

Regular Board of Education Meeting – Approved Minutes
Wednesday, October 16, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Town Hall Meeting Room

Present Board Members: Liz Barlow, Heather Lombardo, Donna Nolan, David Peling, Karen Richmond-Godard, Ali Zafar, and Sofia Brenson (Student Representative)

Absent Board Members: Monica Logan and Katie O’Neill (Student Representative)

I. Call to Order and Welcome

Board Vice Chair, Heather Lombardo, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance as well as online this evening. She stated the Board Chair could not be in attendance this evening.

II. Chairperson's Report

Heather Lombardo stated, in response to yesterday’s lockdown at the middle school/high school by the Granby Police Department, that Superintendent Burke will speak more about this in her comments later on this evening. She shared that she has a middle school student herself. She thanked the Police Department for their immediate and thorough response as well as Superintendent Burke and her staff for the timely updates and communication. She also voiced a special thank you to the teachers for keeping students safe and calm.

III. Awards and Recognition

Superintendent Burke shared pictures and highlights from a recognition ceremony held last Monday, October 7th, for Don Rethke, most notably known as “Dr. Flush” who was honored for his many years as the founder of the Granby Grunts Robotics Team. A photograph of him was framed with a plaque beneath it and hung outside of the classroom where the Robotics Team meets. Superintendent Burke read a letter written by a former GMHS student, Jimmy Gnesda, thanking Mr. Rethke for all of his contributions over the years and the legacy he will leave to the team.

IV. Public Comment

Julie Haefner, 236 Simsbury Road, Granby shared she is in favor of having a School Resource Officer (SRO) for the Town of Granby stating they are invaluable at the school and create relationships with students. She stated surrounding towns such as East Granby, Simsbury and Suffield support SROs. She feels it is important for the town to pay for this resource (rather than the BOE) and she requested that people contact the Town Manager in this regard.

Sean Wilmington, Granby, CT, shared that he also supports an SRO or some sort of security in the schools stating it makes sense to protect our investment which is our children. He asked the Board to please bring this topic up for future consideration.

V. Student Representative Reports

- Sofia Brenson stated the Homecoming Dance is this upcoming weekend from 7-10 p.m.
- Drama rehearsals have begun for *Twisted Tales of Poe* which will be held November 15-17.
- The World Language Department is hosting our sister school from Dijon, France this week.
- Seniors have begun their meetings with Guidance Counselors.
- The College Fair and Blood Drive were held last week and well attended.
- PSATs will be held next week on October 23rd as well as the NHS Induction Ceremony.
- Picture retakes are on October 24th and Quarter One closes on October 29th.
- The DECA can and bottle drive will be held on November 16th from 10-12 to raise money to hopefully send the team to the nationals.
- Girls’ volleyball won their last game 2-1; boys’ soccer won 2-1 vs. Coventry on Tuesday; girls’ soccer won vs. Coventry 2-0; girls’ field hockey plays tonight against Suffield; football plays on Friday night vs. Coventry away; and, cross country had a meet this afternoon at Bolton.

VI. Reports and Discussion

VI.A. Special Education Programming

Kate Weingartner, Director of Pupil Services, along with Jennifer Miller and Tracy Smith, Special Education Department Chairs for Elementary and Secondary Education, respectively, presented on Special Education

Programming in the district and shared that this year, a new special education leadership team was created. Jen Miller is the Department Chair for Elementary PK-5 and Tracy Smith is the Department Chair for Grades 9-12. She stated the Department Chair role is essential in supporting the building administrators in compliance as well as supporting teachers with issues around special education matters. She shared what the Pupil Services Department is responsible for such as Individualized Education Programs; Section 504 plans, monitoring and compliance with legal obligations, as well as serving as a resource to support the needs of all types of learners. She reviewed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which ensures that children identified with disabilities under the law between the ages of 3 and 22 receive a free appropriate public education. She also reviewed the disability categories related to IEPs. Next, Ms. Weingartner spoke about a continuum of services which identifies different service delivery models to provide specially designed instructions to students with a disability. She shared current special education enrollment numbers (321 students were identified in the October 1, 2024 collection). This number includes 3 students who attend the B.E.A.R. Transition Academy as well as 26 students who are privately placed by a PPT and 13 students who attend magnet schools which are parent-choice. David Peling inquired how the district knows needs are being met with outplaced students. Ms. Weingartner stated programs are approved by the State of Connecticut, reviewed during PPT meetings with district representation, and, additionally, site visits are held. Karen Richmond-Godard inquired if there has been an increase in special education services in the secondary level the past couple of years. Ms. Weingartner stated she just arrived in Granby in March and cannot speak to that; however, Superintendent Burke stated that she can put that data in her report to the Board.

Jennifer Miller shared there is a new program at the K-2 Level called RISE (Reaching Independence through Support and Education). She stated 6 students are currently in the program which is for students with developmental and cognitive disabilities. Tracy Smith spoke about another new program called PAVE (Personal Academics and Vocational Experiences). This program currently has 10 students enrolled and involves applied academics, life skills, and social skills. She also shared the B.E.A.R. Transition Academy (Bringing Emerging Adults Resources) offers a network of support within the community and is a program for students aged 18-22.

Ms. Weingartner informed the Board about continued needs across the district, such as, chronic absenteeism at the secondary level; early intervention in PreK; specialized reading at the secondary level; mental health/behavior/dysregulation; as well as continued expansion of transitional and vocational programming at the B.E.A.R. Academy with the hope of adding 7 students in the 2025-2026 school year. Liz Barlow inquired what the caseloads are like in Granby and Ms. Weingartner stated Granby has smaller caseloads than Simsbury and Farmington. She stated she looks forward to growing the program and the support from the Board. David Peling inquired how kids are identified and if it takes a long time to get identified. Ms. Weingartner mentioned MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) and stated each building looks different as they look at the data and design interventions accordingly.

VI.B. School Counseling Report

Megan Rheiner, Director of School Counseling, presented a School Counseling Report to the Board regarding dual credit opportunities and post-secondary planning and shared the College Fair was held last week and over 90 pathways to college/career attended. Ms. Rheiner reviewed AP scores over the past 5 years and in 2024, 89% of students achieved a score of 3 or higher. She also reviewed achievements of the AP program such as 24 AP scholars; 22 AP Scholars with Honors; and 15 AP Scholars with Distinction. She spoke about the ECE and AP courses at GMHS stating that 5 AP/UCONN ECE courses as well as 3 UCONN ECE courses are offered. UCONN ECE courses are \$50/credit and Granby students receive between 3-6 credits per course. She shared that 117 students enrolled in ECE courses at GMHS earned a total of 704 college credits. Next, Ms. Rheiner spoke about CCP (College/Career Pathways (Asnuntuck)) stating in 2024, 61 students received 183 credits who took Intro. to Business. For the HSPP (High School Partnership Program), students in their junior or senior year, can enroll in a community college course and receive credit. And, lastly, courses at Asnuntuck College for Manufacturing, Welding and Electronics are offered to juniors and seniors who attend GMHS in the morning and are transported to Asnuntuck in the afternoon. New for 2025, CCSU Dual Enrollment in new courses Personal Finance, Intro. to Financial Accounting and Fundamentals of Marketing are available. Ms. Rheiner concluded the presentation by sharing statistics of post-secondary plans for the Class of 2024 that 70% are attending four-year colleges and universities; 25% attending two-year colleges; 1% in Career Education; 1% in Military and 2% in employment. Superintendent Burke stated that Ms. Rheiner joined Granby over the summer to replace the Director of Guidance position which was under Julie Groene's position and is doing a great job thus far. She thanked her for all of the work put into her presentation.

VI.C. First Quarter Budget Expense Report (July-September 2024)

Ms. Nickie Stevenson, Director of Finance and Operations, presented the budget report for the first quarter of this school year (July 2024-September 2024) and stated analysis of both personnel and program accounts suggest that projected expenditures will be covered within the budget. Estimated special education expenses for FY25 are currently within the spending plan; however, deficits can be seen with out-of-district tuition and transportation. Ms. Stevenson explained the new design of the report which shows program accounts on one page, personnel accounts on another, and then supplemental information such as revenue to the town and the Quality and Diversity Fund on the last page. She stated the Q&D opening balance was \$95K and revenue to the town is projected to be a little over \$2.5M. As fluctuating special education expenses directly impact grant amounts, the Excess Cost Grant has been and will continue to be the largest unknown throughout the year. Donna Nolan stated this report was reviewed and accepted in the Finance Subcommittee Meeting this evening.

VII. Business Requiring Action

VII.A. Minutes

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education approve the minutes from the September 18, 2024 Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed with one abstention (David Peling) at 8:20 p.m.

VII.B. Second Reading and Approval of Revised Policy 3541 - Transportation

The Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 3541, Transportation, to the Board for a second reading and approval. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Karen Richmond-Godard that the Granby Board of Education adopt revised Policy 3541, Transportation, as recommended by the Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee including the proposed edits presented this evening. This motion passed unanimously at 8:21 p.m.

VII.C. Second Reading and Approval of Revised Policy 6146 - Graduation Requirements

The Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee recommended revised Policy 6146, Graduation Requirements, to the Board for a second reading and approval. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Liz Barlow that the Granby Board of Education adopt revised Policy 6146, Graduation Requirements, as recommended by the Curriculum/Policy/Technology/Communications Subcommittee. This motion passed unanimously at 8:22 p.m.

VIII. Committee Reports

VIII.A. Board Standing Committee Reports

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

This subcommittee has not met. The next meeting is on November 6th.

VIII.A.2. Finance/Personnel/Facilities

Donna Nolan reported this subcommittee met this evening to review and approve the first quarter budget expense report. Also, the contract negotiations for administrators have come to a tentative agreement and should be ready to be brought to the Board at the next meeting. Also discussed the athletic fields and track; there are some areas where water puddles have caused waves in the track. Repairs have been attempted to no avail. A request to potentially replace the track and field could come up in the next budget cycle. An issue with buses and the lack of bus drivers was discussed as it is affecting schools and athletic programs. Nickie Stevenson and Superintendent Burke are going to meet with the bus company.

VIII.B. Other Board-Related Reports

VIII.B.1. CREC/CABE

There was nothing to report for CREC/CABE.

VIII.B.2. Granby Education Foundation

Liz Barlow shared two grants that were approved: \$800 grant for the Native Peoples of Quinatuck to visit 2nd Grade classrooms for a lesson and \$120 to support the Children's Book Festival.

VIII.C. Calendar of Events

Heather Lombardo stated tomorrow night is trivia night at the middle school; October 23rd is the NHS Induction Ceremony; and, there is no school for students on November 5th for professional development. David Peling

inquired about professional development being at the high school on Election Day and Superintendent Burke shared that only high school staff will be at the high school for professional development and all other staff will be in their respective buildings.

VIII.D. Board Member Announcements

There were no Board member announcements this evening.

VIII.E. Action Items

1) Superintendent Burke will provide data on caseloads for special education students; and, 2) Data trends for the percentage of students receiving special education services

IX. Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Burke provided the Board and community members a summary of what occurred in the district on Tuesday. A threat was called in to the Veterans crisis line, which was referred directly into the Granby Police Department who activated the lockdown and were on site immediately. They called for support from other police departments in order to sweep the middle school and high school buildings. Superintendent Burke shared that once a lockdown is initiated, buildings must stay in lockdown until released by the Police Department. Since the high school was put into lockdown, the middle school was also put into lockdown as they share the same campus. A text alert was sent that additional information would follow and 20 minutes later a second alert was sent that police were on site. She stated it took 50 minutes to clear the schools and at 3:15 p.m., we learned that the lockdown was lifted. She shared that other school districts across the state also fell victim to the same "swatting" event which is a false report and is intended to disrupt our emergency response system. This is happening in record numbers and over 80 calls have taken place across the state since school has opened this year. Superintendent Burke stated she is grateful and proud of this district from Central Office to teachers, staff and students and that it is a tremendous strain on everyone. The response was heavy and was challenging. Students were respectful and remained calm. It is an opportunity to reflect and receive feedback which was done this morning. She shared one major disruption to the process is the use of Facebook and social media while the lockdown is going on. It is important to have timely and accurate information. False information can be received and shared with students which is not helpful and only elicits more fear. She begged the community to work with the district in this regard to help staff and students remain calm. Today, the middle and high schools had the opportunity to debrief with staff and students. Superintendent Burke visited all of the schools on Wednesday morning. She thanked the Granby and Simsbury Police Departments as well as parents and the Board. Vice Chair Lombardo stated Chief Sansom attended the last BOE Meeting where the Crisis Protocols were reviewed. Superintendent Burke reminded everyone these documents can be found on the main page of the website.
- Met with the French exchange student this morning.
- On Monday, Mr. Chris DeGray, new Director of Facilities will join the staff at Central Office.
- The next edition of the *Vision* will be delivered at the end of the month in the *Drummer*,
- Granby Parks and Recreation is holding a "trunk or treat" in the BOE parking lot on Sunday, October 20th, from 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- A Farmington Valley flu clinic will be held on October 23rd from 2-5:30 p.m. in the high school cafeteria.
- The next regularly scheduled Board Meeting will be held on November 6th.

X. Adjournment

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by David Peling that the Granby Board of Education adjourn the regular Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth H. Barlow
Board Secretary

