DRAFT Minutes

Chariho Regional District School Committee

SPECIAL MEETING - August 5, 2025

In attendance for the School Committee
Dinsmore, Louise (Chair)
Chambers, Donna
Hopkins, Polly
Louzon, Craig
Lyall, Linda
Phelps, Larry
Pouliot, Patricia
Purcell, Jessica
Reynolds, Karen
Tefft, Dianne

In attendance for Administration
Picard, Gina M., Superintendent
Comella, Dr. Michael, Assistant Superintendent
Zenion, Gregory, Director of Administration & Finance
Brasil, Angela, Clerk

Absent: Tyler Champlain; Laura Chapman

Call to order. Chair Dinsmore called this Special Meeting to order at 6:00pm and led with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence, as usual. She explained why we have called this special meeting for tonight, welcomed everyone and thanked our audience members for their attendance. Then she turned the meeting over to Superintendent Picard who introduced Holly Demers from Colliers (Project Management) and Catherine Ellithorpe from S/L/A/M (Architects) who will be on hand tonight for any questions or concerns the Committee may have for them. Superintendent Picard stated that Colliers has been working with our district for over six years and they are fabulous partners. She recognized Holly Demers and stated that Holly knows our buildings well. Holly understands how to collaborate and is meticulous about the paperwork that needs to be submitted to RIDE. She feels that Colliers' background will be a huge benefit to our district for this Stage II application process. Mr. Zenion said that Colliers is excellent, and they are very attentive to our needs. He feels very comfortable with them as they understand the various changes that RIDE makes throughout the process, as well as being very supportive and ready to answer any questions we have.

Superintendent Picard recommends approval of the contract with Colliers as the Owners Project Managers for the RIDE Stage 2 application for the Chariho Elementary School five-year Capital Improvement Plan. Member Louzon made the motion to approve this recommendation, seconded by Member Reynolds. **Discussion:**
Member Phelps asked if Colliers and S/L/A/M are the same company and inquired if we are able to hire Colliers and not S/L/A/M. Superintendent Picard explained that we can only discuss Colliers at this time. Mr. Zenion stated that Colliers has advised us regarding the architect as they've worked together on similar projects in the State. Member Phelps asked, for clarification, if we are hiring Colliers because we don't currently have the Bureau Veritas report back from the State? Superintendent Picard replied that we need to have an Owner's Project Manager for all our projects. Additionally, we are required, by law, to have a five-year Capital Improvement Plan. We have, unfortunately, been without one for five years. He remembers having the Jacobs report in the past and feels that he cannot make a "restless decision". He doesn't understand why we can't get their report. The Superintendent replied that we still have a significant amount of work to be done at the Elementary Schools, and as a result of our district not approving a five-year plan to date, we could only put in $500,000.00 into the budget for the schools. We keep repeating this process. Member Pouliot inquired if Colliers works as a "general manager" and will manage the subs on the project. Holly Demers explained that Colliers, as the Owners Project Manager, would look out for the best interests of Chariho throughout this process. They are the eyes and ears on the ground to be sure Chariho is getting the best to meet their needs. They will help set up RFPs, help review them, help set up a matrix to score them, etc. Their goal is to protect Chariho. Member Reynolds reiterated that this is required by RIDE. She appreciated that both Gina and Greg have made it very clear that Colliers is well-versed in this work and very responsive. Member Purcell, for Member Phelp's clarification, expressed that Colliers and S/L/A/M are not the same and S/L/A/M will be discussed in the next agenda item. He stated that he understands this. Chair Dinsmore inquired about the "scope of services" provided in the packet documentation. She read aloud the bullet points of deliverables and asked if this would become more expansive. Holly Demers stated that

this is a full and complete list of deliverables "soup to nuts" throughout Stage II. They will follow up with RIDE once Stage II has been submitted and there will be some back and forth there, until it is finally approved in June. Colliers would coordinate all of that during the Stage II process. Chair Dinsmore also inquired about the service fee for Stage II (referencing $185,000.00 allowable for reimbursables). She asked what happens to the funds if they are not all expended. Holly explained that it is just left unspent. Her third question is about the section 5.0 retainer *(Colliers CPL reserves the right to request a retainer from the client prior to the commencement of services on a project)* – she inquired if the $197.000 noted there is equivalent of the retainer? Holly replied, No – that's corporate backup language. She's never seen an actual retainer required. The fee is the total minus expenses, and they bill on a per month basis, based on hours spent. There are no upfront fees. Chair Dinsmore's final question was whether Colliers has ever worked with a client that has, for whatever reason, terminated their agreement with Colliers in the last two years, based on school construction projects or stage II applications. Holly answered, No. Member Purcell referred to the subcommittee's review (Necessity for School Construction subcommittee) she looked at the fee for service which was just mentioned by Chair Dinsmore. On page two of the contract, it states $197,000.00, and at the bottom of the page it states, "these rates are subject to an escalation of up to 4% per year." Member Purcell was curious if this rate was increased 4% from last year. Holly stated that the numbers given are current and would be through this whole period. She is not sure what was paid last time (looking at a previous contract breakdown) but will get that for the Committee. Member Hopkins clarified one of the concerns regarding the previous Jacob's report and the current Bureau Veritas report (which is not going to be ready). She asked Holly how she feels about this report not being in hand and the fact that the Jacobs report is ten years old. Holly explained that you'd have to do a deep dive into the conditions of the buildings as they are now. She doesn't feel that the Bureau Veritas report will be very helpful. As far as establishing cost for Stage II, you can't assume that what is in either of those reports is accurate. You must have someone come in and you need due diligence. Member Hopkins asked if Colliers would be responsible for that due diligence or if they work in tandem with the architect, in a team effort. Holly explained that in Stage II we hire the architect, and they take their whole team of engineers, in all different aspects of what is necessary for stage II and go into the buildings. Colliers go with them and they, along with the lead architects, really look at everything, including systems. This will provide a comprehensive, deep dive, into the actual condition of each building and will help determine actual needs. You don't want to rely on that report. Member Hopkins inquired if Colliers has worked with S/L/A/M before and if they are easy to work with and if Colliers has confidence in their work? Holly reported that they worked together on a $45 Million-dollar elementary school in 2020/2021 and are currently working on the Johnston Elementary School project which is about two thirds of the way done now, on time and on-budget. Chair Dinsmore called for further discussion. There being none, she called for a vote. **VOTE:** Unanimous in favor. ***Approved.***

Superintendent Picard recommends approval of the contract with S/L/A/M to prepare a RIDE Stage 2 application for the Chariho Elementary School five-year Capital Improvement Plan. Chair Dinsmore asked for the Superintendent's input on this, and the Superintendent explained that there were two bids put forward and the Necessity for School Construction Subcommittee voted to approve S/L/A/M. With this approval you will be finalizing your scope. There were three possibilities put forth when Mr. Zenion worked with Atty. Anderson in discussion with S/L/A/M. The Committee will have to finalize their plan and choose the project. The last project was a cost review of community interest in having three Elementary Schools; there is the one-elementary school option; and the last one was the original plan (five years ago) which was brought back up again, for renovations project, which is probably the most expensive. These are the three paths. If the Committee has questions, this would be the time to talk about the different scopes of what it is you want them to put forward to RIDE. By October, the Committee will have to decide on the final project which finalizes our Stage II application. Remember, your Stage II application is just a rendering, it is not the building you'll actually get, but it can show you what is available.

Member Louzon made the motion to move this agenda item for approval, seconded by Member Reynolds. **Discussion:** Cathy Ellithorpe from S/L/A/M was available for questions. Member Tefft inquired about the Jacob's report, which is ten years old and that this Committee should really not be looking at it. Cathy explained that they do look at it as a piece of information, but they need to build upon it. It's old and was only done to a certain depth. Member Tefft said, according to an individual at RIDE, because we don't have the

Bureau Veritas report (why?), it was mentioned that we should take the old Jacob's report and add 30% - which is confusing. If one person says don't look at that ten-year-old report, and another says add 30%, what happens if a new report comes back and maybe we don't need that added 30%? Superintendent Picard, for clarity, stated that the architect would not handle this piece. The reports coming from the state are a result of the General Assembly creating a law that states you need a five-year capital improvement plan and that requires a review. The architects, both in Stage I and Stage II, give a much more in-depth report than you'd see from Jacobs or Bureau Veritas or any other. They are a "reviewer". Those reports may give you a "big picture" idea, because it's a requirement of the state, but it's not the expectation that this is the only thing we do. We are responsible for knowing our buildings. Member Tefft asked if that is the aim of the Bureau Veritas report? Superintendent Picard said we, as a district, know more. Jason Sullivan, Director of Facilities, knows our building inside and out. He knows what is needed. RIDE is only looking at our Capital Plan (or lack thereof), looking at what we are investing our money in, and what still needs to be done. Based on the age of our buildings (over 50 years old), we are already aged out. Those reports are not the "be-all, end-all" that's why there is a Stage II requirement. Member Tefft expressed that she understands this, but asked if we know what the difference is between what the Jacobs report recommended we do and what we actually ended up doing? Superintendent Picard said, because we have not had a capital improvement plan since the start of this, we've only been able to put the minimal amount of funds into the Elementary Schools for repairs. We are only allowed to spend up to $500,000.00 per year, because RIDE will not let you do more than that and be reimbursed. We are behind the eight ball. Member Tefft, stated that S/L/A/M are basically the designers right? Superintendent Picard stated that the architects will listen to your concerns, view the buildings, handle presentation of the different options, and this Committee will decide how they want to move forward. Member Tefft asked if the options will be available for public discussions. They will be. Member Tefft mentioned seeing a PK-Gr. 4 design for 1,100 students. Yes, per Superintendent Picard, that was one of the options. The last one was renovations of existing buildings. It seemed the community wanted to know what that would look like in comparison. The final plan will be up to the Committee. Member Dinsmore addressed the proposal received from S/L/A/M and read a portion aloud for further clarification. She stated "you put together a one-and-a-half-page proposal addressed to Mr.
Zenion on July 7th and it was revised on July 28th. In the first paragraph, you state that you are going to be charged with fully investigating the existing facilities, bringing forward options, and designing the best educational facilities for Chariho (she confirmed this is their overarching goal), and that this is a two-part process that was requested by administration. Part one would be creating a presentation that would be shared four times between September 15th and October 15th in all three towns, and at a school committee meeting, and that we have to decide by October 21st what option we would like to move forward with. Correct?" Cathy confirmed that this is correct. Chair Dinsmore went on to identify "part one of the proposal includes deliverables, site floor plans and renderings from the previous Stage II, for three new schools, and the following for each existing school, and the new central school. It's a conceptual colored site plan, conceptual colored floor plans, one conceptual exterior rendering, and conceptual cost estimates. These were all broken down under conceptual cost estimates." In the second bullet for that area, it states "there is not an actual site for a proposed new central PreK to 4 school. We will not be able to do any site investigations to inform us of a cost estimate. All site costs will be derived using best practice and any information provided by the owner for the land immediately around the central campus." Chair Dinsmore asked Cathy if this is part of the potential part one deliverables. Cathy confirmed that it is. The Chair went on to state "part two would be taking place after the School Committee decided at their October School Committee meeting what plan we would want to move forward with." Cathy confirmed this as well. The document further states that "S/L/A/M has assumed the school department will obtain an updated abbreviation NESC demographic report to be used to determine the population of each school, per RIDE guidelines." Superintendent Picard stated that this is the enrollment report which is required by RIDE. Chair Dinsmore asked when would this Committee get a demographic report to estimate population? Mr. Zenion explained that if this is approved tonight, he would call for an updated enrollment report tomorrow. Superintendent Picard stated that it is online – under the Necessity for School

Construction tab but is the one we did in Stage I. Every time you go through this process, RIDE requires you to update the enrollment. We've used NDADAQ. It is one of the cheapest ways to complete an enrollment study. They look at birth rates, death rates, permits pulled, and an overall review for a five-year enrollment. It's a pretty good rendering and estimates up to ten years forward. We've seen very small shifts. The Chair asked if these projections will be shared with the School Committee at some point before they have to decide in October. Mr. Zenion will get those numbers for the Committee tomorrow, if this is approved tonight. On the last page of the S/L/A/M proposal there is an estimated cost for part one which includes presentation and conceptual estimates of three options at a cost of $353,550.00. The cost is different for each option. Chair Dinsmore, for clarification, asked if this fee is due once the Committee has decided how they want to move forward. Cathy confirmed this. You only pay for the one you choose. Chair Dinsmore asked Superintendent Picard if our Stage II application is approved by RIDE, will we be reimbursed up to a certain amount for this? Superintendent Picard stated that there are certain portions of the project that are reimbursable. Holly from Colliers confirmed that any fees for Stage II, whether for the OPM or architect is reimbursable once you actually get the award and the projects go forward. They typically take the total fee for the contracts and break them down over the life of the projects. If you have one school it would just be part of that one school and be reimbursed based on the rate (currently 61%) and they provide a regional bonus which can be an additional five (percent). Chair Dinsmore asked if we have put money aside for all of this process in the Fiscal year 2026 budget. Mr. Zenion confirmed this. Member Purcell clarified that this process has been going on for two years and additional bonuses are out. The ones they are discussing from last time would have gotten us three-quarters of the way through the project. The reimbursable percentages, 66.76% to 81%, are gone as well. We are back to base level. New projects will be reimbursed at a lower rate than what was available the last time this was discussed. She also addressed consolidating into one elementary school; she wants to clarify that it was never voted on. It was pulled in 2020/2021. That Stage I never made it to Stage II. We made it to Stage II last year, but the voters voted it down. Member Purcell also stated (for the record) *"the school committee members here need to make it clear what they will stand for because there were some of you, including the chair, that were opposed to the last proposal for three new schools at 76 to 81% reimbursement, and I think that needs to be made known. And I think it's even more prudent that we hear what you do want and what you will approve because" (Chair Dinsmore interrupted and asked, "are you asking me that question right now?" Member Purcell went on to say "I'm not asking you right now, but if you'd like to answer it, that's fine. It wasn't just you. I said including you. I'm not trying to put anyone on the spot or be disrespectful, but I think that's part of the clarity that we need moving forward. In addition to clarifying that, the one consolidated school was never voted on and the bonuses that were previously available are now gone. So, I guess the three points I want to make sure we clarify in this discussion as we move forward. Chair Dinsmore, in response, stated: "to respond to that question, I would say that as part of this process in going to the three towns, I think it's important for us to listen to what the voters and the residents of our three towns want and what their feedback is. I think, you know, our partners will give us cost estimates and what those things are going to cost. I think it's important for us to be able to give information, as much in-depth information as possible on cost estimates for all three projects. Jess, you know, I want to, I I'm eager to hear from your due diligence and assess the stage or the state of the three existing schools. I'm really interested in hearing what it would cost for one new school, what it would cost for renovations and additions, and then if there is a price adjustment for three new elementary schools based on your work from the last time around. Just from a practical standpoint, I'm not I'm not going to say what my be all, end all preference would be right this second, but my personal preference would be for one new elementary school. I just think that from an efficiency standpoint, from a cost perspective, I think one new school would make sense for a regional school district, but I'm one person and I want to hear what the community has to say about the options, hopefully by the October school committee meeting."*

Cathy from S/L/A/M asked to add one thing to Chair Dinsmore's last comment, asking that in the October meeting, after everyone's heard from the communities, and this Committee discusses and gives S/L/A/M a direction they will take all of that information and show this Committee what the renderings and plans might be (at the October meeting), and move forward off of that. While there may be some collective changes, they'll be ready to show updated information in

February (2026) and it will still have the opportunity to evolve after that. She wants this Committee to realized that from October to February is our timeframe. Member Louzon added that he was a member of the building committee when it wasn't just one big school and there were three to five different proposals in front of them. He believes nine out of every ten people talk to work against it. Relative to the demographic study, he recommends sharing that information with each town to have accurate population information as member towns, twenty years from now, if they're still going to be paying based on their populations, will need that information. Member Purcell asked what the word "renovations" will mean; will it mean gut and renovate, or fixt little things. You can spend $15 Million dollars and improve HVAC, and the school still looks the same on the outside; she feels that this is an "unknown". She feels that saying we're going to build a school from the ground up is pretty straightforward, but saying "renovation" is more tricky, more gray area and opportunity for unexpected costs.

Cathy responded saying that RIDE expects that when we get done with a major renovation, that It's a substantial 50-year building, as if you built a new one. This may not mean moving every wall, but you'll probably be getting all new mechanical systems, upgrading plumbing, new roofs and windows. They also look at the programmatic (educational) program, so the students are exposed to the same curriculum. Making sure everybody gets to have a gym for instance, will be part of the discussions from October through February. There are so many choices that could be made based on the condition of each school. Member Purcell asked to follow up with another statement, but Chair Dinsmore reminded her that each member has two opportunities to ask questions on the same topic. Member Purcell asked if the Chair was trying to enforce that rule for this meeting, but she responded that she tries to reinforce it for all meetings. Member Purcell withdrew her request to comment further. Member Reynolds asked about ADA compliance, and it was noted that the expectation from the state and the Governor's commission on disabilities would be that our buildings would be made as fully accessible as possible. There may be times when an exception is warranted, but in a project of this scale would prove unusual. Mr. Zenion asked if a major renovation would take place with the students still in the school. This is also something that needs to be discussed. It is not ideal to do that, and at least two of the three existing sites are fairly constrained; it is something that RIDE will ask about in the February submission. If swing space is available, or deemed necessary, you need to budget for that in the full budgets that are presented. Chair Dinsmore asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, she called for a vote. **VOTE:** Unanimous in favor. ***Approved.***

Adjournment – Chair Dinsmore called for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Member Louzon and seconded by Member Chambers. **Vote:** Unanimous in favor. ***Approved.***

This meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

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Angela Brasil
Clerk, Chariho Regional District School Committee