

Chariho School Committee Meeting
Regular Session Minutes
March 28, 2023

Committee Members Attendance: Donna Chambers, Tyler Champlin, Kathryn Colasante, Polly Hopkins, Clay Johnson, Craig Louzon, Linda Lyall, Andrew McQuaide, Larry Phelps, Patricia Pouliot and Karen Reynolds. Absent: Chair Catherine Giusti.

Administrators and Others Attendance: Superintendent Gina Picard, Assistant Superintendent Michael Comella, Director of Administration and Finance Ned Draper, Systems Administrator Eric O'Brien, NEA Chariho President Vin Levcowich, NEARI Representative Leslie Florio, a large group of certified staff NEA members and School Committee Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz.

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

In the absence of Chair Giusti, District Clerk Donna Sieczkiewicz called the meeting of the Chariho School Committee, held in the Chariho Middle School Auditorium, to order at 6:45 PM. She noted that she would entertain a motion to appoint a Chair Pro Tem for this evening's meeting.

Andrew McQuaide made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was VOTED: To nominate Linda Lyall, our previous Chair, to the position of Chair Pro Tem for this evening's meeting. In favor: Unanimous.

Linda assumed the position of Chair and asked all to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

II. Motion/Vote to go into Executive Session

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Donna Chambers and it was VOTED: That the School Committee go into executive session under the authority of R.I. General Laws Section 42-46-5(a)(2) for the purpose of discussion pertaining to litigation/legal update (Approval of Executive Session Minutes of March 14, 2023 - C.A. No. PC-2021-06474 - The Robinson Green Beretta Corporation v. Chariho Regional School District, through its Chair, Linda Lyall); 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 March 14, 2023 - Home Instruction Requests and 2. Approval of Home Instruction Requests); any persons to be discussed have been so notified. In favor: Unanimous.

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

Chair Lyall reconvened the meeting at 7:00 PM. All were asked to please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

IV. Closing/Sealing of Executive Session Minutes

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

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Tyler Champlin and it was VOTED: That minutes relating to the privacy of students and their records (Approval of Home Instruction Requests) remain sealed. In favor: Unanimous.

V. Disclosure of Executive Session Votes

Chair Lyall stated there were four votes taken in executive session. The first vote, approval of executive session minutes of March 14, 2023 – RGB Litigation, was unanimous with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Hopkins, Johnson, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot and Reynolds voting in favor.

The second vote, approval of executive session minutes of March 14, 2023 – Home Instruction Requests, was unanimous with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Hopkins, Johnson, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot and Reynolds voting in favor.

The third vote, approval of home instruction requests, was unanimous with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Hopkins, Johnson, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot and Reynolds voting in favor.

The fourth vote, to return to open session, was unanimous with Chambers, Champlin, Colasante, Hopkins, Johnson, Louzon, Lyall, McQuaide, Phelps, Pouliot and Reynolds voting in favor.

VI. Recognition – The following were congratulated/thanked:

1. Chariho Vocal Select and Chariho High School Women’s Group – Superintendent Picard noted that this is a great way to kick-off Artessy which will be held this weekend. Choral Director Lynn Dowding introduced the Women’s Group. They practice after school on Wednesdays. Auditions were held in the fall and this group does not receive any credits for their time spent rehearsing and performing. They do it because they love it. She then introduced CVS (Chariho Vocal Select). This group also auditioned in the fall and they hold their practices on Tuesdays after school with no credits being earned for their commitment. They do a lot of singing in the community. The entire chorus is comprised of around 40 students. She invited all to the High School Concert which will be held on Friday at 7:00 PM in the Middle School auditorium. The two groups performed separately and then together, singing a song they will perform on Friday. Lynn provided a little background information on All-State Chorus. It is like “play-offs” for chorus. There are several parts to the audition and students are ranked against all Rhode Island students. She had five students audition and all five were selected which is quite an honor. They performed this past weekend (on Sunday) with all who were selected at the Veterans’ Auditorium.

2. Selected to the Rhode Island All-State Chorus were: Rachel Lindelow (CVS - grade 12), Maisie Datson (Women’s Group - grade 12), Virginia Keister (CVS - grade 12), Adaline LaBossiere (Women’s Group - grade 10) and Abigayle Fadgen (CVS - grade 12). Abigayle is also being recognized for receiving a Silver Key Award for her Ceramic piece “Monotone Ocean” at the Regional-at-Large (East) Scholastic Art Competition.

3. RI Art Anchor Awards is a newly-established statewide art show. Chariho High School had 18 student artworks on display. The following received awards:

- Finn Almagno-Gillooley – *Anchor Award – Photography*
- Kaitlyn Burns – *Wave Award – Self Portrait*
- Blake Carboni – *RIAEA Award – Special Recognition*
- Liam Currier – *Anchor Award – Ceramics*
- Morgan Lawing – *Anchor Award – Ceramics* – Morgan is also being recognized for receiving a Silver Key Award for her Ceramic piece “Fish Out of Water” at the Regional-at-Large East Scholastic Art Competition.
- Madelyn Lussier – *Anchor Award – Photography (for Queen of Hearts)* and another *Anchor Award – Photography (for Shine Through)*. Madelyn is also being recognized for receiving a Silver Key Award for this her Photography piece “*Shine Through*” at the Regional-at-Large East Scholastic Art Competition.
- Jack Manni – *Anchor Award – Photography*
- Evan-Paul Medenciy – *Anchor Award – Photography*
- Kaitlin Wojcik – *Anchor Award – Mixed Media* and a *Wave Award – Abstract/Experimental*

Alaina Frias – Received Honorable Mention for her Painting “Feed Me, I’m Scared” at the Regional-at-Large East Scholastic Art Competition.

4. Middle School Spelling Bee Winner Luke DeFedele (grade 7) and Runner-Up Shaylee Horstman (grade 6) represented Chariho in the State Spelling Bee.

VII. Public Forum

Chair Lyall explained that Public Forum is an opportunity for people to speak on items that are not on this evening's agenda. She noted there was one speaker who has signed up to speak and asked if there was anyone else interested in speaking. There were no others interested. Andrew McQuaide stated there has been a conversation around this budget that he has found deeply troubling. The gist of it has been a narrative from those who have advocated for more cuts in addition to the \$1.2M already cut and against the budget's passage that those of us who have advocated against further cuts and support this budget simply don't care about or aren't mindful of our communities elderly, people living on a fixed-income, living paycheck to paycheck, and those in need due to job loss, insecure housing or otherwise. Initially, he was troubled by it because it's not true. He knows that this is not true about himself. And while he can't speak for the other Committee Members, his experience so far has only given him evidence that these are people who care deeply for their entire community and one of many ways they show it is through their service on this Committee. But then he realized why it truly troubled him. Their argument is based on a foundation that we can EITHER fund quality public education OR we can support those who are in need, on fixed incomes and our communities' elders. That is a false choice. We shouldn't be fooled by it and we certainly shouldn't accept it. Call him naive or Pollyanna, but having lived in this community his entire life, he believes they can do both. This should not be an either/or scenario. If there was ever a both/and situation, this should be it. We can, and we should want a community that can, BOTH support a quality education for our children AND for those who are in need. And then there are those who say that the Superintendent and others are being emotionally manipulative when we share the impact of another level-funded budget on the children of this school district. In fact, they criticize community members who also teach in our schools and have spoken up during this budget process arguing against their personal and professional experience by saying that they have a "vested interest and benefit from the increased budget". On this, they are right...but for the wrong reason. Educators see in their classrooms the impact of families who are living paycheck to paycheck or are homeless and, based on his experience, they have no interest in perpetuating this for any of their students or any community member. You're right, they do have a vested interest - but that interest is not their wallets as insinuated - it is wanting to set all students up for success and recognizing that in doing so they set this community up for success as well. Please don't accept this false choice. We don't need to look beyond this very campus to see that we don't live in an "Either/Or" community. Our students and educators BOTH engage in a rigorous, quality education AND support our community by building homes for those in need, by being active in our nursing homes and hospitals, and by organizing food drives and clothing drives...just to list a few. Thank you.

Jessica Purcell from Richmond stated, in light of yesterday's events in Chariho and fourteen other districts across the State, the threat of violence in our schools and then later on finding out about another shooting, she was trying to think of solutions. The best solution is security and support from your community, whether it is your family, your school, your towns' people, your neighbors, and one thing that recently happened in Richmond is that we've hired a Human Services Director. This was recommended by the Wellness Committee who studied the area of need in our community. This is funded by ARPA money for three years. It is a three-year position, part-time, and they just hired someone last week. She would love for everyone to be aware of this person or connection and would love for her to come to speak. She would love to connect the School Committee with all the other resources that we have within twenty minutes of us. She just wanted to bring it up as it is important for everyone to know – parents and especially teachers and staff in schools. These events are very scary and we are fortunate that everyone is fine. She just wanted to talk about solutions and bring up holistic ways we can provide security to our community.

VIII. Policy

A. Hazing Policy (Adoption) – The Superintendent noted that the Policy Subcommittee Members agreed that having the law embedded in the policy is beneficial. She recommended adoption of the Hazing Policy as revised after recommendations made during the First Reading and agreement by the Policy Subcommittee. Chair Lyall added that the Policy Subcommittee actually looked at this policy on two occasions.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was VOTED: To adopt the Hazing Policy. In favor: Unanimous.

IX. Business

A. Learning Inside Out Grant – Superintendent Picard recommended approval to submit this grant request to the Rhode Island Department of Education School Building Authority for up to \$100,000 for creation of outdoor classrooms and pollinator gardens across all schools. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Andrew, to approve submission of this grant request. Katie Kirakosian provided an overview of the request, highlighting what will be done to each school (outdoor classroom improvements and pollinator pathways). Polly questioned if they could utilize Chariho services, such as the construction class, for some of this work to which Katie explained that the work would need to be reviewed by higher level individuals at RIDE.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was VOTED: To approve submission of a grant request to the Rhode Island Department of Education School Building Authority for up to \$100,000 for creation of outdoor classrooms and pollinator gardens across all schools. In favor: Unanimous.

B. Renew America School Grant – Superintendent Picard recommended submission of this grant request to the Department of Energy for \$4.685M (91% would be funded by DOE; 9% funded by the District) for seven improvements across all eight schools that would improve the District's energy efficiency and air quality. The concept paper submitted by Katie was short-listed from 1000+ applications, nationally. She noted that the 9% that is to be funded by the District is already included in the Capital Improvement budget. Craig made a motion, which was seconded by Andrew, to approve submission of this grant request. Katie stated that this will be the largest grant ever received by the District if we are selected with improvements occurring from FY24 to FY26. Donna commented that she remembers a time when Katie was not here in the District. She thanked Katie for all the grant money she has secured. Craig questioned how much security would the 3M film provide to which Ned responded, based on a review of what just happened, it will slow it down. It is an added level of deterrent. Gina noted that these were the recommendations from the District Safety Team. Chief Johnson will be in attendance at the April meeting during Executive Session.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was VOTED: To approve submission of the grant request to the Department of Energy for \$4.685M (91% would be funded by DOE; 9% funded by the District) for seven improvements across all eight schools that would improve the District's energy efficiency and air quality. In favor: Unanimous.

Chair Lyall thanked all for attending and being so positive.

X. Consent Agenda Items

Chair Lyall asked if there were any items that needed to be pulled. Seeing none, Craig acknowledged the donation and thanked the donor.

Craig Louzon made a motion, seconded by Andrew McQuaide and it was VOTED: To move the Consent Agenda Items. In favor: Unanimous.

A. Minutes – Approved the following:

1. Executive Session Minutes of March 14, 2023 – Approval of Executive Session Minutes of February 7, 2023 (minutes not sealed).

2. Regular Session Minutes of March 14, 2023.

B. Transfers – Approved.

C. Bill Review – Accepted.

D. Revenue/Expenditure Account Status Report – None at this time.

E. Student Activity Fund Balance – None at this time.

F. Personnel Actions – None at this time.

G. Permission to Issue Bids/Request Quote – Approved the following:

1. Permission to issue and award a bid for the purchase of furniture/equipment for the district from the SBA (School Building Authority) Grant so long as the bid comes in within the amount designated in the Grant.

H. Permission to Award Contracts – None at this time.

I. Home Instruction – Action taken in executive session.

J. Grants – None at this time.

K. Donations – Accepted the following:

1. Donation from Earth Care Farm, Charlestown, RI (Jayne Merner Senecal) of 1.5 cubic yards of raised bed compost mix, valued at \$138.00 to the High School raised vegetable garden that will be maintained by Kathryn Sagamang's ADL Environmental Awareness Class.

XI. Reports

A. Subcommittee Reports – Nothing to report.

B. Superintendent's Report

1. Strategic Planning – We have spent the year on this planning and will present the Plan in May. We have had about 65 individuals involved which does not include the schools' teams.

2. FY24 Budget Reminder - The All-Day Budget Referendum – Tuesday, April 4, 2023 from 8 AM to 8 PM in each of the three Town Halls.

3. Artessy Reminder – Artessy will kick-off on Friday, March 31st with the High School Chorus Concert at 7:00 PM highlighting 100 years of Broadway. Artessy will continue on Saturday, April 1st with student art work, community collaborators and a highlight of CTC Pathways. All events will take place at the Chariho Middle School with Saturday's events running from 9-3. We hope all will join us.

C. Coming Events were highlighted.

XII. School Committee Requests for Future Agenda Items or Legal Opinions

There were no requests.

XIII. Adjournment

Tyler Champlin made a motion, seconded by Craig Louzon and it was

VOTED: To adjourn at 7:47 PM. In favor: Unanimous.

Donna J. Sieczkiewicz, Clerk