

Regular Board of Education Meeting – Draft Minutes
Wednesday, May 21, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Town Hall Meeting Room

Present Board Members: Liz Barlow, Monica Logan, Heather Lombardo, David Peling, Karen Richmond-Godard, Ali Zafar (via Zoom), and Katie O'Neill (Student Representative)

Absent Board Members: Sofia Brenson

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Board Chair, Monica Logan, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Chairperson's Report (5 min.)

Chair Logan thanked all who were in attendance. She shared she heard about concerns over 10th grade curriculum regarding healthy living standards and asked Jennifer Parsons to share some information in this regard. Ms. Parsons stated she spoke to one parent and gave the Board an update that the lesson in question had a set of resources with it; however, students were not required to use those resources. She stated per state law, students may opt-out of instruction involving HIV/AIDS and further shared that all students may opt out of any lesson if they are not comfortable. The topic of the day is posted at the beginning of each class period. The curriculum is transparent for parents and high school courses are linked directly to the standards for which Granby Public Schools is accountable and which coincide with the Program of Studies. Parents are encouraged to look at the syllabus accompanying any class. She shared the district is currently working on adding reminders for opting out in the syllabus.

III. Awards and Recognition

Katie O'Neill, Senior and BOE Student Representative, was recognized for recently winning the 2024-2025 InvestWrite Contest. Katie came in first in the state and 10th in the nation. Katie was also recognized by the Board for her service on the Board of Education as a Student Representative. Katie will attend UConn in the fall.

Terri Ziemnicki, Granby's Girls' Lacrosse Coach, was recently named as the recipient of the Kathy Holloway Women of Inspiration Award by the National High School Athletic Coaches Association and will be recognized in June in Rapid City, South Dakota.

IV. Public Comment

Nick Faraco, Granby resident and former high school Guidance Counselor at Simsbury High School for 35 years. He inquired regarding the assignment in the Wellness Class what the objective was of this class. He stated he has ascertained that it was somewhat controversial and, if this is the case, parents should be aware and were not told about this assignment.

Christine Santa, high school parent, stated she moved to Granby 15 years ago for the school system. She shared that her children brought the topic of the health class up to her. Her daughter was given permission to opt-out and her son did not opt out for fear of receiving a zero. She stated videos were shown regarding sexual relations and she is attending tonight's meeting for all of the students who felt they could not opt out of the assignment for fear of receiving a zero. She inquired why parents were not notified of these sensitive topics stating this has been past practice, i.e., *Schindler's List* movie. She requested that action be taken regarding this curriculum and the sensitive material.

Jennifer Slade, parent of a 10th grader, stated her daughter did not feel she had the option to opt out of LGBTQ content. The content was inappropriate. She inquired if opposing viewpoints to these topics can also be shared.

Sean Wilmington, parent of a high school student, stated his ask is simple. Please post assignments for parents to view prior to being taught. Clear out any confusion so parents and students are clear and ensure that students can opt out. This is a reasonable request.

Marta Beckwith, mother of a high school student, stated she would like to see the content posted somewhere. She was appreciative of the opportunity to sign off on the *Schindler's List* movie. Additionally, she inquired if anyone on the Board had seen the videos.

Mike Kramarenko, Notch Road, Granby, stated there is a lack of communication when it is convenient for the Board and backs are turned when it comes to sexuality. He stated he believes no one under the age of 18 should be viewing anything with sexual content. He also stated he was disappointed that at a recent Board Meeting a Board Member spoke about attending a district equity committee topic of gender and gender oppression, which he believes was banned by the President.

V. Student Representative Reports

- Katie O'Neill stated AP exams have been held the past 2 weeks.
- Prom was great and students had a good time. The food and music were amazing.
- NHS Science Night was held this week. Elementary students worked with high school students to do science experiments. It was a fun night.
- The Senior Outing will be held on May 22nd. The weather is not favorable but there is an indoor space and the pool is heated.
- Juniors will take the NGSS Science Test on May 22nd.
- The Arts Expo and Chorus Concert will be held on May 22nd.
- There is no school Friday for professional development and no school on Monday for the holiday.
- Capstone Projects will be presented next Wednesday, May 28th.
- The Underclassmen Awards Ceremony is on May 30th and June 3rd is Senior Scholarship Night.

VI. Reports and Discussion

VI.A. Annual Facilities Report

Mr. Christopher DeGray, Director of Facilities, presented the Annual Facilities Report to the Board and gave a brief overview of the Facilities Department stating he has successfully hired permanent and temporary staff this year and made some changes as follows: conducts weekly meetings with his administrative assistant and maintenance and custodial lead personnel; meets with principals on a monthly basis; and made accommodations for custodial/maintenance staff to work summer hours. His maintenance crew is working tirelessly on the fields to get them ready for sports. Additionally, many cost-saving measures were put in place saving over \$85K since September. Mr. DeGray stated this summer, he will work in the field with the staff on the buildings and the grounds. He reviewed upcoming projects: indoor air quality testing will be done in-house; the HVAC mandate will start at the middle school (Granby will be a case study); CPPAC middle school renovation; turf field analysis and budget; and, upgrades to safety and security around the district. This summer all flooring will be deep cleaned and on the maintenance side plumbing, painting and work orders will be completed. Additionally, renovations will be done to the high school culinary arts room as well as new bleachers installed in the high school gym. Mr. DeGray thanked the Board for their continued support.

VI.B. Superintendent's Annual Report

Superintendent Burke stated she would like to respond to questions raised in public comment and thanked parents who reached out to the High School principal and teacher. The District strives for transparent communication and wants to hear about issues but may not always agree. Every individual should be heard. She shared the lesson given was at the teacher level and is directly aligned to a standard or an objective and gave an example. This lesson had nothing to do with sexual relations and, rather, sexual orientation and identity. These topics are uncomfortable. She agreed that the District needs to do better with communication. She shared that she viewed all of the videos and agreed that as a parent, she might have been uncomfortable with some of them as well. She spoke about other various topics covered, such as, suicide, grieving, etc., which may be challenging for certain students. Parents should have the tools they need if they would like to opt out their child. The District wants to partner with parents and for communication to be two-way. Liz Barlow inquired about standards and if they are district or state standards and Superintendent Burke shared they are state standards. David Peling inquired how students will know in advance if they will be uncomfortable. Superintendent Burke stated the objective for the lesson is posted on the board for students as well as the expected learning for the day. He also inquired about the penalty for disregarding the CT state standard and if the District can pick and choose which standards to include in the curriculum and teach to students. Chair Logan stated

the district should be cautious in micromanaging teachers but better communication needs to take place and can be improved upon. Ali Zafar stated clearly there is an issue in this town where people are upset. He inquired if a student opts out are parents informed and the answer is not currently. Mr. Zafar believes parents should receive a notification. He also inquired what exactly is the opt-out process and if it can be communicated earlier in the year. He suggested having stickers, signs, etc. to remind students they can opt out.

Superintendent Cheri Burke presented her Annual Report for the 2024-2025 school year to the Board and stated she sees her role as a Superintendent to inspire her staff. She spoke first of the Student Achievement goal for 100% of Granby students to make growth and shared that since prior to the pandemic, the District is seeing its highest math scores on the Smarter Balanced Assessments in Grades 6, 7 and 8; a 20-point increase in Grades 8 and 9 PSAT scores; and early data shows Grade 3 as achieving 70% at proficiency or higher on both Math and ELA. The focus on achievement consists of hiring a Certified Math Intervention Teacher at GMMS; focused training for Teaching Assistants to support small group instruction; and data teams at the grade and building level to target instruction. Next, Superintendent Burke spoke about the second goal around community engagement and communications stating the District successfully completed the first two years of the district communication plan; published a crisis response protocol; developed and shared a communication plan for incidents and emergency response; created a guide to address school concerns; and, revised all library media websites with searchable tools for book collections.

Next, Superintendent Burke discussed safety and security and stated the District's Emergency Planning Committee meets 4 times per year and this year revamped and updated the District's Reunification Plan. Additionally, this fall, the District will welcome the first School Resource Officer. Another aspect of safety and security discussed was mental health. The District collaborated with the Farmington Valley Health District this year to train all Granby staff in Youth Mental Health First Aid; certify all Grade 11 and 12 students in Teen Mental Health Training; and, offer online vaping and substance abuse prevention classes for at-risk youth. Superintendent Burke spoke about the Special Education and Program Development including the RISE Program, Alternative Learning Center and PAVE and shared students have successfully been brought back to Granby Public Schools from out-of-district placements. Reorganization of administration and Central Office staff was discussed. Two positions were eliminated at Central Office: Grants Manager and Out-of-District Coordinator. An Administrative Assistant position was added to the Human Resources Department as well as Department Chair stipends for existing special education positions (at schools). She also shared an Assistant Principal position was eliminated at the high school and a Dean of Students was hired as well as a Director of School Counseling.

The Capital Improvement Plans were discussed and Superintendent Burke shared that research was done and a solution was identified for the GMHS track and field concerns; a complete study of GMMS was done for consideration to renovate/build new; and infrastructure updates for safety and security. Next, Superintendent Burke spoke about the aligned schedule at GMMS and GMHS stating that the District worked with a consultant group who met with focus groups of students, staff and administrators from both schools; collected data on current practice and instructional minutes; and analyzed bell schedules, course offerings and staffing data. She shared the goals of this work to align schedules at both schools; maximize academic intervention programming; and, manage low-enrollment and single-section classes. Superintendent Burke concluded her presentation by reviewing highlights under her goal categories of student achievement; community engagement and communication; safety and security; special education and program development; capital improvement plan; and aligned schedules. Chair Logan inquired 1) how students were involved in the focus groups and 2) what other programs will be available for students. Superintendent Burke stated the new schedule opens the opportunity for modernizing our current course offerings and with regard to the student focus groups, the middle school/high school solicited feedback from students and this feedback was considered for the work currently being done. Conversations were had with students and this Friday teachers will be spending time with students as well. Karen Richmond-Godard expressed concerns about social media access for students and what types of programs can address this. Superintendent Burke stated in the budget cycle this year, a pause was put on the Chromebook replacement cycle. There is signage at the high school regarding phone use and drop boxes for phones are at each class entry. David Peling stated West

Hartford does not allow phones in classes (only at passing time) and they have seen an increase in student engagement. He certainly supports this. Dr. Peling asked Superintendent Burke what she is most proud of this year and she stated her connections made with folks across the community and being a fabric of the community. She is proud of the staff hired and proud of the community.

VI.C. First Reading of Revised Policy 5131.911 - School Climate

The Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 5131.911, School Climate, to the Board for a first reading. Jennifer Parsons stated this policy is directly from the state and replaces the current "Bullying" policy. It is required this policy be adopted by July 1st. Granby is already about 85% compliant with the policy and needs to make the shift in the terminology used. This policy will go to the Board for a final reading and adoption at the next meeting.

VI.D. First Reading of Revised Policy 5112 - Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement

The Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 5112, Ages of Attendance/Admissions/Placement to the Board for first reading. Jennifer Parsons stated this policy is based on legislation and updates the Kindergarten entry age from December 31st to September 1st as well as the age and procedure at which a student may withdraw from school. This policy will go to the Board for a second reading and approval at the next meeting.

VI.E. Non-Lapsing Education Fund Balance

Nickie Stevenson, Director of Finance and Operations, updated the Board on the Non-Lapsing Education Fund balance for FY25. She shared that the Board approved this fund in September 2024. In FY24, the Board approved a deposit of \$35,269.86 and to-date no expenditures have been expended from this fund. Moving forward, administration will bring forward an amount, if any, at the first BOE meeting in September. She explained the Board can choose to deny or approve each year.

VII. Business Requiring Action

VII.A. Director of Finance & Operations Report

Ms. Stevenson presented the April 2025 Budget Expense Report and stated this report includes transactions up through May 15th. Overall, the budget remains aligned. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Heather Lombardo that the Granby Board of Education approve the April 2025 Budget Expense Report and identified line item transfers. This motion passed unanimously at 9:02 p.m.

VII.B. Approval for Transfer of FY26 Funds to Small Capital Fund

The Board considered the approval of not-to-exceed \$650,000 from the BOE General Fund to the Small Capital Fund in order to fund the cost of a new roof on the Central Office Building, bleachers in the Granby Memorial High School gymnasium and additional funding towards the plan for District Safety and Security. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow that in accordance with Town Charter Chapter 10, Section 5, Item (f) of the Town of Granby, the Board of Education approves the transfer of funds and appropriation to expend \$650,000 or such lesser amounts as deposited based on the proceeds as transferred from the Board of Education General Fund to the Board of Education's Small Capital Reserve Fund for the purposes of funding capital improvements, as outlined in the Board of Education Budget Expense Report Memo dated 5/16/2025, of which are all consistent with the projects contained in the district's approved Capital Improvement Plan. This motion passed unanimously at 9:03 p.m.

VII.C. BOE Capital Plan Approval

The Board considered approval of the BOE Capital Plan Priorities to be forwarded to CPPAC (Capital Program Priorities Advisory Committee). Superintendent Burke stated a 10-year capital improvement plan was established with the town and this plan was previously adopted in June 2024. CPPAC will meet this June and the BOE needs to identify and prioritize projects which will be the turf and track field replacement; GMMS renovation, BOE building roof replacement; district facility storage and district safety and security program. A motion was made by Heather Lombardo and seconded by Donna Nolan that the Granby Board of Education approve the attached Board of Education 10-Year Capital Plan priorities as follows: District Safety and Security Program, GMHS Turf Track and Field Replacement, Granby Memorial Middle School Renovation, Board of Education Building Roof Replacement, and District Facility Storage. This motion passed unanimously at 9:08 p.m.

VII.D. Approval of Healthy Foods Certification/Food and Beverage Exemptions - 2025-2026

The Board discussed and considered the approval of the Healthy Food Certification and Food and Beverage Exemptions for the 2025-2026 school year. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education will allow the sale to students of food items that do not meet the Connecticut Nutrition Standards and beverages not listed in Section 10-221q of the Connecticut General Statutes provided that the following conditions are met: 1) the sale is in connection with an event occurring after the end of the regular school day or on the weekend; 2) the sale is at the location of the event; and 3) the food and beverage items are not sold from a vending machine or school store. An "event" is an occurrence that involves more than just a regularly scheduled practice, meeting, or extracurricular activity. For example, soccer games, school plays, and interscholastic debates are events but soccer practices, play rehearsals, and debate team meetings are not. The "regular school day" is the period from midnight before to 30 minutes after the end of the official school day. "Location" means where the event is being held and must be the same place as the food and beverage sales. This motion passed unanimously at 9:10 p.m.

VII.E. Second Reading and Approval of Revised Policy 5145.5 - Suicide Prevention

The Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 5141.5, Suicide Prevention, to the Board for a second reading and adoption. A motion was made by Heather Lombardo and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education adopt revised Policy 5141.5, Suicide Prevention, as recommended by the Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee. This motion passed unanimously at 9:11 p.m.

VII.F. Minutes

A motion was made by Karen Richmond-Godard and seconded by Ali Zafar that the Granby Board of Education approve the minutes from the May 7, 2025 Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 9:11 p.m.

VIII. Committee Reports

VIII.A. Board Standing Committee Reports

VIII.A.1. Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communication

This subcommittee will meet on June 4th. Approved minutes are in the packet.

VIII.A.2. Finance/Personnel/Facilities

Donna Nolan reported this subcommittee met this evening and reviewed the April 2025 expense report as well as the March 2025 expense report; non-lapsing account; transfer of funds to small cap; healthy food certification; school lunch prices (no change for next year); food service bid update; and, efforts for reimbursement on high school roof project. Additionally, the bus shortage and shortage of drivers was also discussed and the inability to obtain buses for sporting events. Coach buses are being used when necessary but this is costly. Ms. Nolan also shared that multiple districts are affected and Granby is continuing to work on this issue.

VIII.B. Other Board-Related Reports

VIII.B.1. CREC/CABE

Chair Logan stated she is unable to attend the Board Chair meeting tomorrow but will share any pertinent information she receives.

VIII.B.2. Granby Education Foundation

Liz Barlow reported the GEF met on Monday; however, she was unable to attend. She read in the minutes that a grant was awarded to the Stony Hill Apartment Complex and wanted to share that grants other than for schools are given to the community.

VIII.C. Calendar of Events

Chair Logan stated there are many end-of-year events on the calendar.

VIII.D. Board Member Announcements

There were no Board member announcements this evening.

VIII.E. Action Items

Continue to work on communication efforts on student opt-out; screen time usage. Superintendent Burke stated both of these issues will be addressed in the fall.

IX. Superintendent's Report

- 8th graders went to Washington, DC. this week and are having a great time.
- School Resource Officer interviews will be held next week.
- Wax museum was held this week at Wells Road. Amazing projects by our 5th grade students.
- There is no school for students on Friday due to a professional development day and no school on Monday in observance of the holiday.
- The next and last BOE meeting of the year is on Wednesday, June 4th.

X. Executive Session

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education enter into an Executive Session to discuss the Superintendent's evaluation and contract. This motion passed unanimously at 9:19 p.m. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and Ali Zafar to adjourn the Executive Session. This motion passed unanimously at 9:50 p.m.

A motion was made to enter back into the regular Board of Education Meeting by Karen Richmond-Godard and seconded by Liz Barlow. This motion passed unanimously at 9:52 p.m.

XI. Adjournment

A motion was made by Karen Richmond-Godard and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education adjourn the Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 9:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth H. Barlow
Board Secretary