

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
November 3, 2020  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Ms. Donna Newcomb (Vice Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Secretary) and Ms. Maria Santos. Mr. John Moses is not present tonight.

**Also present:** Dr. Jay Lang (Superintendent), Dr. Linda Hirsch (Assistant Superintendent) and Ms. Joanna Johnson-Collins (Director of Business and Finance).

**Call to Order**

6:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Chair Opening Statement**

“Tonight’s meeting is being live-streamed by Chelmsford Telemedia and posted to the CPS website for interested community members to access and watch. Although we are not allowing for in-person public participation, interested community members are encouraged to submit their names and addresses to Superintendent Lang if they would like to participate remotely under the public input portion of our meeting. During our public input session anyone who has joined us through the *gotomeeting* platform and expressed interest in making a comment will be recognized by the Superintendent and allowed to speak with The Committee. If anyone watching this meeting live has questions or comments to share they are encouraged to email one of us during the meeting. We will read those questions or comments during our second public input session at the end of the meeting.”

The Chair welcomed all and stated that the status of education in the Chelmsford Public Schools and current learning models will be discussed tonight.

**Consent Agenda**

1. **Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of October 20, 2020.**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of October 20, 2020. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.**

**Good News**

The Chelmsford Center for the Arts sponsored a special online performance called *Follow Your Compass* for all elementary students. The presentation was a pro-kid character building show to help students explore empathy, courage, and conflict resolution skills. Today was a professional development day for staff. The past week saw many Halloween celebrations for the students. At CHS the LIME group held a drive-through “trick or treat”. They raised funds and donations for the Food Pantry and The Table of Plenty, which was a huge success according to Mr. Doherty. Ms. Santos shared that she and Ms. Newcomb were judges for the “Battle of the Booths” which was a collaboration for Byam, Harrington and CHIPS. There were many decorated car trunks to be judged as well.

## **Public Comments**

Lauren Cochran, of 46 Augusta Way and a teacher at CHS, introduced herself as the new president of the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers. She is striving to have 100% staff membership for all who qualify under the AFT Umbrella. She shared the dedication of her staff for the students of the CPS. She shared the importance of the staff, administration and union working together for solutions to the current concerns. She expressed concern for the health and safety of staff. Due to staff shortages, she states, that paraprofessionals, specialists and others in the schools are being called upon to work in situations outside of their job descriptions. Licensed teachers are not available to teach students in some content areas. Faculty are stressed and in need of more prep time. There has been confusion about a directive from HR that staff use their sick time early in the school year. There are concerns that not all staff and students are wearing masks. Additionally, protocols are not always being followed. Students are not always maintaining a safe distance of six feet. Some paras have no place to sit and are not safely distanced in the classrooms. Teachers experience more technology issues in school than they do when working at home. There is also confusion about Tier 1 and Tier 2 teacher expectations. Staff are concerned about the holidays and would like to be able to work from home more to allow time for quarantining to be able to spend time safely with their families. She wants clarification on "snow days". Currently 17 grievances have been filed by the CFT. She closed by stating that "nobody likes the hand sanitizer". She looks forward to working these issues out with the current administration.

Katy Sullivan, of Seven Robin Wood Road, Littleton, has been a member of the Social Studies Department since 1996 at CHS. She is the newly elected vice president of the CFT. She is concerned that the current schedules at all three school levels are not sustainable. She would like to see a remote academy created. She is concerned as well about FMLA, Family First Act and the Cares Act. The priority right now is to provide the best education possible for all students.

## **New Business**

### **1. Fall Reopening Discussion and Updates – Verbal**

#### **a. Facilities and PPE Update**

Dr. Lang shared that we are well-stocked for PPE. New orders being placed will carry us through the winter. The schools are being kept clean by our own custodians during the day and the hired cleaning companies at night. Extra help has been contracted during to day to service frequently touched areas. Regarding HVAC, the heat has been turned on and systems are up and running. Testing has been done on the schools' ventilation and filters. The report should be received before Thanksgiving.

#### **b. Transportation Update – Student Ridership**

Ms. Johnson-Collins shared that there are now 952 riders in K – 8 on 29 busses. CHS has 64 riders using the shuttle busses from 11 stops.

#### **c. Technology Update**

Dr. Lang shared that 80 Clear-Touch Interactive Panels, 200 web-cameras with microphones and 1,000 Chromebooks have been received and are in use. Now, every student in grades 5,6, 9 and 10 have Chromebooks. Upcoming technology will include 115 additional Clear-Touch Panels and 134 portable/adjustable stand mounts for panels will be retro-fitted to provide mobility and better access for the teaching staff. More Chromebooks (3,000 units) will be arriving later this month and in December. Finally, the CHS and elementary school gymnasiums will receive 6 TouchView Interactive Panels. These were piloted successfully in the middle schools.

#### **d. Communication of COVID Cases Within the District**

Dr. Lang shared that The District is sharing The State's color-coded map that comes out each week in our weekly newsletters. DESE also shares weekly how many COVID cases have affected learning and that is made available through The District as well. Additionally, information on COVID cases by school is included. He feels that the actions in place in the CPS are working well.

#### **e. Identification of Close Contacts – Results of Contact Tracing**

#### **f. Decision of Learning Model Implementation – Chelmsford as a “Red” Community**

Dr. Lang shared current data for active cases on the screen. (To view the data please watch tonight's meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.) Contact tracing revealed no spread of the virus from these cases, although the impact of quarantining had an effect on students and staff involved in in-person learning. Exposure occurring outside of CHS did show spread of COVID. In the two elementary schools, individuals who encountered a COVID victim all tested negative. An individual at Parker recently tested positive but had no contact with students or staff. All other schools have had no confirmed cases. Going forward this information will be shared in the weekly school updates and on the Dashboard.

#### **g. Learning Model Transitions**

Concerning elementary and middle students already enrolled in a remote classroom, they may request to switch to hybrid learning if there is physical space in their classroom at school to do so. Each school has reached out to its students/parents to see who would like to make this switch. Transportation provisions for these students will have to be worked out. The hope is that these changes may occur the week after Thanksgiving. At CHS the transitions should also occur at that same time. Dr. Lang will update this information at the next meeting on November 17, 2020. MIAA will be coming out with recommendations on winter sports soon, which may have an impact on learning choices made by CHS students.

In response to a question posed by Ms. Santos, Dr. Hirsch shared that the district continues to do routine academic assessing in all areas for students. Assessments so far show that student achievement is as good as in prior years.

Dr. Lang said that enrollment data was submitted to DESE on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Attendance is a little more complicated. Hybrid students who do not feel well can stay home, but still participate in their classes remotely. Attendance rates may be high, but the level of student engagement is more difficult to track. Teachers and guidance counselors are reaching out to students who are not attending or are not engaged.

## **2. 2020/21 School Committee and Superintendent Goals**

The Chair has added some measurable goals for the School Committee since the information was shared at the last meeting. The goals are included in tonight's agenda packet. Many of the progress of the goals were discussed earlier in the meeting under "Fall Reopening. Discussion and Updates".

Dr. Lang shared that his goals and those of The Committee are complementary and consistent. He stressed how critical the SEL goals are for this year. Dr. Lang feels that this year is going well and hopes that next year more work may be done on the Strategic Plan.

**Ms. Newcomb motioned for the School Committee to adopt the School Committee and Superintendent goals for the school year 2020/2021. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.**

### **3. Discussion on FY22 Capital Planning**

In addition to the information provided in tonight's agenda packet, Dr. Lang shared an updated XL Spreadsheet during the meeting to allow for Committee discussion leading to prioritization and to provide information to the public. Discussion followed with security, duct work and door hardware issues being deemed the most important. The Parker lift and kitchen upgrades are also supported. Some of the items are being removed as they have already been funded. Dr. Lang will update the spread sheet, including discussed priorities, and a vote will be taken at the November 17, 2020, meeting.

### **Liaisons**

Mr. Doherty attended the CHS PTO meeting where new officers were chosen and priorities were given for the after-prom breakfast and teacher appreciation events. Mr. King attended the Chelmsford Council of Schools meeting and he is pleased at how well the PTOs are working together. He also was at the District 1 MASC virtual meeting. He feels that the CPS are in good shape in comparison to others in our district. He felt supported by others at that meeting. The MASC annual conference will be held virtually this weekend.

### **Action/New Items**

The Chair recommended that policy for snow days this year should be discussed soon. Dr. Lang shared that power outages will factor in to this decision.

Ms. Santos would like to discuss if the hard work of the staff is sustainable and how the staff may be supported this school year.

### **Public Comments**

Hanna Barker, of Newtowne Way, sent an email which was shared by Ms. Santos. She expressed appreciation for Principal Murray and his staff regarding COVID cases at CHS. The handling was "exemplary and should stand as a model for The District". She is also pleased with the addition of the COVID dashboard.

### **Adjournment (8:56 p.m.)**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned for The Committee to adjourn the general session and convene to executive session to discuss strategies with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and not return to general session. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Giglio*