

Cohasset Public Schools

143 Pond Street

Cohasset, MA 02025

Empower Students to Improve Communities

PUBLIC HEARING SCHOOL CHOICE

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

6:30 PM

PUBLIC HEARING SCHOOL CHOICE MINUTES

6:30 PM - April 24, 2024

Learning Commons

Cohasset Middle and 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:

Ted Carr, Secretary

Paul Kearney

Craig MacLellan, Vice Chairperson

Jennifer Lesky

Also, In Attendance:

Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations

Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent

Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent

PUBLIC HEARING

ON

SCHOOL CHOICE

Call to Order

Craig MacLellan, Vice Chairperson for the Cohasset School Committee called to order a Public Hearing on School Choice for Wednesday, April 24, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. pursuant to Massachusetts G.L. c. 76, §12B. All members of the Cohasset School Committee who are present are asked by the Vice Chair to indicate so in

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

The purpose for Public Hearing on School Choice is to determine whether or not Cohasset Public Schools will be a receiving district for the Inter District School Choice Program. There is a program, pursuant to Massachusetts G.L. c. 76, §12B, that allows students from one district to attend a school that is not within their residential school district. A public school has the option of being a receiving school district where students from outside the district can attend that public school, so long as there is room. It is up to that individual school district by law whether or not that school wants to participate in the Inter District School Choice Program. There are various considerations in determining whether or not that is the right choice for the district, including but not limited to whether or not resources would allow that school district to receive students from other districts. Students that reside in Cohasset regardless of whether they decide they're going to be a receiving school district may still elect to attend a district outside of Cohasset by notifying the Superintendent of that school district. If a Cohasset student decides to attend another school district, Cohasset pays for that tuition only if that school district has chosen to be an Inter District School Choice Program. There are other options such as Private Schools, Charter Schools, South Shore Vocational Tech Schools that are an Inter District School Choice Program that students can attend that are not within the district. However, these schools may not necessarily be part of the Inter District School Choice Program and not a receiving school district.

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Public Comment

Jay Catadela residing at 249 Beechwood Street asks who makes the ultimate decision whether a student in this school district can go to another school district?

Vice Chair MacLellan states if a student in their district wants to attend another school district through the Inter District School Choice Program the parent of that student would contact that Superintendent in that school district who elected to receive Inter District School Choice and may have a limited amount of space available to out of district students. Cohasset Public Schools is responsible for paying a \$5,000 tuition cost per pupil.

Jay Catadela has a daughter in 4th grade who attends Deer Hill School who has had significant learning delays her whole life who now has limited use of her left arm, left hand, and leg from a seizure she had last summer. Mr. Catadela says he has letters from his daughter's two (2) Neurologist's, her Pediatrician and Neuropsychologist from the Integrated Center for Child Development that states his daughter should be in a specialized learning environment such as the South Shore Collaborative in Hingham. The office of Student Services in Cohasset Public Schools has denied his family's ability to visit the South Shore Collaborative to assess if this is a better fit for his daughter. This request has been ongoing since the beginning of the school year that has been pushed on, pushed along, and Mr. Catadela has been pushed to the point of hiring a lawyer just to be able to visit the South Shore Collaborative, who addresses to the school committee, "How's that for the lack of school choice!" Why can't a student who has special needs be allowed to visit the South Shore Collaborative just to see if this would be a better place for his daughter.

Vice Chair MacLellan can't comment on any specifics on behalf of the school district but expresses his empathy especially where a child's parent shows up to a public hearing on school choice, they can say whatever they want. The best advice Vice Chair MacLellan can give Mr. Catadela is to contact the Director of Student Services to work through this and with any situation.

Superintendent Patrick Sullivan isn't aware of Mr. Catadela's situation, and it would be inappropriate for him to make any comment on this. Superintendent Patrick Sullivan says he would absolutely love to meet with Mr. Catadela anytime that is mutually convenient for them both.

Mariah Tossey from 42 Beechwood Drive chimes in to ask a question. Is the cost incurred by the sending school district based on what the school allocates or sets, or is it based on what the sending district allocates per student.

Superintendent Patrick Sullivan says to answer *Ms. Tossey's* question, generally there's a formula to this and not sure exactly how that set formula works because Cohasset Public Schools has never been a receiving school district.

Vice Chairman MacLellan notes that DESE has a website, and if folks search School Choice Districts in Massachusetts, the first link should have an option to click on preliminary tuition for the most recent year and final tuition from previous years. The preliminary tuition figure for the most recent year was \$5,000, then finalize that amount using whatever set formula they use, whereas Cohasset Public Schools does not. The final regular school tuition rate for 2023 is \$5,000 per student for school districts, or \$9,184 per student for Commonwealth Virtual Schools with an additional \$75 per student for administrative fees. There were 184 receiving school districts and 316 sending school districts in 2023.

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Superintendent Patrick Sullivan would like to remind folks that all schools are not necessarily school choice schools. This doesn't mean that any school lines up with school choice. Some schools specialize in taking students based on the needs of the student and the determination of a team regarding a student that are not school choice schools. Much of the community in Cohasset values low-class sizes, this has been advocated for years by staff where they can work effectively with the space and resources they have. There is a list that shows every public school who chooses to be an Inter District School Choice, and every Town has to decide by May, 2024 if they're going to choose to be an Inter District School Choice Program.

A motion was made by Mr. Carr that Cohasset Public Schools does not declare itself as a receiving school district for the Inter District School Choice Program for 2024-2025 school year, seconded by Ms. Lesky. Roll Call Vote: Mr. Carr-Aye; Mr. Kearney-Nay; Ms. Lesky-Aye; Mr. MacLellan-Aye.

Motion to adjourn Public Hearing on the Inter District School Choice Program held on April 24, 2024 at 7:02 p.m. was made by Mr. Carr, seconded by Ms. Lesky.

Aye – All