

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

Regular Meeting Minutes
Cohasset School Committee
Wednesday, April 16, 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
Tori Hanna
Jennifer Lesky
Mrs. Susan Owen, Director of Finance & Operations
Mr. Rock Roberts, Director of Data Evaluation, and Curriculum
Dr. Leslie Scollins, Assistant Superintendent
Mrs. Sarah Shannon, Superintendent

AGENDA

Call to Order

Mr. Craig MacLellan called to order the Wednesday, April 16, 2025 regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee at 6:00 PM. Members who are present are asked by the Chair to please indicate so in roll call.

Roll Call

Mr. Carr -Absent; Mr. Dial - Present; Mrs. Hanna – Not present upon roll call; Mrs. Lesky - Present; Mr. MacLellan - Present.

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

The Chair would like to kindly remind everyone this meeting is being broadcast on Cohasset 143TV; being streamed live on Facebook and one can participate virtually logged onto Zoom through the link that appears on top of tonight's school committee agenda. The school committee meeting agenda is emailed to all school community family members and can be attained through the Cohasset Town website.

Public Comment

There are no public comments

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Invited Guests

- **Food Service Update (Mr. Vinnie Cordon)**

Vinnie Cordon, Director of Food Services, says he's been wanting to thank the school committee from day one and the administration for the new combo ovens which can cook better and more, and somewhat more than the old ovens were ever able to do. Mr. Cordon trained his staff members in the Food Service department to make his homemade muffins and Roselyn on his team actually makes them better than he does, says Mr. Cordon. In the cafeteria's they've reconfigured the serving lines at each elementary school, and somewhat at the high school with the limitations of space with a "grab & go" line for students to experience the dining areas there. The "grab & go" lines are happening in all three buildings for students to easily reach for juicy fruits, already made sandwiches and prepared salads to speed up the service lines. Food Services has acquired a citrus squeezing machine to make freshly made orange juice at least once a week, sometimes twice a week. The kids get a kick out of the juice machine to grind their own juice and it's delicious! The only citrus item the machine squeezes is oranges.

Cohasset Public Schools are participants of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, a federally funded program operating in public schools. Food Services participates in a program called the "Department of Defense for Fruits and Vegetable Grants and can buy anything as long as they buy everything that is grown inside the United States. Right now, the Food Service Department gets fresh strawberries from California, and fresh oranges year-round from Florida.

Everything more or less is brought into the high school since Mr. Cordon arrival in CPS. The heaviest lift was the improvement made to the kitchen at the Osgood School, leaving 4 ovens that are not used anymore. The new Combi oven is able to make and then somewhat more those 4 ovens were able to do. Having those ovens removed will open up more space in the kitchen. Taco Tuesdays are a hit for students at the middle high school where they get to make their own, students at the elementary level are not quite able to do this yet by themselves. Way back when the Food Services department talked about a pizza station has now become the most successful thing the lunch program has ever undertaken. They're averaging close to 38 pizzas being freshly made at middle/high school, a little bit over 300 slices of pizza and the kids are loving it! The important part was the cross training of the equipment in terms of training staff how to use it, but now they're able to do this job.

This year, Food Services was able to open up the new Senior Café, so the seniors get to experience a little bit more freedom and their favorite dish Mr. Cordon doesn't mind making for them with chicken, brown jasmine rice, steamed broccoli that also meets the requirement from the U.S.D.A. Last year towards the Summer the middle school planted a garden partnered with Holly Hill Farm that Mr. Cardon was able to use some of the produce for the salad bar and looking forward to this harvest year with a fresh start on this garden again. It looks phenomenal, really a nice view from the dining room in middle school.

Mr. Cordon would like to remind everyone that it's important to note why Cohasset Public Schools is part of the National School Breakfast Lunch Program (NSBLP). Participating school districts receive funds and USDA Foods for each reimbursable meal that is served. In exchange, lunches must meet certain requirements. It's important that both consumers and workers always see a piece of fruit or a vegetable on the lunch tray, they don't have to eat it, but they do have to present it on the lunch tray. All the kitchens in the schools currently offer at least 4 different types of fruits and 2 different types of vegetables at any time.

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Mr. Dial says all the work Mr. Cordon has done with Food Services has been great, he's done Yeoman's work getting Food Services up to par and has far exceeded his expectations. Mr. Cordon's food was a big hit at a recent basketball showdown at Deer Hill School, it was really well done.

Vinnie Cordon says he has a great staff to work with and they're really hard workers. He's really proud to work with them and they're at a level of sense of ownership because they see what is good for them there.

The Chair notes for the minutes that Mrs. Hanna arrived and is present for the meeting at 6:26 PM.

Mrs. Hanna says she's had the pleasure of having the pizza and she witnessed the services that Mr. Cordon provided at "Whiz Kid" night which was a great night!

Mrs. Lesky thanks Mr. Cordon for all he's doing for the students, full bellies learn better! The work he does is just incredible and opening palates to different foods that's looks pretty when walking through the cafeteria. It's packaged nicely, it's easy to access, the food always looks great, and it tastes good too! Mrs. Lesky wants to comment on the way in which Mr. Cordon works with his staff. She appreciates his attention, giving his staff professional development opportunities, making this a great place to work and learning for the people who work here in the cafeterias because consistency is making the work easier to improve the products overall in the Food Service Department, thank you for that.

Mr. MacLellan asks if Mr. Cordon considered implementing any learning opportunities in terms of culinary arts. He recalls this was something that Mr. Cordon wanted to do. Mr. MacLellan says there's opportunities for enrichment programs for the kids, (e.g. cooking classes). There's also the opportunity here for a fulfilling community night (e.g. restaurant night) where the students take part to showcase some of the foods they make. The schools held a Mosaic event recently that was well received by the community, this could be something similar where a lot of families would participate.

Vinnie says there's a business lesson to be learned and there is a life skill that is important and a lot to be taken on, but he'd be more than happy to participate, it would be great. Mr. Cordon talked about this, and he thinks the Farmers Market should partner with Food Services. The vegetable garden is very important to him, there are so many ways in which they can prolong the season of harvest.

Superintendent Updates – Mrs. Sarah Shannon

Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon attended the Mosaic Event, which was her first time, and she would like to thank everybody who came because it was so much fun, joyful and so fulfilling. Diversity does exist within Cohasset with different cultures that families have, like the foods they eat, the clothes they wear, and every table at the event represented family heritages of where they're from, a wonderful night. Mrs. Shannon highly encourages everybody to put the date on their calendar for next year, because it was great!

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Superintendent Updates – Mrs. Sarah Shannon

Statements of Interest (SOI) have been submitted for the Cohasset Middle High School. It's just a matter of being in this waiting pattern to see what the MSBA has to say. The deadline for the MSBA to let the district know is sometime in December, a long way between now and then. Mrs. Owen, Mrs. Shannon had their first facility's meeting with Nick Bernardi and the designer who will be doing the Osgood School roof. Cohasset Public Schools is in the feasibility study for the schematic design phase of that project. The contracts have been signed and will be anticipated sometime between now and the summer with an intended start date for this project being the summer of 2026.

Another really great opportunity was the "Credit for Life" held last week. It's an event that is held for seniors and is a grant that is partially funded through the state. Nicole Fitzgerald, who is a teacher in the math department at the high school, runs this. Parents, teachers and folks from Rockland Trust who also support the program come in all dressed up and students pick a profession based on what their interest is and are given a salary. Students then go around to decide what they want for housing and transportation; and how much of it will be spent on utilities and food. The students were incredibly invested in the decisions they were making. As students go off to college it's a really good time for them to think about what a budget looks like. The more the district can teach kids about financial literacy, the better.

Superintendent, Mrs. Shannon would like to give a huge shout out to the Cohasset PSO for bringing "Whiz Kids" to town, a really fun community event. There were smiles, joy, and laughter and the patience of the Wizards while playing basketball with the teachers, it was a great night here in Cohasset.

- **South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) Board Member Vote**
(Mrs. Sarah Shannon)**

Exhibit D-1

Some Cohasset resident students attend the South Shore Educational Collaborative for out of district placements. As part of that membership, they have one seat on their board and every year by May 15th a vote needs to be taken on who will be appointed as a representative to the board. Past years, the appointed representative has been a Superintendent. Mrs. Shannon has been attending this year and if that is something the district is interested in continuing, the school committee would need to vote on this, to which Superintendent Sarah Shannon says she'd be happy to continue to serve in that role.

A motion was made by Mrs. Lesky to approve the Superintendent of Schools, Sarah Shannon as a Board member on the South Shore Educational Collaborative, seconded by Mrs. Hanna.

Aye – All

Teaching and Learning

- **Academic Initiatives / Updates**

- **Student Opportunity Act Update (Dr. Leslie Scollins and Mr. Rock Roberts)**

Cohasset Public Schools are at the end of their first year in the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) that was enacted by the State of Massachusetts in 2019 to reduce the achievement gap, target specific subgroups, and use evidence-based practices to create ambitious SOA target from 2024 to 2027 to reduce the reading and math achievement gap for students with disabilities. Cohasset SOA Plan is to target the Osgood, Deer Hill, and Middle School. Students will use evidenced based intervention programs in math and literacy.

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Teaching and Learning

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The district will refine their systems using data to inform teaching and learning using the MTSS to continue to improve upon the process with the district and building based data teams to expand co-teaching into grades 3-5. Continuing to provide professional development for all staff around interventions with what tier 1/tier 2 would look like in the classroom. Coaching for special education teachers and continue the work through the multi-tier system process, MTSS that is connected to the specialty task force that Michael Stapleton has been able to work with.

Stephanie Saunders from 10 Stratford Terrace, a parent and a SEPAC member, would like to personally thank the current administration and leadership for really clarifying and recognizing special education and out of district placements is a right for students and not something to consider when they're looking at budgets in that way and she has appreciated hearing that consistently along the way. Ms. Saunders has concerns about the current reading curriculum, especially around reading workshops and what is seen on DESE website that are not necessarily seen as good evidence-based practices. She asks if there will be any changes within that tier 1 curriculum?

The Chair would like to limit the amount of discussion on this particular topic. This is just a general overview of the Student Opportunity Act. The ELA curriculum at the elementary level has been a controversial issue for some folks so there will be a lot of discussions to have on that and will get deeper when that item is on the school committee's actual agenda. This school committee is very vested in special education in this district. The school committee is planning more in-depth conversations on this particular issue in the future. The school committee can collaborate a little bit ahead of time with SEPAC so they can address these items that are important in a presentation. It will be edifying to people that may not be aware of SEPAC or not a member of SEPAC but still interested in this.

Dr. Scollins says both those programs are good, they both support each other, so they're not totally different. Certain students need more time understanding the codes and struggle with that piece. When educators look at what they want for their students, they work with their teachers and reading specialists and look at all facets of how students with literacy will be able to read and what are the components they'll need for out of district placements. Foundations is the phonics program, and it hasn't changed since Dr. Scollins arrived here some 8 years ago. Educators needed new resources because of what they were using. They needed to move on from that and make sure they had strong communicative awareness programming for students and strong comprehension so that students love to read.

Megan Barry from 11 Todd Lane chimes in using the Q&A feature on Zoom to ask what are the deciding factors as to what students are selected for a co-taught classroom? How many co-taught classrooms are offered across the district.

Superintendent, Sarah Shannon states it is decided on a student-by-student basis who is eligible for a co-taught classroom, and it's really based on the IEP team process. There's no certain set of what qualifies or doesn't qualify, it's really looking at the whole profile of each individual child. They don't necessarily have a set number of co-taught classrooms in each grade level, it's driven by how many students in each grade level have co-taught classroom experience.

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Sara Davis from 160 Sparrows Lane says some parents worry that tier 2 and tier 3 are so different from what children are receiving in tier 1 and tier 2 that could potentially be the reason to close that gap, opposed to programming. Readers Workshop isn't great for kids who are in tier 2/tier 3 because they need scientific evidence-based reading instruction when students have both they seem to work against each other. The other programming is better.

Mrs. Lesky would like some clarification when they're talking about the population of students with disabilities. Are these students on IEPs, or are they on an IEP and title 504, or just students within the district that are known to have a disability or perhaps don't qualify for an IEP. A student could be dyslexic, but not qualified because they weren't able to access, but is a student with a disability.

Rock Roberts says a student with a disability categorization through the state on the SOA and the data he provides are students on IEPs and does not include any students under title 504.

Mr. MacLellan has a question that relates to co-teaching that expands to grades 3-5. What was it looking like before that?

Dr. Scollins says they've expanded it to grades K-2, middle school and for grades 9-10 at the high school and it's now at Deer Hill School. When co-teaching, educators have to work very closely with that person in the classroom the majority of time, there's different models. Sometimes there's co-teaching where there's a special education teacher and a general education teacher in the classroom all day long. Educators want to know how to create the best environment for students in which they spend a lot of time with professional development doing that. A general education teacher and the special education teacher come together for ELA math; it all depends on the students IEP.

Budget, Resources and Governance

Monthly Update (Mrs. Susan Owen)

Exhibit F-1

The approved school budget for FY25 totals \$23,909,407, with an additional one-time allocation of \$342,399 to address the special education shortfall. This brings the total available budget for FY25 to \$24,251,806. As of March 31, 2025, expenditures total \$16,260,704, with encumbrances for supplies, materials, and remaining payrolls on purchase orders totaling \$8,945,023. This results in an estimated shortfall of (\$953,920), an increase from last month's shortfall of (\$894,810).

Closely monitoring all accounts, and the budget has been frozen. No budget overrides will be permitted, meaning no deficit will be allowed unless approved by the Superintendent. The special education (SPED) tuition budget was established at \$926,416 and is currently allocated on purchase orders. There is a tuition shortfall of (\$206,655), which represents an increase from last month's shortfall of (\$180,935). Furthermore, the SPED transportation shortfall has risen from (\$111,608) to (\$112,059) over the past month.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

• **Monthly Update (Mrs. Susan Owen)**

Exhibit F-1

	<u>March</u>	<u>February</u>
SPED Tuitions	\$206,655	\$180,935
Utilities	\$199,073	\$195,915
SPED Transportation	\$112,059	\$111,608
Custodial supplies/materials	\$ 51,908	\$ 48,417
Regular Transportation	\$ 10,468	\$ 0

<u>School</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Expended</u>	<u>Encumbrances</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>% Used</u>	<u>FTE</u>
Osgood	\$4,559,387	\$2,903,934	\$ 74,451	\$1,581,003	65.32 %	52.10
Deer Hill	\$4,335,012	\$2,721,999	\$ 30,229	\$1,582,785	63.48 %	46.40
Middle	\$4,218,395	\$2,569,577	\$ 2,403	\$1,646,415	60.97 %	46.00
High School	\$7,241,994	\$4,946,823	\$ 89,472	\$2,205,694	69.54 %	66.80

FY26 FINAL VOTED CAPITAL LIST

School Bus Lease	\$151,300
Electric School Bus Lease	\$ 25,000
Bus Lease (1 additional bus to replace the Blue Bird)	\$ 22,224
Replace All Projectors with interactive presentation equipment (Osgood 13/Deer Hill 13)	\$117,628
Security Equipment – PA System (Osgood & Deer Hill) (DH & MSHS Cameras)	\$ 97,582
Furniture – (Middle School Counseling Offices, High School Babian Conference Room)	\$ 35,672
1 New Athletics 15 Passenger Activity Bus (36-month lease)	\$ 22,034
Extend Sidewalk to Pond Street (Cohasset Middle/High School)	\$ <u>75,000</u>
Grand Total	\$546,440

Circuit Breaker funding received in FY24 was \$1,177,034. Due to the budget shortfalls and unanticipated expenditures, the district needed to utilize \$1,078,643 leaving a balance of \$98,391 to be carried over into FY25. Circuit breaker funding to be received in FY25 will be \$1,097,956 being paid to the schools in four installments. Received the first two payments in the amount of \$274,489 each: total of (\$5,48,978). The Circuit breaker program is a state initiative designed to assist school districts by reimbursing a portion of the expenses incurred in providing a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) to students with special needs. This reimbursement helps offset the costs associated with special education services, including tuition and transportation for out-of-district placements.

In Massachusetts, the program reimburses 75% of eligible special education costs that exceed four times the state average per pupil foundation budget. This support is crucial for districts managing the financial challenges of delivering specialized education services to students with significant needs.

Next year, adding an extra school bus to daily routes to reduce travel time and offer a less crowded ride. During the School Committee meeting on March 31, 2025, a vote was held to raise transportation fees from \$350 to \$450 in order to help cover the budget shortfall in the transportation department.

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Budget, Resources and Governance

- **Monthly Update (Mrs. Susan Owen)**

Exhibit F-1

To further address the transportation challenges, the Athletic Department will be receiving a 15-passenger bus to help transport athletes to and from games and practices. The leadership team and central office are actively exploring ways to reduce their current deficit by identifying potential savings opportunities.

The Chair anticipates they'll be able to successfully address that deficit. The budget that was just passed for the next fiscal year was a balanced budget.

Mr. Dial asks if the Circuit Breaker 75% of eligible special education costs that exceed four times the state average per pupil is a student-by-student basis or is that the aggregate. How is the per pupil calculated and who does that? The reason why he's asked this is it's a worthwhile endeavor for this purpose alone to ensure that expenses are appropriately allocated in such a way that the cost per pupil is accurate and not overstated. With this equation, where they reimburse 75% of the cost, a small decrease in cost per pupil can be a significant additional circuit breaker revenue.

Superintendent, Sarah Shannon says the state does that. They do that by adding up all of the costs of the district. Then they divide it by the number of students, and they get it from their audited report.

- **Gift from Cohasset Diversity Committee ****

Exhibit F-2

Motion was made by Mr. Dial to accept a gift in the amount of \$5,000 from the South Shore Unity Council on behalf of the Cohasset Diversity Committee, seconded by Mrs. Lesky.

Aye – All

- **Gift from Cohasset Education Foundation (CEF) ****

Exhibit F-3

Motion was made by Mr. Dial to accept a gift in the amount of \$1,921 from the Cohasset Education Foundation to supplement the Shakespeare Theatre experience, seconded by Mrs. Lesky.

Aye – All

- **Vote to Approve Advertising for a Fee as Deemed Appropriate ****

Exhibit F-4

This is a policy that was approved two years ago, and given the situation, the schools are revisiting this line item in this policy to exercise the right to approve advertising for a fee as deemed appropriate. To advertise in athletic spaces for a fee to continue bringing in revenue, and to start seeking advertisement sponsorship.

A motion was made by Mr. Dial to express support for partnering with advertisers on athletic fields with the Superintendent of Schools to seek out those sponsorships and present to the Cohasset School Committee for approval, seconded by Mrs. Hanna.

Aye – All

Community Relations / Communication

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

Mrs. Lesky met with the high school council on March 25, 2025 on the current standing of the school budget and potential impacts on the schools.

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Community Relations / Communication

• Reports from School Committee Subcommittees and Liaisons

Mrs. Lesky received some updates from the cell phone task force and had robust conversations with students after viewing “The Six Triple Eight movie”. Getting student input in schools and how that might be addressed through the handbook, more to come on both of those.

Mr. MacLellan met with the elementary PSO reviewing the homework policy.

School Committee Governance

• School Choice Vote **

A motion was made by Mr. Dial to decline Cohasset Public Schools’ participation in school choice, seconded by Mrs. Lesky.

Aye - All

• Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

There were no topics not reasonably anticipated within 48 hours by the Chair.

• Approval of Minutes **

Exhibit H-1

A motion was made by Mrs. Lesky to approve the meeting minutes for the Public Hearing on Wednesday, March 19, 2025 FY26 School Budget as presented in Exhibit H-1, seconded by Mrs. Hanna.

Aye – All

• Executive Session¹ ** #3 To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

A motion was made by Mrs. Lesky to move into Executive Session¹ for reason #3 under Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining. The school committee will not reconvene in public session, seconded by Mrs. Hanna. **Roll Call Vote: Mr. Dial - Aye; Mrs. Hanna – Aye; Mrs. Lesky - Aye; Craig MacLellan – Aye.**

• Adjourn

The regular meeting of the Cohasset School Committee for Wednesday, April 16, 2025 adjourned at 7:48 PM.

**** 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 at the regular meeting on April 16, 2025 for the Cohasset School Committee:

Food Services Presentation Spring 2025 Invited Guest (Mr. Vinnie Cordone).....	
South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) Board Member Vote ** (Mrs. Sarah Shannon)	Exhibit D-1
Teaching and Learning - Student Opportunity Act Update (Dr. Leslie Scollins, Mr. Rock Roberts).....	
Budget, Resources and Governance – Monthly Update (Mrs. Susan Owen)	Exhibit F-1
Budget, Resources and Governance - Gift from the Cohasset Diversity Committee **	Exhibit F-2
Budget, Resources and Governance - Gift from the Cohasset Education Foundation (CEF) **	Exhibit F-3
Budget, Resources and Governance - Vote to Approve Advertising for a Fee as Deemed Appropriate **	Exhibit F-4
Budget, Resources and Governance – Vote on School Choice – Public Hearing April 16, 2025 **	
School Committee Governance -Approval of Minutes –Public Hearing FY26 School Budget – March 19, 2025 **	Exhibit H-1