

CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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March 20, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Mr. John Moses (Vice Chair), Ms. Maria Santos (Secretary), Mr. Jeffrey Doherty and Ms. Donna Newcomb. Attendance taken by roll call.

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

Call to Order

1:04 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Opening Statement

The Chair stated that this meeting will be recorded and posted on the Chelmsford Public Schools website. The public is welcome to make comments by contacting either Dr. Lang or Chairman King.

Public Comments

Susan McKinnon, a former early childhood education teacher, emailed The Chair and expressed her concern about younger children and those with special needs who cannot always learn by watching videos and wants The District to use a variety of resources to keep students engaged during remote schooling. Hana Barker praised all the hard work by staff and administration. She thanked the teachers' union for cooperation and collaboration. Her children appreciate their teachers reaching out to them. She asks that "social distancing" remain in place. The Chair also heard from a parent who wants to be sure IEP's are being supported, if the situation lasts longer than three weeks.

New Business

1. Update on the Status of the Chelmsford Public School Closure

Dr. Lang shared The District originally planned to close schools for two weeks. Governor Baker then ordered the schools be closed for three weeks. Deep cleaning of school buildings has been ramped up. The District is in support of "social distancing". Dr. Lang will continue to communicate through Direct Ed, Facebook and on the district's website. Principals and coordinators will be in touch with staff to try to bring a new level of normal to educating our students during this extended closure. The district has also been asked to plan for school closure through the end of April. Some school districts have closed for the rest of the school year, so Dr. Lang feels that planning for that possibility should also take place.

During week two of the closure (starting March 23) the schools will be open to staff on Monday and Tuesday to allow them to gather teaching resources. Building principals will set up a schedule for this. The Technology Department will support staff needs for teaching from home. Teachers will reach out to their students to ascertain which students will need technology to be able to participate in learning from home. Remote meetings amongst administrators, coordinators and staff will take place and help to offer mutual support as this process unfolds. Communication will be forthcoming for week three and longer if necessary.

Dr. Hirsch stated that at the federal level standardized testing will not take place. The DESE has not decided yet on state testing. Also, online workshops will be offered in different areas for staff support. Dr. Lang added that there are links on the website with offerings for: grades K-4; 5-8; and 9-12. Dr. Hirsch stated that "Google Classroom" is the platform that is being used for remote learning. Everything will be housed there.

Dr. Lang envisions some special services being delivered remotely, for example speech services, by the specialists. The specifics of how ELL, SPED, and guidance services will be delivered is being worked on and staff will be sharing this information during the upcoming week.

All CPS sponsored events are cancelled or postponed through April 6, 2020, including events booked for use of school property. Outside groups will most likely not be able to schedule events in our schools until at least after April vacation. Spring sports have been postponed until the end of April. This would mean a shortened spring season. Decisions will be made concerning field trips and CHS senior activities.

There are close to 900 students who qualify for free/reduced lunch. During this time the Chelmsford food service staff have been providing meals for those in need. Breakfast, lunch and dinner options are being prepared and can be picked up curbside at CHS between 4:30 and 6:00 p.m. There is potential for government reimbursement later. School nurses, counselors, psychologists etc. will be reaching out to needy families about, not only the food program, but to determine what additional services they may need. The Chelmsford Food Bank and The Table of Plenty will be helpful in stocking and staffing non-perishable food items at food pantry at Harrington School to provide for weekend needs. Volunteers will help to deliver these directly to the homes starting next week. The PTOs and Council of Schools are also helping with this endeavor. School busses may help with deliveries. The custodians, in addition to deep cleaning, are also able to tackle some projects.

A meeting on bargaining is scheduled with the custodians for Monday, March 23rd. This meeting may be held in person or remotely.

The next regular meeting of The School Committee is scheduled for Tuesday, March 24th at 6:00 p.m. at Central Office. The Chair said the those who attend the meeting will maintain "social distancing". It will be broadcast live by Chelmsford Telemedia. The public may ask questions via email and should not attend the physical meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Moses motioned to adjourn today's meeting at 2:13 p.m. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5 – 0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio*