

Chariho School Committee Special Meeting/Budget Workshop - Virtual
Regular Session Minutes – January 27, 2022

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti, George Abbott (arrived at 6:01), Ryan Callahan, Donna Chambers, William Day, Gary Liguori (arrived at 6:04 PM), Craig Louzon, Lisa Macaruso (arrived at 6:18 PM; exited at 7:45 PM), Linda McAllister, Karen Reynolds and endawnis Spears (arrived at 6:01 PM).

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Assistant Director of Administration and Finance Gail Wilcox, Director of Building and Grounds Jason Sullivan, Richmond Town Council Member Rich Nassaney, NEA ESP Union President Tom Pirnie and District Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

I. Meeting Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance, Silent Meditation

Chair Lyall called the Special Meeting/Budget Workshop of the Chariho School Committee to order at 5:48 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was then followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Motion/Vote to go into Executive Session

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Linda McAllister and it was

VOTED: That the School Committee go into executive session and close the meeting to the public under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussion pertaining to collective bargaining (1. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff - Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and 2. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement). In favor: Unanimous.

III. Reconvene Open Session

The Committee returned to open session at 5:58 PM and Chair Lyall reconvened the meeting at 6:00 PM.

IV. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

1. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff –Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was

VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff – Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Lyall, McAllister and Reynolds. Abstained: Abbott and Spears. Recused: Day and Louzon. The motion carried by a vote of 6 in favor with 2 abstentions and 2 recusals (Liguori and Macaruso were not in attendance for the vote).

2. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement) remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to collective bargaining (Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement remain sealed until such time as an agreement has been reached. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Lyall, McAllister and Reynolds. Abstained: Spears. Recused: Day and Louzon. The motion carried by a vote of 7 in favor with 1 abstention and 2 recusals (Liguori and Macaruso were not in attendance for the vote).

V. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Vice Chair Giusti reported there was one vote taken in executive session; to return to open session. The vote was unanimous with Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Lyall, McAllister and Reynolds voting in favor.

VI. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff – Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement – Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff – Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Linda McAllister and it was VOTED: To approve the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho Certified Staff – Article 16C of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears. Recused: Day and Louzon. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor with 2 recusals (Liguori and Macaruso were not in attendance for the vote).

VII. Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement - Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve the Memorandum of Agreement Between the Chariho Regional School District and NEA Chariho ESP – Article 8.1.3 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Giusti, Lyall, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears. Recused: Day and Louzon. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor with 2 recusals (Liguori and Macaruso were not in attendance for the vote).

VIII. Capital Projects FY22 – Adjustment to Security Lighting/Retrofit Project

Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the lighting retrofit project per National Grid and EW Energy Solutions in the amount of \$121,611 (per the memo from Ned Draper dated January 25, 2022).

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve the lighting retrofit project per National Grid and EW Energy Solutions in the amount of \$121,611 (per the memo from Ned Draper dated January 25, 2022). In favor: Unanimous.

IX. Transfer of Funds from CMS FY22 Capital Allocations to Security Lighting/Retrofit Project

Superintendent Picard recommended approval of the transfer of funds from the CMS FY22 Capital Allocations to be applied towards the Security Lighting/Retrofit Project.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: To approve the transfer of funds from CMS FY22 Capital Allocations to the Security Lighting/Retrofit Project. In favor: Unanimous.

X. Budget Workshop

1. HVAC Management, Costs, Alternatives – Per comments made during the Omnibus Meeting, Rich Nassaney from Richmond was invited to discuss HVAC management, costs and/or alternatives. The Superintendent added that Jason Sullivan is here as well. Rich thanked the Committee for inviting him. He toured the Middle School with Jason. He explained what happens to systems is that sweat builds up and coils get wet. Mold and bacteria can grow and then you have a problem. He commented that Sully does a great job taking care of the system. Ionization is a different way of treating the coil but the bacteria/mold/mildew also get into the air. His system puts ionization into the duct and this takes dust particles in the air and causes them to stick together. This increases the efficiency of filters. Ionization also coats surfaces and will kill bacteria, mold and mildew there. George asked if ozone was produced in the process to which Rich responded “no, we are approved.” Ryan commented that UVC lighting and filtration were mentioned and ionization reduces bacteria, mold and mildew, but nothing was mentioned about virus’. Rich noted that they are doing testing and have found this will kill the common cold. The technology is rather simple and he will keep his product name out of it as it is about the technology. There are multiple companies that manufacture this product. He explained the difference between what other companies sell and what he promotes. His 2nd generation product looks like an airplane wing with lots of tiny brushes. There are 22 brushes on each stick and each stick pushes out 3 billion ions per second. You can use up to 4 sticks which would result in 12 billion ions per second being pushed out. The life span of his product is 12-15 years so the return on investment is far greater than putting in a light bulb. Whenever air goes, ions go putting billions out; continuously circulating and cleaning the air and ducts. Chair Lyall asked how this becomes part of the system; is it a stand-alone machine? Rich explained that they drill a small hole above the air conditioning coil. He noted that the machines the District received from Rhode Island Energy Management Agency (REMA) are UL867 approved which is good/fantastic. You just have to replace the filters where his product is installed in the duct work. Donna thanked Rich for the explanation and noted that since this is a budget workshop, what is the initial outlay to convert as this may save the District in the long term. Rich stated that he did not do the price quote and he referred the question to Sully. Sully replied that the quote for the Middle School was about \$35,000. Rich stated that this sounds like a huge number but you only replace it after 12-15 years. Donna asked Sully if he was able to figure out the ultimate savings over 15 years to which Sully replied that he did not do a price comparison/savings versus UV lighting. He talked with Gina about this and about similar products. They haven’t committed to UV lighting. Chair Lyall added that the District would have to go out to bid and if Rich was interested, he would have to bid the project. Ned noted that at the last meeting, the SC approved a plan with the first step determining what tech is best. RGB’s approach made them feel uncomfortable. We are at the point now when we can rely on the REMA units and use them for 1-2 years; then come back with a more robust planning for the Stage II application for housing aid. This will be due in about a year. Donna felt she was more informed due to Rich’s presentation and he was thanked. Ryan questioned how is success measured; how do you measure the bacteria, mold, etc. in the air? Rich explained that an air study would be done. They would take a sample then come back after a system is installed. He then explained how his competition misleads consumers. His technology removes allergens so adults and kids with allergies will benefit as well. Bill stated that he read the Wilkinson Report (which includes a lot of advertising). There was no mention of the High School or CALA in this report with 99% of the report a boilerplate. We need to rethink this. We need to take a step back. What needs to be done without breaking the bank for staff and students? The Wilkinson Report is not worth the paper it is written on. Sully explained that they brought in Trane separate for the High School and CALA, the newest building, is already fitted with Murph 15 filters. Bill asked if Trane came up with the same stuff as Wilkinson to which Sully replied “no, the report was different.” He will get a copy over to him. Ned stated that they shared the report with Rich and it is a boiler plate structure. We knew when we opened school that we would not get to the third level. We also knew we were not comfortable with the RGB approach; it was inefficient and we need more education on our end. We didn’t get to the next step. Catherine noted how informative this discussion was but we are getting a little off topic. We need to be mindful of the Agenda and bring it back in to discussion on the budget. Chair Lyall

thanked Rich for joining the Committee to which Rich responded that the whole point of his presentation was to give the Committee the best information to make educated, informed decisions; not just for today but for the next ten years. He did see in the Wilkinson Report that Murph 9 filters are what you should use in older systems. If you have any questions, feel free to call him.

2. Adjustments to Superintendent's Proposed FY23 Budget – Superintendent Picard provided updates. A letter has been forwarded to Senator Algieri and Representatives Filippi and Kennedy and they thanked us. Questions have been added to the FAQ. In the budget that was presented to you, PreK Tuition did not change. If you increase tuition, this would be additional revenue. Vision 2023 concludes next year and she feels this would be the opportune time to have a long-term conversation for PreK. Lisa asked all to look at the information from Ned before any changes are made. We have 50 PreK students receiving services and 30 who are paying tuition with 8.3 staff for 2022. When we think about this particular program, we are providing a service to our students. After we get funds for special needs' students, are we meeting budget or do we have a slight revenue? What does it actually cost? Ned responded that it would be hard for him to separate the cost as we are legally obligated to provide services and we have all types of learners. He can't divorce the two. Lisa asked if the tuitioned students were providing \$49,500 to the District to which Ned replied "yes". Lisa felt this was a value that cannot be priced out in having our community an inclusive one. How much does it cost for a student who leaves our District? If we start keeping our own preschoolers, can we see the benefit of them not going to Charter schools? It could be a return on our investment. Can we find a way to absorb the \$49,500 in our budget to offer preschool? She does not want to raise tuition and would like to provide a universal preschool here at Chariho. Linda McAllister commented that she heard \$80,000 would support tuition students. They pay a total of @ \$49,000 which means we are already covering \$31,000. Karen noted there is a lot of talk at the federal and state level for preschool; can we tap into this to which Gina responded that preschool is not part of the funding formula. There is a lot of talk also bonus points when a building plan includes a universal preschool that would be open to everyone; not just those who are attending now. George reminded all that preschool is not covered by the Chariho Act which states K-12 students. Chair Lyall agreed it would be beneficial to the community. She would support not increasing tuition this year and explore options as to what we can create. Gary stated this is one area where he and Lisa agree and disagree. Lisa would like the District to absorb \$50,000 but we are already absorbing \$31,000 for this program so we absorb \$80,000 and this number will continue to grow. He agrees it would be a fabulous outcome if students remained here but that is speculation; there is no evidence. There is also no evidence that raising rates will force people not to come. It will remain an inclusive classroom. He understands the sentiment making it free for everyone but costs would have to be absorbed elsewhere. Maybe we can begin to close the gap and become more fiscally sound in all areas. endawnis was heartened by the opportunity to have more conversation about preschool in the future. Three of her kids have gone to Hope Valley PreK; the third is currently in the program. This has contributed to the fabric of the community and is a qualitative, important part of her family on their educational journey. She will recuse from voting on this because she is paying tuition but would support not raising tuition during a pandemic. They should plan out what direction they want to go with preschool. Bill stated that he does not need to remind Committee members that they have to prove to voters that they are watching out for their dollars. He has a problem with more giveaways. We need to find ways to keep this budget down. He cannot support not raising tuition. Linda McAllister added that she is an educator and philosophically believes in PreK. She also supports the District but agreed that they need to think financially about the District and what this means for us. She has to think along with Mr. Day. Incrementally they could do it over time but she is in favor of the increase. We are asking for a reasonable amount at this time. She would have to say 'no' to not increasing it. Ryan commented that he was interested in delving into this outside the budget season but for tonight he pulled journal articles and there is not a lot of data about the value of it. There are two aspects to the proposal. The first recommendation was to eliminate the two-day position and the second was to increase tuition by 15% of revenue. This program is already subsidized by taxpayers. Increasing the rate is the right thing to do. It

keeps us below market. He is torn but is not in favor of going downward. He feels they should add an additional 15%. Lisa noted that is why they have a twelve-member Committee. She understands universal preschool and is looking at keeping the program the same as it is; do a lottery. A subcommittee can explore this. Another situation if you raise rates on preschoolers and they are a taxpayer, that means they are getting hit twice. This is not the time to reach market value. She would like to not raise tuition and develop a subcommittee to explore what it takes to run our preschool. Ryan responded that the way he looks at it, they are not double-dipping. They are acquiring services outside what is mandated. The entire Chariho District is subsidizing these families. He would like to make a motion to eliminate the two-day option for preschool and possibly put this on a School Committee meeting for a vote. Lisa again reiterated her concern. Taxpayers are absorbing the \$30,000 for a blended preschool for students with IEPs. If you don't consider the value, it sounds like we shouldn't have anything extra for kids with disabilities. Sometimes a community does have to absorb this \$30,000 to provide for these students. Bill noted that he is struggling with this. He hears from people who don't have kids in the system and never had kids in the system. He feels Lisa is throwing a guilt trip on them. We do support all kids but if it wasn't for Charlestown bringing in the votes, we wouldn't have a budget. He has worked privately and publicly for all students of Chariho and he is tired of having a guilt trip thrown on him. Linda McAllister stated she is an advocate for education and believes in preschool. We are not saying we are not going to do this; we are considering changing tuition to help our budget. She wants to make it clear; it is not about changing the program. This will help even things out in our budget and make it work a little better for the Chariho region. Gary agreed with Linda and Craig noted that he agrees with Bill. This is the 4th workshop and they haven't done anything. What Lisa is proposing will add to the budget. We need to pass the budget. Let's move on and address this in the future as he does not think this is an appropriate discussion for a budget workshop. He feels they are a little off topic. Chair Lyall felt it was a budget discussion. She emphasized that the budget will not change unless they increase tuition as that would increase revenue. Catherine appreciated the clarification. Lisa is not proposing to add to the budget now; the pandemic would not support raising it right now but maybe in the future.

Ryan clarified – we are at \$1.8 or \$1.9 million over the prior year to which Ned replied “yes”. Ryan noted that he made a motion at the last meeting and withdrew it to go to a 2% fund balance. Ned also mentioned the 4.1% increase in healthcare and absorbing any increases because of our surplus. Ned noted that he spoke with the Superintendent and we have another opportunity there that we can look at (page 62 of audit) – non-spendable funds that have accumulated in healthcare and can only be spent on healthcare. We have a \$3.3 million fund balance which is very helpful. He is comfortable that the District could do \$250,000. Dental is self-insured as well. He recommends applying that thinking to dental – there is an additional \$35,000 they can use. He would, however, not make a habit of using this. Ryan stated that he doesn't typically like drawing down balances that have not already been inflated but feels, as a Committee, they could take all three options and cut @ \$413,000 from the budget without affecting staff or programs. Catherine noted that she could support this as this is the right year to do it. She typically would not recommend it either so it is important that they do so with the caveat that they cannot do this every year. We shouldn't be comfortable in thinking that this could be done every year. Donna agreed with Catherine and Ryan. It is a good way to adjust the budget. Linda McAllister agreed with those who came before her. She could support this. Ryan stated that he would like to see the actual numbers to which Ned supplied the following: lowering the 4.1% healthcare increase to 0% would result in a savings of \$252,027; lowering the fund balance to 2% would add another \$143,137; and reducing the dental fund by \$35,000 would bring it to a total of \$430,164. Ned noted that he and the Superintendent have a couple more options to recommend. Ryan made a motion, which was seconded by Craig, to reduce the budget in the amount of \$430,164 as noted above. Lisa shared a concern that she is being asked to approve all three and she can't. She would prefer to vote on each one separately. Ryan withdrew his motion and Craig withdrew his second.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To reduce the fund balance to 2% for a total of \$143,137. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, McAllister and Reynolds. Opposed: Macaruso and Spears. The motion carried by a vote of 10 in favor with 2 opposed.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, which was seconded by Gary Liguori, to reduce healthcare inflation from 4.1% to 0% for a total of \$252,027. Craig was curious before they proceeded as to what the other options are to see if they can play with the numbers but the motion was made so he will wait.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was VOTED: To reduce healthcare inflation from 4.1% to 0% for a total of \$252,027. In favor: Unanimous.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To reduce the dental premium by \$35,000. In favor: Unanimous.

Ned shared a few other ideas. The recent RIDE ruling regarding a change to CTC transportation if a CTC program was the same in each of the two schools has not been enacted. RIDE is now considering all these CTC programs unique. Gina commented that RIDE has not developed a criteria but is allowing districts to appeal. We are not sure if Westerly will appeal this. Ned added that we had \$20,000 in Section 4, Row 5812 for transportation but he feels comfortable reducing this by \$15,000 as the ruling was only supposed to affect students that start after January and incoming freshmen. Gina added that the Committee can wait until March to decide on this as we will know by February 15 if any district is appealing. Donna asked if this will affect students going out of Chariho to which Gina explained only if they can prove the programs are the same. We do have students going to South Kingstown, Narragansett and North Kingstown. Director Auth, she and Jon have been in communication and Director Auth is comfortable with the fact that he can prove our programs are superior. Bill stated that The Met School is continually being referred to as a Charter School. The State of RI does not list it that way. How does this affect students who transfer as a sophomore or a junior? Ned noted that they would be covered to which Gina added that once they apply to a program, they would be considered a "new" student. You will see more debate around this. Craig commented that in today's Express newspaper, Narragansett and Westerly had big ads for their CTC programs. He remembers when we had this fight which is still a lawsuit. RIDE had on their website something similar and they pulled it down when they found out we were using it for our lawsuit. He thinks it is a great idea to save \$15,000. Ned noted that the other idea was in Section 4, page 31, line 5874. They can reduce DCYF placements by one. This too is a risk. Ryan asked Ned to walk him through the logic. You put in two because you saw a potential need. Why are you comfortable now removing one? What is the monetary impact? Ned explained it is \$55,000 for one placement. We put \$110,000 there to which Gina added that this was based on the trend they were seeing. Ned noted that financial pressure had them revisit this and they are willing to take the risk. Ryan stated that if the need arose, we will have to support the placement so it is a risk but he is fine with both reductions. He sees this as them sharpening the pencil on the budget process. George commented that he helped run the out-of-state placements for DCYF and DCYF had to seek approval from an LEA before they could make the placement. Do you have a say in this to which Gina replied that they notify the LEA but we don't have a say. We had names attached to the two placements and we haven't seen less than two. Placements have increased as have costs. DCYF is advocating the State require that districts pay for all as IEP students. Linda McAllister felt it might be a little too early to vote on these if they have until March. Catherine questioned if this was for homeless students to which Gina clarified that it is mainly foster children that may be placed with a foster family in district and it is in the child's best interest to continue attending their current school. Catherine asked if the student could be moved after they were placed to which Gina responded that this is a case by case situation.

William Day made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: That they remove \$55,000 in DCYF placements in this budget process. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso, McAllister, Reynolds and Spears. Abstained: Abbott. The motion carried by a vote of 11 in favor with 1 abstention.

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To reduce CTC Transportation by \$15,000. In favor: Unanimous (Macaruso was not in attendance for the vote).

Ryan stated that the final motion put them over \$500,000 in cuts to the budget with the fund balance at 2%. He had no additional adjustments to make.

Chair Lyall thanked all for the great work. The Superintendent stated that she will add this to the FAQ page and the updates.

XI. Adjournment

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Gary Liguori and it was VOTED: To adjourn at 7:58 PM. In favor: Unanimous (Macaruso was not in attendance for the vote)

Donna Sieczkiewicz, District Clerk