

Regular Board of Education Meeting – Approved Minutes
Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
Town Hall Meeting Room

Present Board Members: Liz Barlow, Monica Logan, Heather Lombardo, Donna Nolan, David Peling, and Sofia Brenson and Katie O'Neill (Student Representatives)

Absent Board Members: Karen Richmond-Godard

I. Call to Order

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

II. Chairperson's Report

Ms. Logan welcomed everyone in-person and online this evening. She recognized Superintendent Burke for being awarded as the 2024-25 Superintendent to Watch by the National Schools Public Relations Association who recognize up to 25 school leaders nationwide with less than 5 years' experience who demonstrate dynamic, fast-paced leadership with strong communication at its core. Superintendent Burke's selection was based upon her innovative and effective technology to engage and inform the community and expand two-way communication and outreach efforts. Ms. Logan read a selection from the nomination materials submitted on her behalf and stated the Board is very proud and appreciative of Superintendent Burke for bringing her talent to the community.

III. Superintendent's Report

- Superintendent Burke shared that a second communication was sent to parents this afternoon with regard to the lockdown incident that occurred on Monday at the middle and high schools. She stated it is very challenging to communicate given the commitment to privacy and to making sure each and every child is protected. She shared that the individuals involved were identified and reiterated that no weapon was found on campus or elsewhere. Police confirmed this fact after an exhaustive search and confirmed there was no weapon and no imminent threat or danger. Consequences will be given for the disruption to the educational process. The Police Department is continuing to work in partnership with the district.
- Kindergarten registration is open for the 2025-26 school year.
- There will be an early release on January 29th for professional learning.
- There is no school on Monday, January 20th in observance of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.
- A Three-Board Meeting will be held January 21st at 7pm to review Plus One Budget recommendations.
- There will be a strings concert on January 27th and a middle school band concert tomorrow evening.
- Thank you to Kate Weingartner, Director of Pupil Services, and Jennifer Hudson, parent, who co-lead SEPTO (a special education PTO). Heidi MacDonald and Taylor Barbieri presented at Monday's meeting on executive functioning and the presentation was very timely and well done. The presentation will be posted online.
- The next Board of Education Meeting will be held on February 5th and at that meeting will be a return to the discussion of an SRO. The survey was a success with 750 responses by parents, staff, students, and the community. Feedback from the survey will be brought forward as well as an attempt to answer some of the questions asked in the survey. Superintendent Burke shared that 80% of survey respondents felt that an SRO should be added; 79% support an increase to the budget; and, 81% believe the position would be beneficial. She stated the Board will be asked to vote on this position at the February 5th meeting.

IV. Public Comment

Jennifer Ehmann 29 Pheasant Run, North Granby stated she has three sons. One son graduated in 2023 and the other two are a senior and a sophomore at the high school. Ms. Ehmann stated she is the Chair of Parents for a Safe Graduation which is an evening planned for graduated seniors and includes food, many activities and prizes including a cash prize contest for all seniors to design the invitation which is then made into a T-shirt for all students. Ms. Ehmann went on to state that it is great if this event can be held on a Friday as many parents work and it is harder to get volunteers during the week; however, she understands the law around setting the graduation date. Ms. Ehmann encouraged parents to volunteer for this event. She welcomed the Board as well as the audience to volunteer for the event and invited Board members to let her know if they would like to attend.

Katie O'Neill, 215 Mountain Road, and Sofia Brenson, 5 Farmview Lane, students at GMHS, spoke to the Board regarding their concerns with possibly changing the schedule for next year from 8 periods to 7 and eliminating PLC time and study halls. They stated the student athlete population is high and students may need more time to support a balance between academics and athletics. By eliminating PLC from the weekly schedule, it takes away an hour of rest that students could use. Additionally, using PLC as a study hall helps to assist students with their workload. They went on to state that a good sleep schedule is imperative for adolescents to maximize their brain development. Also, by eliminating a whole period it will become very difficult for students to take electives in the arts, business, STEM fields, and other humanities. Katie and Sofia requested for the Board to consider adding PLC to the middle school for students to have extra time for schoolwork or sleep. They concluded by saying they understand the want and need to implement changes; however, hope the Board can see merit in their ideas.

Beth Carroll, 10 Quail Lane, North Granby, stated she reviewed the presentation on the School Resource Officer Program and also participated in the survey as a non-school community member. She suggested it would be beneficial for the public to know how one person will be able to cover all of the schools and stated that the more that can be described to the public, the better. With regard to the \$100K cost, she suggested trying to offset some of the cost as opposed to an addition to the budget and feels it would be advantageous to try to do that.

V. Student Representative Reports

- Katie O'Neill reported midterm exams are well underway. National Honors Society students held tutoring sessions for students.
- An Elective Fair was held yesterday for 8th grade students. Jazz band and chamber singers performed.
- A FAFSA workshop was held after exams today.
- There is no school on Monday and third quarter begins on Tuesday, January 21st.
- There will be a Poetry Out Loud finalist assembly on January 22nd.
- Thank you to the Police Department for the quick response to the lockdown on Monday and effectively diffusing the situation.
- Job Shadow Day will be held on February 3rd.
- 8th grade parents' night will be held on February 4th with tours beginning at 5:45 and the program beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the High School Auditorium.
- Winter sports are in full swing. Boys' basketball played last night against Suffield and will play the Aerospace Academy home on Friday night; girls' basketball played last night against Suffield and will play South Windsor away on Saturday afternoon; wrestling has a match against Somers today and a match away vs. Hall on Saturday morning; boys' ice hockey plays North Braford away tonight; girls' and boys' indoor track has a meet away on Saturday morning; and, swimming has a meet on Saturday afternoon vs. Lakeview.

VI. Reports and Discussion

VI.A. Director of Finance & Operations Report

Ms. Nickie Stevenson, Director of Operations & Finance, presented the December 2024 Budget Expense Report and stated both personnel and program account expenditures are consistent and anticipated to be covered within the appropriated budget. Special education expenses continue to be within the spending plan. With regard to the Quality & Diversity Fund, the first installment of the Open Choice Grant funding was received as well as additional funds for PreK tuition. Revenue to the town decreased approximately \$280K since reported in November. Revenue from the BEAR Transition Academy reduced due to decreased enrollment from 3 students to 2 students; however, the district anticipates increased special education tuition revenue. Ms. Stevenson also shared that the State recently provided preliminary excess cost reimbursement percentages for FY25 and, at this time, Granby's expected reimbursement is 62.07% which decreases revenue by \$383,338 from the previous report. She also shared that Per Pupil Expenditures should be available by the end of January which was increased by \$764 to \$20,725. A motion was made by Heather Lombardo and seconded by Donna Nolan that the Granby Board of Education approve the December 2024 Budget Expense Report. This motion passed unanimously at 7:35 p.m.

VI.B. FY26 Plus One Budget Q&A and Approval

The Board reviewed questions submitted from Board members on the FY26 Plus One Budget as well as considered the FY26 Plus One Budget for approval. Superintendent Burke stated questions were asked by the Board and answered in a PowerPoint which was previously shared with the Board and is in the packet this evening. She shared that the Plus One Budget is a first step in the budget process and that the Plus One Budget is presented as a 5.67% increase over the FY25 Budget which includes 3.03% in contractual increases; 1.82% in special education costs and 0.82% for all other costs. She also shared the budget increases over the past four years as follows: FY25 6.43%; FY24 5.94%; FY23 4.29%; and, FY22 4.50%.

Superintendent Burke stated many of the Board's questions focused on special education program development; Board-Certified Behavior Analyst position; B.E.A.R. Transition Academy; leadership/administrative structure; and, staffing reductions. She went on to share information with regard to special education programming such as the RISE (Reaching Independence with Support and Education) at Kelly Lane; PAVE (Personal Academic & Vocational Experience) at the high school; B.E.A.R. Transition Academy for post-secondary students aged 18-22; and, an alternative learning program at the high school being piloted this school year which focuses on social emotional and behavioral support above and beyond what can be provided currently in the school setting. Superintendent Burke provided information on the Board-Certified Behavior Analyst position stating this position benefits students who may have behavioral challenges, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or emotional and behavioral disorders. A cost analysis of the B.E.A.R. Transition Academy was shared which showed a savings to the district of over \$800K in FY26 with a projected enrollment of 8 students. A slide was shared regarding administration/leadership positions comparing the administrative positions as well as the number of leadership positions which are filled by 7 teachers who receive a stipend on top of their salary to be a Department Chair. With regard to the 3.8 FTE reductions in FY26, Superintendent Burke stated this consists of 2.0 FTE Classroom Teachers (one at Kelly Lane and one at Wells Road) due to grade enrollment reductions and 1.8 FTEs in World Language.

With regard to questions asked by the Board, since the Q&A was provided to the Board ahead of time, each question was not reviewed in its entirety; rather, some questions were briefly discussed regarding the hiring of an SRO as well as the Groundskeeper and Maintenance Technician positions; electricity costs; and, savings in transportation costs. Superintendent Burke shared upcoming important dates of the Three-Board Meeting on January 21st and her budget presentation to the Board on March 5th. She thanked the Board for their questions and their support on the budget and asked if there were any additional questions. Donna Nolan inquired about the oil tank removals for Kelly Lane and Wells Road at a cost of \$165K and wondered if 1) there have been any leaks and 2) why is the cost so high. She also inquired about the basis for the state-mandated HVAC testing. Superintendent Burke stated she cannot answer these questions; however, the district's insurance company stated there was a need to transition them out of the ground. She will get back to the Board after consulting with Christopher DeGray, Director of Facilities, who can answer these questions at the next Board Meeting. David Peling commented that 5.67% is a big number and he cannot help to think about his dad who is retired and trying to live on a pension and Social Security and these types of increases are not sustainable. Monica Logan stated the Board has a series of hard decisions ahead of them. Donna Nolan stated the district has a shrinking student population but the budget continues to increase and the town unfortunately does not have a business base to support the budget. Heather Lombardo stated she is an advocate for the students and administration to give them what they need to succeed in a way that is responsible for taxpayers. A motion was made by Liz Barlow and seconded by Heather Lombardo that the Granby Board of Education approve the FY26 Plus One Budget to be forwarded to the Board of Finance. This motion passed unanimously at 8:30 p.m.

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 of the December 18, 2024 Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 8:31 p.m.

VII.B. Approval of June 2025 Graduation Date

The Board will discuss and consider the approval of the June 2025 graduation date to be Tuesday, June 10, 2025 (rain or shine). Superintendent Burke stated the district is legally obligated to have students in school 180 days so the projected last day of school is Tuesday, June 10th after one snow day. She stated if a snow day is called tomorrow, students in grades K-11 would need to make up this snow day. It is best practice to try to honor the 180th day. A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by David Peling that the Granby Board of Education approve the June 2025 graduation to be Tuesday, June 10, 2025 (rain or shine) as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools. This motion passed unanimously at 8:39 p.m. Monica thanked Jennifer Ehmann for all of her work with regard to the Safe Graduation Party.

VIII. Committee Reports

VIII.A. Board Standing Committee Reports

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

This subcommittee will meet on February 5th.

VIII.A.2. Finance/Personnel/Facilities

Donna Nolan reported this subcommittee met this evening and approved the Budget Expense Report for December 2024. Received an update on CPPAC – preparing a fact sheet on the BOE priorities on the turf, track and field replacement; middle school renovation; and safety upgrades. Also received a transportation update – there are 2 years left on the contract and there is an upcoming meeting with CREC to renegotiate rates. The Plus One Budget was briefly discussed as well as outstanding meal balances at the high school and the pursuit of reimbursement for these balances.

VIII.B. Other Board-Related Reports

VIII.B.1. CREC/CABE

Monica Logan stated she has a Board Chair leadership meeting on Thursday and will keep everyone apprised if there is something to report. Superintendent Burke shared that she recently spoke to Greg Florio, Executive Director at CREC, regarding the time of CREC Council Meetings and he shared that they compete with so many other districts who hold board meetings on different days during the week. He shared that this topic will be discussed at a future board meeting to see if the time of 11 am can be pushed back to around 4:30 or so.

VIII.B.2. Granby Education Foundation

Liz Barlow shared that the GEF has not met and Kim Becker said to keep on the lookout for GranBee information.

VIII.C. Calendar of Events

Monica Logan stated the calendar of events is as presented.

VIII.D. Board Member Announcements

Monica Logan thanked the Board and extended her gratitude for working collaboratively on the budget.

VIII.E. Action Items

1) Cost of underground tank removal and 2) Cost of HVAC testing. Superintendent Burke stated these items will be addressed at the next Board of Education Meeting on February 5th.

IX. Adjournment

A motion was made by Donna Nolan and seconded by Ali Zafar that the Granby Board of Education adjourn the Board of Education Meeting. This motion passed unanimously at 8:44 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth H. Barlow
Board Secretary