation where that specific class will have five sets of twins in the grade. There are five families that will have to cover 11% of that total deficit and to put that on a small number of families just doesn't seem right. Mr. Smith would like to know where the funds came from originally. Was it grants from the state, or from the federal government. He'd like to know what happens if those funds were missed allocated because they were. Those funds were provided to cover the cost of a full day kindergarten. This feels wrong and unethical to charge a small number of families within this Town to cover that burden.

Mr. MacLellan has a fairly brief response to his question because the school committee dedicated hours and hours to this topic already and it may not have been something that Mr. Smith was personally aware of. The objective fact is that the schools have been discussing this for months and held a special meeting on Monday, March 31, 2025 to decide about that with numerous people who shared their perspectives on a free full day kindergarten. At that Town meeting that was discussed with endeavors for a number of years to offer a free full day kindergarten here in Cohasset with the exception of the last three years has always been a family subsidized program and the schools just recently made that a reality. Unfortunately, the anticipated amount of state funding from that decision was predicted upon, did not materialize. The free full day kindergarten programming was in conjunction or in tandem with money that was anticipated to receive from the state. That money did not meet the levels that were needed. This year, the cost of a free full day kindergarten was a material contributor to the shortfall. An effort to ensure they don't find themselves in that situation in the coming year they needed to decide how they're going to address that. Cutting costs or finding paths to increase revenue to cover those costs. People may be losing their jobs next year and in order to mitigate that terrible and sad consequence, it was incumbent upon the schools to consider additional revenue sources. It has become clear that a free full day kindergarten is something that this district can't currently afford. The schools are making a fiscally prudent decision to do that and it's not a permanent decision. This obviously is extremely burdensome on Mr. Smith and his family and it's not something that the school committee is happy about. It's extremely frustrating and the school committee will continue to prioritize it to ensure that if it ever becomes feasible again in the near future that service will return to Cohasset. Right now, it's not something that is affordable and that is why the school committee had made that decision.

Mr. Dial would like to add that no grant funding was given. The reason the Town voted was because this was approved through the budget to have free full day kindergarten. In order to do that the Town needed to approve the budget to get an allocation from the Town for \$200,000. That \$200,000 was to cover the first year of a free full day kindergarten, hoping that allocation of funds from Chapter 70 from the state would actually make this self-fulfilling. One year of a free full day kindergarten they would see new numbers from Chapter 70 that would fully fund a free full day kindergarten. That did not happen, and that Chapter 70 funding came in woefully short, well below expectations.

Invited Guests

- **Superintendent Student Advisory Council Update (SSAC) (Natalie Heffner)**

Natalie is a junior who attends Cohasset High School and reports there's a lot of voice in the Superintendent Student Advisory Council with a lot of boys and girls from middle school, a couple of freshmen, juniors, and seniors as well. Normally, they meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month and have really good conversations. There are 14- and 18-year-olds students bringing in the same things on a wide range of things that Natalie and her peers do while in the schools.

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Invited Guests

- **Superintendent Student Advisory Council Update (SSAC) (Natalie Heffner)**

Some students brought up sinks and actually fixed those, teachers needed rubric on all assignments. It's a range of things that actually gets done, which is what Natalie really likes. The Superintendent Student Advisory Council brought in surveys a couple of weeks ago with a lot of really fluid conversation opposed to just meeting in the room. The kids actually want to come and build a relationship with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, which is great.

Mr. Carr thanks Natalie for coming. The school committee likes to try and fix things that's not going well for students. They also make some good decisions, and they'd love to hear from students when things aren't going well, there's no wrong answer. Natalie can be part of the change they want to make.

Natalie says all the students are really grateful to go to this school and recognize how good a public school they go to is. There are some little things, but overall, everyone is doing a really good job.

Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon, says one of the things students brought up in those surveys is what's going on within their classes, that's part of the curriculum review processes that Dr. Scollins and Mr. Roberts have been working on to create surveys that students from the Superintendent Student Advisory Council had some really good feedback. It was actually unbelievable of the amount and depth of the strong feedback students provided that was really impressive. The surveys will go out to all students and the data will be incorporated into the curriculum review process.

- **High School Spotlight on Learning: Model Congress and Model UN Trip (Mr. Chris Luvisi, Mr. Russell Sears, and Students)**

The National High School Model United Nations trip was held in New York City this year and they brought the most kids they've ever brought from usual. This year Mr. Luvisi brought 48 students along with Mr. & Mrs. Sears and Mr. Turner on this trip. This year they extended the trip by a day to do some sightseeing because doing trips to the Model UN in New York the schedule is busy and there's not a lot of extra time. Building that extra day allowed them to go to the Museum of Natural History, Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, that allowed them to do some additional sightseeing that added to the experience of this trip. The guest speaker at the UN was President Joe Biden that made this a really great experience. For the students to hear in person from a former President talk to them directly at the Model UN about the importance of international politics and alliances such as NATO which the former President Biden spent a sizable portion of his speech was memorable. They'll all remember that experience and had a great time. This will be Mr. Luvisi last model UN switching his focus over to the model Congress but hopes to come back in future years. The students are in great hands with Mr. Sears and Mr. Turner and returning juniors have a lot of experience.

Mr. Sears says this was his first year and seeing the students on these committees was great to see them actually acting and speaking was really good. The kids are really busy when they're there and adding on that extra day was really nice. Mr. Sears and Mr. Turner are thinking of doing this next year so that juniors that are coming back won't have to see the same thing again.

Amanda says one thing students enjoyed about this Model UN was meeting different people with diverse backgrounds and just forming those connections. Every year students meet a group of people on their committee with different backgrounds that are really interesting. Also, just being able to research a country to learn about different global issues with different perspectives is really eye opening. It's just a good skill to have in life.

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Invited Guests

- **High School Spotlight on Learning: Model Congress and Model UN Trip
(Mr. Chris Luvisi, Mr. Russell Sears, and Students)**

This year students learned about Ireland and Lebanon and since this was such a large group of students they needed two delegations. Last year the sophomores who are currently juniors did the Boston University UN, which was awesome. It started a bit smaller, a more intimate conference and then moving to the UN in New York really showed the students professionalism with a lot of content, with 8 hours' worth of conferences in one day really gave students appreciation for that type of world. For anyone at Cohasset High School who does the Model UN is really dedicated and really cares about the economics in this state of the world and have a greater appreciation for it. The fact that so many kids did this will pack even more for next year. Hearing former President Joe Biden speak was amazing and such a great opportunity for the students from Cohasset High School.

Grace says the UN trip had a lot of native dialect experiences with the mixture of many different cultures. Students meet other people from places such as Italy to Mexico, all around the world. Hearing people have different conversations in their native dialect and their experiences traveling to the UN conference through their school and through their own culture was super interesting and probably the best taken when with friends.

Mr. Luvisi says a lot of the new first year UN students are pushed towards the U.S. House of Representatives that can be overwhelming. A lot of the kids had different U.S. House positions that were real U.S. House members of Congress to take on their politics. Students that didn't like the country's politics were acting this out which is part of their learning experiences. A lot of the experience is just putting themselves out there and really the name of the game is just chatting with some people that you don't know, like icebreakers. This is a great experience for students preparing for college and life too.

Olivia attended the Model UN Trip and was assigned to South Carolina as a Republican Representative. Everyone had different roles as a Democrat or Republican and there were a few people representing each district of the state. It was cool to work with other people passing bills with different parties because they had to make sure they're bipartisan so that everyone agreed on the major goal of what the House wants to pass on the bill. Olivia's major role was the oversight of the border control, and she talked with other students on that committee about education, SATs, and other tests in the schools with Olivia's group getting some bills passed. Then a small gathering of 50 people outside who are very passionate about it were fighting for a chance to speak about it. When the group got to bigger groups, they were able to share their opinions more and they got to pass the bill.

Mr. Dial thanks the staff for doing this. These are the sorts of experiential learning he's sure that all the students will have memories to keep on with what they've done here building this well financial literacy about New York and learning social skills on how to work in groups, how to work in a structured group. These are skills students use to develop even as grownups, it's a great thing!

Mr. MacLellan says the Model UN is a huge valuable experience for students to remember those experiences forever. It's exactly the type of project based learning the district is encouraging here. Thank you to Mr. Luvisi, Mr. Sears, and Mr. Turner for doing this.

A motion was made by Mr. Carr to approve the Model United Nations 2026 trip as presented by the Faculty Moderators, seconded by Mr. Dial.

Aye – All

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Superintendent Updates

The core strategic planning meeting was held yesterday. This meeting went really well, and they'll continue to do good work there. So far, they've drafted a revised mission, values, and compass points and are excited to meet again on April 15, 2025 to develop their strategic initiatives. Another update is just a reminder and an invitation to anybody who is interested tomorrow night in the auditorium at Cohasset Middle High School at 6:30 p.m. Dr. Elizabeth Englander from Bridgewater State will be presenting on screen-savvy strategies for smart and safe technical use. This is an endeavor through the middle school PSO to continue the conversation in the community around the book, "The Anxious Generation." The presentation will be for parents on covering youth tech use here in Cohasset. This presentation is for parents and kids at any age level, managing screen time, cyberbullying, helping to build connections offline and more. Dr. Elizabeth Englander is the Executive Director of Marc, (Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center) at Bridgewater State. She is a professor of psychology, a founding member of social, emotional research consortium and an award-winning office speaker. Dr. Elizabeth Englander is somebody that Superintendent Sarah Shannon has worked with in the schools since cell phones became something that were in every child's pocket. She's remarkable and an expert and is somebody that if you have a child with a cellphone, she is somebody that folks should come and listen to. The school administration is really grateful to Cohasset Middle School PSO because not only are they helping to support Dr. Englander's visit and speaking but also helping to provide childcare for children in grades 5-8 that will be hosting a "Mystery Night" in the Learning Commons from 6:15-8:15 p.m. with pizza and dessert. The students who come will become detectives for the night, solving mysteries and figuring out what's in the locked box! The cost for attendance will be \$25 per student. Those proceeds will go to support the Middle High School Library.

Teaching and Learning

• Student Services Update (Mr. Michael Stapleton)

➤ Data Sharing

Exhibit E-1

March 2025				
Meeting Type	Elementary	Secondary	Out of District	Total
Meetings	(JOS, DHS)	(CMS & CHS)		
Annual Review	8	12	1	21
Re-Evaluation	6 (5 Eligible) (1 Not Eligible)	6 (5 Eligible) (1 Not Eligible)	1	13
Initial Evaluation	7	3		10
Initial Evaluation – Referral Source / Eligibility	Family: 7 MTSS: 0 (1 Eligible) (6 Not Eligible)	Family: 1 MTSS: 2 (1 Eligible) (1 Not Eligible)		
Cohasset Resident Evaluation (Private School)	1		0	1
Independent Evaluations	0		0	
			Total:	44 Meetings

➤ Integrated Monitoring Review 2025- 2026 Information

During the next school year, the office of Student Services will undergo an Integrated Monitoring Review with the state through DESE. An audit of the department will focus on functional outcomes and educational results. This is to make sure Student Services is fully aligned with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) rules and regulations. The first phase will start this year with a self-assessment which Mr. Stapleton will be completing.

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Teaching and Learning

- **Student Services Update (Mr. Michael Stapleton)**

- **Integrated Monitoring Review 2025- 2026 Information**

Exhibit E-1

Next year, Mr. Stapleton will approach their existing policies, procedures, and practices/PSM review of records and documentation, interviews, and observation. Cohasset is in statewide Group A which focuses on identification, IEP Development, Current Programming and Support Services offered to students.

- **Extended School Year**

Exhibit E-2

An extended school year (ESY) Programs may be identified if the student has demonstrated or is likely to demonstrate substantial regression in his or her learning skills and substantial difficulty in relearning such skills if an extended program is not provided. All students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate public education (FAPE). In order for some students to receive FAPE, services will need to be provided beyond the typical school year. Individual ESY Schedules will be sent to families by April 25, 2025. July 7 - August 7 (Monday – Thursday) 8:30 – 11:30 A.M. ESY Site Elementary (Pre-K – Grade 5) Joseph Osgood School; ESY Site Secondary Grades 6-12 Cohasset Middle/High School. ESY Coordinator, Samantha LaPanne SLapanne@cohassetk12.org.

Ms. Davis, SEPAC member and parent says Mr. Stapleton presentation was great. Ms. Davis had people asking her for a copy of it. Some adults really liked the executive functioning information they learned. SEPAC attended the Health Fair and Ms. Davis met some families there, which was nice. SEPAC has their next meeting about their goals, modifications and accommodation. Erin DeMello, a local parent, teacher, and advocate for the South Shore Education Advocacy will be doing a presentation for SEPAC members next Thursday at 11:00 A.M.

Budget, Resources and Governance

- **Approval of FY26 Budget ****

The current deficit is approximately \$953,000. Superintendent Sarah Shannon and Mrs. Susan Owen, Director of Finance and Operations worked really hard to identify how to bring that deficit number down by the end of this current school year, by June 30, 2025. A conservative list was created by both Superintendent Sarah Shannon and Mrs. Susan Owen to potentially bring down the deficit even more. Hoping by the end of this June to bring down that deficit from \$953,000 to \$569,000. This information was shared with the Town Manager and he's aware and prepared to support the schools in this current school year by covering the deficit they'll have left.

Superintendent Mrs. Shannon would like to publicly thank Ms. Kathy Sanchez, an amazing teacher that has touched on so many lives in her years here in Cohasset. Wishing Ms. Sanchez well in her retirement, they've heard she has some pretty amazing plans.

Also, Superintendent Sarah Shannon would like to thank the school committee for Monday evening because with the addition of some fees they were able to continue to offset that deficit they were looking to close. Again, thankful for the collaboration and support from the Capital Planning Board who are funding the entire school bus leases through Capital which allows the schools to bring back \$60,000 in their operating budget and also grateful for the support of the Town for \$150,000 for a one-time special education allocation cost.

Mr. Carr says it's very nice to hear that this city is very cooperative with the school department. It's in their best interest to continue to be very aggressive between now until the end of the school year to lower that number for the city that will be very well received.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

- **Approval of FY26 Budget ****

It's a great budget, it's clear and a great deal of thinking has to go on about public education in this Town after Mr. Carr is no longer on the school committee. It will be important because it's a mandated problem to do this differently and better.

Mr. Dial states tremendous work was done by Superintendent Mrs. Shannon, Dr. Scollins, and Mrs. Susan Owen. This has been an incredible intro to the position of Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon, no doubt, who tackled a huge, huge problem and they have a solution and now that solution may not make everybody happy there's no way one can find \$1.4 million dollars and make everybody happy, unless you literally find it, which is not usually how schools are funded. Thank you for all your work on this and for coming up with a solution to an intractable problem that is in the best interest of the district and therefore in the best interests of the community. Mr. Dial fully supports what they've done here and has put forward. He'll close his comment by building onto Mr. Carr's statement that despite all this work, the work they've done is to solve a symptom, it doesn't solve the problem and they should take the energies at least some of the energies they've spent trying to solve this gap this year and think about more permanent solutions what their funding needs should look like and be prepared to propose to the citizens of this Town at a Town meeting a more structural solution to their educational funding, let's not declare a victory yet!

Mr. MacLellan is very grateful for all the collaboration district wide on how to do this with some folks who are being burdened with more of a sacrifice than others. This is no small thing to tell someone they may not be returning to work with them next year, it's really discouraging that the school committee was in this position. Mr. MacLellan hopes the numbers presented by Superintendent Shannon where she is confident that they're at least setting up in the best possible way to ensure that they won't find themselves in a scenario where they have an ever-increasing shortfall next year, to which they're trying to avoid.

A motion was made by Mr. Dial to approve the FY26 Cohasset Public Schools Budget as presented tonight by Superintendent of Schools, seconded by Mr. Carr.

Aye – All

Community Relations / Communication

- **Reports from School Committee Subcommittees and Liaisons**

Mr. Carr has been working with a group that looks at budgetary items. They'll be going through an exercise about the current status of the electric school bus in the contract and will report back to the school committee on this. They have to call the vendor who is no longer in Massachusetts. It's been a challenge to manage, and Mr. Carr is going to work with others to have a conversation and will report back to the public forum the next steps with the schools. The electric bus contract has been hard to manage from a distance. When the district took on this project, there was a third-party company involved and that company at their discretion shut down their Massachusetts base of operations. For a period of time, it moved back to where their parent corporation was in the country of Italy. Then they moved into other locations where they had been challenged to deal with from a perspective of maintenance and care of the electric bus. The bus is safe, it works, they need a partner that also works as part of their scenario for this. They'll have a frank conversation and see what to do next about the electric bus, it's been a challenge to deal with this. The good news is they have not been billed significantly; they have been reimbursed for the most part and have been good in that way.

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School Committee Governance

- **Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair**

Mr. MacLellan will be sending out the summative document to school committee members in the coming weeks and Mr. Carr will be included on that which is the 2024-2025 academic year. The primary role as school committee members is to evaluate the performance of the Superintendent and Superintendent Shannon has asked that the school committee complete that task a bit earlier than they have in the past which was over the Summer. Mr. MacLellan asks members of the school committee to please be attentive, and he'll remind everyone in a few meetings that are coming up.

- **Approval of Minutes****

A motion was made by Mr. Dial to table the meeting minutes for the public hearing on the budget until the next regular school committee meeting, April 16, 2025, seconded by Mr. Carr.

Aye – All

- **Executive Session¹ ** #3: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation**

A motion was made by Mr. Dial to move into Executive Session¹ for reason #3: **To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation**, and the school committee will not reconvene in an open session, seconded by Mr. Carr. **Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Ted Carr – Aye; Mr. Lance Dial – Aye; Mr. Craig MacLellan – Aye.

Adjourn**

The regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee for Wednesday, April 2, 2025 adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

****Requires Committee Vote / Action**

Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) mandates that in order to go into Executive Session the Committee must:

1. Do so on a roll call vote
2. State the purpose for executive session.
3. Indicate whether the body will reconvene in public session

Documents/Materials used for the April 2, 2025 Cohasset School Committee Meeting

Approval of Model Un 2026 Trip ** (Mr. Russell Sears)	Exhibit C-1
Teaching and Learning – Student Services - Data Sharing (Mr. Michael Stapleton)	Exhibit E-1
Teaching and Learning – Student Services - Extended School Year (Mr. Michael Stapleton)	Exhibit E-2