

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 2, 2021  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Ms. Donna Newcomb (Vice Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Secretary), Mr. John Moses and Ms. Maria Santos.

**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 to the meeting.

**1. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of January 19, 2021.**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned for the school committee to accept the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of January 19, 2021. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

**CHS Student Representative Announcements**

Sudeep announced that CHS schedules for next year are available. Winter sports season 2 starts on February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Katrina shared that semester two has started and teachers have shared their Google Codes so students are able to login to their new classes. Winter sports are going well. She thanks Chelmsford TV for broadcasting these games.

**Good News**

Ms. Santos shared that basketball and hockey games are being filmed for all to see. *Chelmsford News 3.0*, the Valentine Edition, will be available soon. Theatre continues with its movie project, *Murder at Pendleton*.

Ms. Newcomb gave a “shout out” to The Chelmsford Boosters for their support for viewing games “live”.

## **Public Comments**

None.

## **New Business**

### **1. Presentation: Spotlight on the Schools – McCarthy Middle School**

Principal Kurt McPhee, along with McCarthy staff and students presented virtually this evening. The school year is going well. Students are observing safety protocols including mask-wearing and keeping safe distances. Parents are cooperating with protocols as well. The staff have learned many new instructional techniques and tech tools to facilitate teaching during hybrid and remote. These tools and techniques will reshape teaching/learning moving forward as well. Mrs. Calobrisi, Assistant Principal, then provided an update on the PRIDE initiative as it was reinvented to address remote and hybrid learning models. The entire detailed presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford TV YouTube. The slide presentation is included in tonight’s agenda packet. Despite students not being fully in-school, McCarthy’s annual Project 300 food drive was undertaken. Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Sullivan joined remotely to share how this endeavor succeeded during the pandemic. The goal of 15,000 items was exceeded by a total of 16, 691 food items! Several students also joined the meeting to share their experiences, including fifth graders for whom this was their first Project 300. Information was also shared about the after school virtual activities offered this school year including: Drama Club; Dungeons & Dragons; American Sign Language; and several others.

### **2. Presentation: Spotlight on the Departments – Mathematics**

Dr. Beyranevand, Department Coordinator for Mathematics, joined the meeting virtually to share what is being done for middle school students in mathematics during hybrid and remote learning and address standards-based report cards. The CPS philosophy of teaching math embodies: conceptual understanding; joyful math; and growth mindset. On March 31<sup>st</sup> a “Parent Night” will be scheduled to present an update on standards-based report cards. Dr. Beyranevand’s slide show is included in tonight’s agenda packet. His entire presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford TV YouTube.

### **3. Update on HVAC Assessment**

Dr. Lang reminded The Committee that in the fall The Town had hired an HVAC contractor to review 20 – 25% of the classroom vents and the rooftop vents. Their initial assessment advised that a 100% “rebalancing process” be undertaken. A memorandum is included in tonight’s packet from Kathleen Canavan, AIA, Public Facilities Manager. Melissa Joyce, from the Department of Public Works, joined tonight’s meeting to provide an update on the ongoing mechanical assessment and repairs being done in response to ongoing efficiency reporting. The second phase of testing and balancing will begin during February vacation. This phase will take 60 days. The third phase will entail capital improvements.

### **4. Update on CPS Website Redesign**

Chris O’Donnell, CPS Communications Director, joined tonight’s meeting virtually and shared “proofs” of the redesigned website. He looks forward to updating many of the photos on the website this coming spring. One section called “Latest News” will provide a place to tell “great stories of the students and staff”. There will be a calendar page featuring events district-wide. Videos will be included thanks to

Chelmsford Telemedia. Links to additional pages will cover: individual schools; departments; curriculum and social media. The new website will be launched in the next few weeks. Tonight's slide show and full presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford TV YouTube.

## **5. Superintendent's Recommended FY2022 Budget**

Dr. Lang's proposed FY22 budget is not included in tonight's packet, but he will make it available later tonight. It will be found on the district's website under "Business Office". Committee members received FY2021 budget packets from Dr. Lang which they referenced during Dr. Lang's budget presentation at tonight's meeting. His entire presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford TV YouTube. Data is given with respect to CPS and comparable school districts in Massachusetts. Currently, our teacher's salaries are in the bottom third, but Dr. Lang would like to see future movement to bring us closer to the top/middle range and believes next contract will help to do that. He prefers we stay in the middle or top half when we are ranked with comparable districts. We are in the middle of the pack in per pupil expenditures, but in student performance we outperform both the state and our comparable districts. This base budget is \$65,000,000 which reflects an increase of two million to keep the budget level service funded. The past few years have seen an increase in both staffing and programs. This budget includes an increase in targeted intervention and tutoring in ELA and math. The 1:1 technology initiative continues and will allow for students in grades five through nine to receive a new device every four years. CHS activity fees will go from \$75 per pupil to \$50, to align the fees with middle school. The budget hearing will be held on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, and discussion will begin on page 13 of this budget document. If Committee members have questions or concerns about the proposed budget they should feel free to reach out to Dr. Lang, prior to the public hearing on February 23, 2021.

## **6. COVID Update**

Dr. Lang expressed dismay that educators have been moved down on the list for COVID vaccines. He believes that staff vaccines would greatly help schools to resume full in-person learning sooner. Over 700 staff members have pre-registered to receive the vaccine. Currently, only one of the two vaccines may be administered to children starting at age 16. The other is only given to people 18 and older. Trials are in process for vaccines to cover older children. Discussion is taking place on lengthening the hybrid school day.

### **a. Close Contact Definition**

Educators at the middle schools and CHS are identifying students who are struggling with the remote learning model, for whom in-person learning would be beneficial. In the current hybrid model there are very few seats open to add additional students to the class. At the two middle schools, the possibility of opening more classrooms (support centers) in the schools is being considered. This would allow hybrid students to be in-person on their remote learning days. The Committee discussed this proposal. Dr. Lang does not believe this would increase the incidences of "close contact" under the CDC Guidelines. [Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.] Some Committee members would like to have a representative from the Public Health Department be available to give their advice on this matter relative to increased risk of COVID spread, before moving on this proposal. Either Dr. Lang or The Chair will reach out to Sue Rosa from Public Health to schedule a Zoom meeting to help with further evaluation of the proposal.

## **7. 2019/20 – 2020/21 Term 1: Student Grade Data Comparison**

Dr. Hirsch has included a memorandum in tonight's packet providing the data requested by The Committee on grade comparisons from grades five through 12. As expected with the pandemic at the middle and high school level there are numbers of students who fall below the 70 mark. Guidance counselors are looking into the reasons these students are falling behind, so that additional supports may be put in place to address students who are struggling. Dr. Hirsch will share data for Term 2 soon.

## **8. 2019/20 – 2020/21 Term 1: Student Attendance Data Comparison**

Dr. Hirsch has included an additional memorandum in tonight's packet providing data requested by The Committee on attendance comparisons. CHS and Parker's attendance is up from the previous year, while McCarthy's is down. Recent changes on how attendance is taken mandated by DESE may be a factor as well. Prior to the pandemic, South Row School had more families who traveled during the school year. Since travel was curtailed this year their attendance is up. Dr. Hirsch will share data for Term 2 soon.

## **9. 2021/22 Kindergarten Entrance Age Policy Waiver**

Dr. Hirsch included a memorandum in tonight's packet detailing a waiver in age policy for those entering kindergarten during the 2021/22 school year. Policy states that children who turn five years old by August 31<sup>st</sup> of the year may register for kindergarten. Since kindergarten attendance is not mandated by The State, many families chose to **not** enroll their five-year-old children in kindergarten for the current school year. Dr. Hirsch has heard from parents who made this choice and are requesting their children be allowed to go to kindergarten for the 2021/22 school year instead of first grade although these children will be age six by August 31<sup>st</sup>. If this were allowed kindergarten classes would have close to a two-year age range in class which would not reflect best educational practices. Dr. Hirsch stated "In reviewing the School Committee Policy, factors affected by any changes, and to mirror the waiver process for students who are age 6 and would be enrolled in grade 1, I am recommending a parallel one-year waiver petition process for parents requesting their child(ren) be enrolled in Kindergarten for the 2021 - 2022 school year if their child(ren)'s birthday falls between August 1st and August 31st. This will allow for some flexibility for those families who did not enroll in Kindergarten, while not creating a large age discrepancy within the grade for all students and will keep appropriate developmental instructional groupings with age-appropriate peers throughout the schooling years. Attached you will see the current policy and the recommended one-year revision to the policy."

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to amend policy JEB entrance age mandatory admissions to include a waiver for kindergarten retention for the school year 2021/2022 as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

### **Liaisons**

Ms. Newcomb attended the South Row PTO meeting. They have future fundraisers scheduled as well as a "Zoom Dance".

Ms. Santos attended a recent Wellness Committee meeting. Meetings for the rest of this school year will include the DESE coach and the task is to review and update the CPS Wellness Policy to meet the DESE requirements. ELPAC has a meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Laura Judge from the Chelmsford Public Library will attend the meeting and will be taking requests for ELL books that should be purchased by the library. ELPAC's board will be attending a DESE sponsored parental "convening" on February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. King shared that the Center School PTO is still selling tickets for the "Taste of Chelmsford". It will be a calendar raffle where winners will be chosen each day to receive gift cards to local restaurants.

## **New Items**

CHS is looking to change their class schedules to assure that all five classes will be similar in length. Dr. Hirsch will provide updates.

Ms. Newcomb would like to see an update on the roll out of the standards-based report cards.

Winter sports have only two weeks left according to Dr. Lang.

Ms. Santos thanks Principal Murray and his staff for assuring that the PSAT's were held successfully at CHS.

The Chair would like The Committee to find a way to acknowledge local businesses and organizations who support the schools (like Brick House and their support for Project 300).

## **Public Comments**

Hanna Barker requested using data on close contacts to provide recommendations going forward.

**Adjournment (9:36 p. m.)**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to adjourn. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*

