

Chariho School Committee Meeting  
Regular Session Minutes – September 28, 2021

Committee Members Attendance: Chair Linda Lyall, Vice Chair Catherine Giusti, George Abbott, Ryan Callahan, Donna Chambers, William Day, Gary Liguori, Craig Louzon, Lisa Macaruso (arrived at 7:01 PM), Linda McAllister and David Stall (arrived at 6:50 PM; exited at 7:06 PM). Absent: Sheila Grover.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, High School Assistant Principal Jean Bradanini, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, NEA ESP President Thomas Pirnie and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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

Chair Linda Lyall called the meeting of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho High School Library, to order at 6:30 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a moment of silent meditation.

II. Motion/Vote to go into Executive Session

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and Catherine Giusti 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)(3) for the purpose of discussion and/or action pertaining to the matter of security including but not limited to the deployment of security personnel or devices (1. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of September 14, 2021 - Emergency Operation Plans; and 2. Approval of Emergency Operation Plans); and under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(8) for the purpose of reviewing and/or approving matters which relate to the privacy of students and their records (1. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of September 14, 2021 – Approval of Home Instruction Requests; 2. Approval of Executive Session Minutes of September 14, 2021 - Rescinding of Home Instruction Approvals; and 3) 2. Approval of Home Instruction Requests); any persons to be discussed have been so notified. In favor: Unanimous (Macaruso and Stall were not in attendance for the vote).

III. Reconvene Open Session/Pledge of Allegiance/Silent Meditation

The Committee returned to open session at 6:40 PM and Chair Lyall reconvened the meeting at 7:00 PM. She asked all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silent meditation.

IV. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

1. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes pertaining to the matter of security including but not limited to the deployment of security personnel or devices (Emergency Operations Plans) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes pertaining to the matter of security including but not limited to the deployment of security personnel or devices (Emergency Operations Plans) remain sealed. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister. Abstained: Stall. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 1 abstention (Macaruso was not in attendance for the vote).

2. Superintendent Picard recommended that minutes which relate to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Ryan Callahan and it was VOTED: That minutes which relate to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed. In favor: Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister. Abstained: Stall. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 1 abstention (Macaruso was not in attendance for the vote).

#### V. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Vice Chair Giusti disclosed that voting in favor for the first vote to approve the executive session minutes of September 14, 2021 – Emergency Operations Plans were Callahan, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister with Abbott and Chambers abstaining.

The second vote, approval of the executive session minutes of September 14, 2021 – Approval of Home Instruction Requests, voting in favor were Callahan, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister with Abbott and Chambers abstaining.

The next vote, approval of the executive session minutes of September 14, 2021 – Rescinding of Home Instruction Approvals, voting in favor were Callahan, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister with Abbott and Chambers abstaining.

Voting in favor of tonight's Home Instruction Requests were Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister.

Those voting in favor of the approval of the Emergency Operations Plans were Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall and McAllister.

All were in favor of returning to open session with Abbott, Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, and McAllister voting.

VI. Recognition – Nothing to report.

#### VII. Public Forum

Chair Lyall invited anyone to speak on matters that are not currently on the agenda. David Stall stated that there is an email in your box that has his letter of resignation. For many it will bring joy; some may celebrate privately or publicly. Some of you are smart enough to predict that this separation precedes legal action I am starting against you. For eighteen months you have tried to silence me, dismiss my perspective, given me the run around and literally refused to allow my requested agenda items. In a few cases, I believe your actions were illegal and often they violated reasonable and decent practice for a school committee. Your worst offense is your blatant disregard for hundreds of parents and community members who have attended our meetings over the last several months. When their opinions were different than yours, you swiftly and strategically pushed people aside thinking you know best and it is for everyone's good. I disagree and I believe you forgot who you work for. It is not an honor to serve with this Committee but increasingly becoming a source of embarrassment. I'm not leaving the schools or the district nor am I abandoning my commitment to serve the community. I'm just moving my voice to the other side of the table. Two minutes during each meeting for public comment will be more than you have previously allowed me on several issues I have brought up. Our Superintendent nods politely while already dismissing the concerns of stakeholders. The Chair has overstepped her bounds in shutting out dissenting voices. I have been lied to and the public has to. You have lost the trust of many. I disagreed with many of this Committee's votes; voting 'no' often by myself is not enough. I don't want to continue to have any part of this. He left the meeting at 7:06 PM. Polly Hopkins noted that was stunning and feels that we are all a little less for that. Maybe some of you will realize that. She echoes David's sentiments as she has been lied to. There are illegal things going on and she has been the target of that. She knows about the Google vault of information that was off her Facebook page. She was cyberstalked. Ms. Picard knows about it as well as Linda Lyall, Lisa Macaruso and Ms. Giusti. She filed an APRA request and all your

names were on the emails that circulated along with some ARTF members and eight teachers. It is truly disgusting to see you collecting names of parents and cyberstalking them. When she asked for the information that was hers to begin with, there were hundreds of pages of emails that were heavily redacted but there were a couple things. When parents have a concern and come to you to ask straightforward questions and you can't answer them honestly, then we're going to do it our own way because we employ all of you. She would like all of the Committee to re-evaluate the curriculum – the racially-incentivized curriculum you are imposing on these children. Thank you. Chair Lyall and Catherine both stated that they have no idea about Google vault or what Ms. Hopkins is talking about. Donna Chambers agreed that she had no idea either about what Polly reported. Goldie Williams from Richmond wanted to know why the CALA CAB has not met since June. Why hasn't anyone done anything about special needs kids? She then reported that the Chariho Act Revision Subcommittee last met in 2006 and the Accountability Subcommittee in 2005. She then asked why are the drugs still coming in from CALA kids who all belong in juvenile hall. At this point, Chair Lyall interjected that the CALA CAB meets four times a year. Goldie then asked how much does the District get paid per student for a vaccine or masks at which time the conversation ended. David Lelli from Richmond sent a letter to every member of the School Committee and then read the letter he sent. He feels there is little to no oversight by parents as to the curriculum that is taught in grades K-12. He believes teachers are teaching kids in class about gender changes and race. Children are being fed lies. Gender transition is being encouraged. Kids are exposed to books that have obscene material. You are getting kids to hate themselves and their country. He is calling for a heightened awareness by the School Board. Set a regular topic of Transparency of Curriculum at your meetings and demand full accountability of what the next generation is being exposed to. He urged the Board to take a close look at the curriculum and these teachings and get it out.

#### VIII. Business

A. Audit Subcommittee Terms – Superintendent Picard reported that a concern arose from the Audit Subcommittee regarding vacancies. In researching this Subcommittee (which is not a requirement of the Chariho Act), Finance Committee Minutes of May 27, 1992 include a motion that was made, seconded and approved for the Finance Committee *to recommend to the school committee that it make the composition of the Audit Subcommittee to include one financial knowledgeable person from each town and two School Committee members; all five appointed by the School Committee.* An amendment was made, seconded and approved, *to include that there be staggered 3 year terms for each member.* The Chariho School Committee minutes of June 15, 1992 include a motion which was seconded and approved - *To approve the Finance Committee's recommendation that the Audit Sub-committee be composed of 5 members – 1 financially knowledgeable individual from each town and 2 school committee members; all 5 members to be appointed by the School Committee and there be staggered 3 year terms for each member.* The Subcommittee currently has one financial knowledgeable person from each town (appointed by the School Committee) and two School Committee vacancies. It appears that what has happened over the years is that School Committee Members who were serving on this Subcommittee were not reappointed for additional terms on the School Committee (or chose not to run again) but remained on the Audit Subcommittee as representatives of their town. In consultation with legal counsel, I am recommending the following:

1. That a motion be made to rescind the vote taken at the School Committee Meeting of June 15, 1992 regarding the recommendation from the Finance Committee pertaining to the Audit Subcommittee.
2. That another motion be made to approve the Finance Committee's recommendation of May 27, 1992 as modified that the School Committee make the composition of the Audit Subcommittee five (5) members; one (1) financially knowledgeable individual from each town and two (2) School Committee members; all five (5) members will have terms expiring in December of every even year as School Committee terms could possibly end in November of that year.

George stated that he would abstain from these votes as he is unclear on the action being taken. Ryan summarized that all the Committee is doing is to adjust the terms so they end when School Committee terms change.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To rescind the vote taken at the School Committee Meeting of June 15, 1992 regarding the recommendation from the Finance Committee pertaining to the Audit Subcommittee. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso and McAllister. Abstained: Abbott. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 1 abstention.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To approve the Finance Committee's recommendation of May 27, 1992 as modified that the School Committee make the composition of the Audit Subcommittee five (5) members; one (1) financially knowledgeable individual from each town and two (2) School Committee members; all five (5) members will have terms expiring in December of every even year as School Committee terms could possibly end in November of that year. In favor: Callahan, Chambers, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso and McAllister. Abstained: Abbott. The motion carried by a vote of 9 in favor with 1 abstention.

B. Appointment of Two School Committee Members to the Audit Subcommittee – Superintendent Picard recommended the appointment of two School Committee members to fill the vacancies that exist on the Audit Subcommittee. The Subcommittee meets two to three times a year to review and approve the audit prior to it being acted on by the School Committee. This Subcommittee will be included on the list of School Committee Subcommittees and vacancies will be filled as they occur so that we do not run into this issue again. Gary asked if the terms should be staggered so that one stays on to which Ryan noted that this should be corrected if the Committee reviews the list of members in December after every election. Ryan volunteered to serve.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To nominate Dr. Callahan to serve on the Audit Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Lyall asked if there was another member interested in volunteering to which Gary noted that he would serve as well.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To nominate Mr. Liguori to serve on the Audit Subcommittee. In favor: Unanimous.

C. Traffic Concerns at Drop-Off and Pick-Up Times – Superintendent Picard stated that a concern was raised by David Stall at the last meeting regarding congestion at drop-off and pick-up times at the schools. Chair Lyall requested an update on this issue which Ned will provide. Ned reported, as everyone already knows, that we are struggling with transportation issues. We have revised bus times ten minutes earlier and added a bus to Richmond School so that all the elementary buses could arrive on time. This should improve the time performance for these schools. Around campus, we have a few too many cars lining up so we are looking to change where Middle School parents pick up. We will have them pick up behind the Middle School and come out by CALA and hope this takes 40 or 50 cars off Switch Road. We can't control the times parents arrive. Once the buses are ready to move, cars will be held up until the buses get out. Gary stated that he likes this idea of changing the exit but he feels the problem will now be that parents will rush to get here earlier to be first in line to beat the buses. He would say to hold all cars and let the buses out first. He was shocked at all the cars parked on the other side of Switch Road waiting to get into the High School driveway. This might be a separate issue. Ned stated the only problem he sees if they hold all the cars and let the buses out first is that the cars may then back up onto Switch Road. Bill felt they were making it too convenient for parents. We have

an SRO and, per the contract, he is here for ten minutes after school gets out. We should put him out on Switch Road as he feels traffic would flow better if there was an authority figure controlling it. Either that or we need to give the bus duty personnel more training. He feels the plan is good but has a concern about a parent broadsiding a bus. That is why buses were separated from cars. We made it so they do not interact with each other. Linda McAllister asked why cars were lined up both ways to which the Superintendent responded that one line is for High School pick-up and the other for Middle School. Last year we had 25% fewer students on campus; now we have 100%. Chief Johnson has been involved. Gary agreed with Bill about directing traffic. We have new staff who do not know how to handle it. Also, we have students parking by CALA so we need to concern ourselves with that. Maybe check this out before we fully implement it. Ned agreed that there is impatience at the bus loop so this will be a challenge. Lisa felt that in the immediate, they should clearly separate bus dismissal from parent pick-up. Maybe stagger times. The bigger picture she feels is around developmental start times. Younger children are better in the morning while teens are better later. We haven't been able to do that because of athletics, etc. We might have a better academic outcome. This is more long-term, not immediate. Craig had a question about SK tech. Ned explained that is South Kingstown CTC students. Statewide contacted us the day before school started and said they weren't going to be able to do routes. South Kingstown has thirty students coming to our CTC; it is their responsibility to bus them. He spoke to his counterpart and asked if they could work together as Ocean State Transit serves both districts. This also involved one of our buses running students to Narragansett. The problem with the plan is that students are missing some instructional time. Every district is having some form of transportation issues. Craig then asked about the issue at Richmond School to which Ned explained that a couple of the buses were not getting to the school on time. By starting ten minutes earlier, the bus can get from campus out to Richmond to get those kids and be to school on time. There is still one arriving about eight minutes late. We are still working on this. Bill noted that the State awards the Statewide contract and there is no penalty for them when they don't provide buses. Are we incurring additional expenses to which Ned replied that by and large this is a topic for another night but Statewide charges us for whatever they provide. We found we could do it for less so we only paid them for the McKinney Vento students and private schools. Gina added that we were informed via email from the State that we cannot provide our own plan and have the State reimburse us because of legislation so we have reached out to Senator Algieri, Representative Kennedy and the Governor. Bill commented that this is the same State that cut our categorical aid. Craig wondered when the pandemic is behind us, do we anticipate this being behind us or do we reach out to DOT. Gina noted that a long-term plan could be to separate the campus but that would mean more buses. Ned added that the campus used to be split up; maybe there could be two loops. Craig suggested they could raise walks to slow the traffic but this also costs money. Ned informed all that they will be discussing this in about a month or so. Gary suggested that maybe they could engage the engineering department at URI to come out; maybe a thesis project. Lisa thought that maybe they could pull together the Transportation Subcommittee to discuss this and maybe reach out to URI engineering students. Chair Lyall felt these were great suggestions.

D. ESSER/ARP Funding and Next Steps – Ned reviewed his memo on ESSER/ARP Funding and next steps. \$4.5 million is expected in federal funds over three to four fiscal years. The first of ESSER funds were released and we received \$378,000 in COVID Relief Funds. We then received \$316,000 in ESSER Funds that were applied to getting our transportation contract set (the overhead costs for the bus company). For ESSER II \$1.2 million is currently in progress. This year we decided to take a chance that it would include curriculum and so far it has worked out well. Funds put on the table are mandated. Last but not least is ESSER III Funding which will be the largest. It is unclear right now what the stipulations will be. We expect them to be more rigid; very focused on learning loss. We enjoyed a lot of in-person learning last year while other districts did not. This investment will be applied. Gina noted that the Deputy Commissioner met with Superintendents. ESSER III will have specific buckets and will be tied to the Back to School Plan which must be reviewed/revised every six months. Ours is updated monthly. The focus will be

on high curriculum items. Typically we are not allowed to use federal funds for this but they are allowing it. We got three grants from RIDE; a lot of legislation requirements. Her October E-Update will allow for feedback from families; what will the #1 priority be. We must align to the State plan. George asked if this funding is related to the billion dollars the State of RI received to which Gina replied that she thinks this is part of it. George questioned if ESSER II Funds are in an account or held by the State. Ned responded that this funding is held by the State; they have it in an account. Chair Lyall thanked Ned for the update.

E. Review of Orientation Process for New School Committee Members – This item was requested by Gary Liguori. Gary stated that he recognized when he joined it was at the height of COVID; meetings were online but he found it challenging. There are a number of things he has learned as they go. He thought that some things they could put into a small packet for new members like Robert's Rules. He also thinks there could have been better communication about online meetings like which to be in. At a basic level, they could walk through the meeting structure and explain the role of the Chair versus the Superintendent versus a member. New people may feel shy about speaking up. This is an important, collegiate thing to do. All agreed it was a great idea. Lisa noted that when she was newly-elected, Mr. Ricci personally called her and took her on a tour. He also arranged for a school committee association member to come to a meeting. Gary commented that Gina did reach out and they met. He began getting emails from Tim Duffy and didn't know who he was. Lisa asked if they could build a module in Canvas that school committee members would have access to. Donna felt that modules were great. They could be more structured; they could decide. She was given a book but she loves this idea. Craig noted that he was so glad this was asked at the last meeting – when Mr. Swain asked about their school committee hours. He did not know that subcommittees count toward this. Lisa asked who would develop the curriculum to which Gary replied that he would be happy to be part of an Ad Hoc Committee. Donna noted that she would be more than happy to work on this as well. Linda McAllister also volunteered. Polly Hopkins from Hopkinton stated that she knows some parents who have stated they should not work with Tim Duffy to which the Chair ruled her out of order. Gary was thanked for requesting this.

F. Home School Three-Year Comparison – This item was requested by David Stall. Charts were included in the packet to which Ryan asked if the numbers were about the same. Michael replied they are on level with last year. Ryan noted that on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page at the bottom, tonight's approvals were noted twice with 23 and 25 requests. The Clerk explained that what she believes happened is that originally there were 23 requests for this evening and then two more were added but the line with 23 was not removed from the chart. The amount listed should be less 23 students.

#### IX. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall asked if there were any items to be pulled. Craig pulled A-1 and A-2 and Ned noted a modification he would like to make to H-1.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: To move the remainder of the Consent Agenda Items. In favor: Unanimous.

- B. Transfers – Approved.
- C. Bill Review – Accepted
- D. Budget Summary – None at this time.
- E. Balance Sheet – None at this time.
- F. Personnel Actions – Staff Updates included in FYI.
- G. Permission to Issue Bids/Request Quotes – None at this time.
- I. Home Instruction – Action taken in Executive Session.
- J. Grants – None at this time.
- K. Donations – None at this time.

A-1. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: To approve the Executive Session Minutes of September 14, 2021 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of August 10, 2021 (minutes not sealed). In favor: Callahan, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso and McAllister. Abstained (due to absence): Abbott and Chambers. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor and 2 abstentions.

A-2. Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: To approve the Regular Session Minutes of September 14, 2021. In favor: Callahan, Day, Giusti, Liguori, Louzon, Lyall, Macaruso and McAllister. Abstained (due to absence): Abbott and Chambers. The motion carried by a vote of 8 in favor and 2 abstentions.

H-1. Permission to Award Contracts –The Superintendent recommended award of the Public Water System – Contract Operating Services to Northeast Water Solutions Inc. (NWSI) at an annual price of \$18,980 per year for three years and per contract rates for additional services as required as noted on the memo from Ned Draper and the NWSI contract both dated September 7, 2021. Craig made a motion, seconded by Catherine, to award the Public Water System – Contract Operating Services to Northeast Water Solutions Inc. (NWSI) at an annual price of \$18,980 per year for three years and per contract rates for additional services as required as noted on the memo from Ned Draper and the NWSI contract both dated September 7, 2021. Ned requested that an amendment be made to add “subject to legal review” to the motion. George asked if there will be coordination between this and the company monitoring the wells for the Middle School. Ned explained that he could have them coordinate but one tests the water in our wells while the other is removing oil.

Ryan Callahan made an amendment to the motion, seconded by Craig Louzon to include “subject to legal review” in the motion. In favor: Unanimous.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Catherine Giusti and it was VOTED: To award the Public Water System – Contract Operating Services to Northeast Water Solutions Inc. (NWSI) at an annual price of \$18,980 per year for three years and per contract rates for additional services as required as noted on the memo from Ned Draper and the NWSI contract both dated September 7, 2021 subject to legal review. In favor: Unanimous.

## X. Reports

### A. Subcommittee Reports

1. Health & Wellness Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, October 5, 2021 at 4:00 PM in the High School Library.

### B. Superintendent’s Report

1. Flu Clinics – The Superintendent reviewed the dates of the flu clinics as follows: Middle School 10/6; Hope Valley 10/7; Charlestown 10/13; High School 10/19; Richmond 10/21 and Ashaway 10/26. There is a flyer on the main page of our website.

2. Assistant Superintendent Update on Recent Professional Development – Michael noted that the PD this year is centered on high quality curriculum materials. He reported on the professional development that has occurred to date and upcoming PD days.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

## XI. School Committee Requests for Future Agenda Items or Legal Opinions

Lisa stated that she is happy to be flexible with her request that could occur anytime in the fall. The public forum format is continuing to have a barrier; we can’t discuss or respond to comments made per Robert’s Rules and OMA. We have two resources recommended by RIDE for culturally responsible curriculum. She would like to have a visitor from RIDE (content expert) to answer systemic questions so the community can understand. This is a State issue.

Craig noted that with budget season coming up, he feels it is time to think about adding another position to the school system with all the requests we have been getting for public information. If Jon needs to be included on this for training of this individual, the Committee can take a vote. This is a burden on secretarial staff, especially Donna. The Clerk noted that she did not feel that Jon needed to be involved as there is specific training required by the State that must be completed every year on OMA (Open Meetings Act) and APRA (Access to Public Records Act).

Bill wholeheartedly supported Lisa's suggestion but felt they should hold a special meeting in the Middle School auditorium so plenty of citizens can participate and be heard.

#### XII. Adjournment

Ryan Callahan made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To adjourn at 8:31 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

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Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk