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To: Cheri P. Burke, Superintendent of Schools
From: Nickie Stevenson, Director of Finance & Operations
Re: Food Service Update
Date: May 8, 2026

Food Service Program Update - Chartwells

As the school year draws to a close, I would like to provide an update on the Granby food service program. This marks the first year that Chartwells has managed the District's dining services, and overall, it has been a very positive transition.

The food service program, which operates as a self-sustaining fund separate from the general fund, reported a profit of approximately \$52,000 at the end of April. As required under the National School Lunch Program, all earnings must be reinvested into the program. This reinvestment directly benefits students through enhanced menu offerings, equipment upgrades, and overall program improvements.

Chartwells has proven to be a strong partner in its first year, and we look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship. The District will renew its contract for the 2026–2027 school year with a 2.5% increase. This remains below the current Food Away From Home Consumer Price Index (CPI) of 3.9%. Notably, through last year's RFP process, the District established a contractual cap of 2.5% on annual increases, compared to prior practice where increases were typically aligned with CPI.

Breakfast and Lunch Pricing

No increases to breakfast or lunch pricing are being proposed for the upcoming school year. With the approval of the Governor's budget on May 6th, funding for breakfast to be provided at no cost to all students statewide during the 2026-2027 school year was approved.

While a review of lunch pricing indicates that Granby remains on the lower end compared to surrounding districts, currently \$3.50 versus averages of \$3.97 (middle school) and \$4.19 (high school), we believe maintaining current pricing is appropriate at this time. Given the program's positive financial position and current economic conditions, holding prices steady will best support our families.

It is important to note, however, that the District will likely recommend a modest increase next year. The most recent adjustment occurred in the 2023–2024 school year, when prices increased by \$0.35 at the middle and high school levels and \$0.25 at the elementary level.

Negative Student Meal Balances

As of April 30th, outstanding student meal debt totaled approximately \$13,000. School staff continue to actively work with families to reduce these balances through outreach and support.

State regulations require that all food service programs participating in the National School Lunch Program be financially made whole at year-end. Historically, food service funds could not be used to offset unpaid meal balances. While recent changes have allowed limited flexibility under specific conditions, the State has not yet confirmed whether this option will be available for the current fiscal year.

If food service funds cannot be used, the District’s general fund will be required to cover the outstanding balance. It is important to note that this is not unique to Granby or Connecticut; student meal debt is a growing national challenge. Districts face increasing difficulty in recovering these funds due to regulatory limitations on collection practices.

Overall Program Outlook

Overall, the Granby food service program remains strong, with participation continuing to increase. As Chartwells continues to invest in the program and better understand student preferences, we expect offerings to evolve further, driving increased participation and strengthening the program’s long-term sustainability.