

CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
All Members Attended Remotely by Logging on to
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April 22, 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). Also, in attendance are Town Manager, Paul Cohen and the CHS student representatives, Katrina and Sudeep.

Call to Order

6:06 p.m.

Chair Opening Statement

The Chair called the meeting back to order following an Executive Session. The meeting is taking place using GoToMeeting.com electronic platform. All are attending the meeting remotely. The meeting is being televised and recorded by Chelmsford Telemedia. Community members are encouraged to watch and submit comments via email to Dr. Lang or Mr. King.

Consent Agenda

1. **Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of April 7, 2020**
2. **Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of April 13, 2020**

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the April 7th and April 13, 2020, regular school committee minutes. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Katrina reported that, although online learning has proven difficult, the students are adapting very well. The teachers assign work at the beginning of the week and the work is due by Friday. Each class is also holding online meetings.

Sudeep shared that the experience, although different, has been going well. Teachers schedule online meeting times during the week, so students know when to log on. Some teachers assign work each day rather than at the beginning of the week. Students need to manage their time.

Katrina added that students who have questions about assignments can email the teacher or make private comments to the teacher. Some teachers schedule office hours for students to contact them. Both students feel that students are getting enough support from the staff. Regarding participation in the class meetings, Sudeep said about 75% participate. Some teachers are assigning more work than was anticipated, "but it is manageable" said Sudeep. Katrina feels that the workload is a little lighter than normal and she is liking online learning a lot.

Dr. Hirsch stated that many teachers are checking in weekly with students about how online learning is going. She stated that The Committee following up on how online learning goes would be a good idea. Ms. Santos suggested polling parents for elementary and middle school feedback on online learning. Dr. Hirsch added that data would be gathered again when school reopens in August.

Public Comments

Ms. Newcomb shared that parents are looking for some additional guidance as remote learning continues. Also, what supports are in place for students for whom online learning is a real struggle? Dr. Lang believes tonight's agenda will cover those concerns. If not, questions may be raised again during the second public comments time of the meeting.

New Business

1. Ratification of Memorandum of Agreement: CFT Building Custodians

This covers the nine daytime building custodians who are employees of The District. The evening cleaning is contracted out. The new contract will run through June 30, 2023. Dr. Lang provided an overview of the new contract. Negotiations were "swift and smooth".

Town Manager, Paul Cohen, said he would vote against this agreement tonight. He feels that due to the current economic insecurity he is not comfortable voting to support a three-year agreement. The economic shutdown and its effect on the future are concerning to him. Mr. Cohen believes the agreement should be for two years for it to be on the same time table for reconsideration as all the other town and school contracts.

Mr. Moses motioned to ratify the Memorandum of Understanding with the custodial unit. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-1.

Mr. Cohen left the meeting at 6:29, after the vote.

2. Vote to Approve Assistant Superintendent's Contract

Dr. Lang asks The Committee to vote in favor of this contract which was discussed previously in executive session.

Ms. Santos stated that going forward she would like more information available on curriculum and how it is formed.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the three-year employment agreement covering the period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2023 with Dr. Linda Hirsch to continue to serve as Assistant Superintendent in accordance with the terms and condition as outlined. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Committee members spoke favorably of the work that Dr. Hirsch does on a regular basis. They especially appreciated her leadership during the recent sudden switch to online learning. She thanked them.

3. Vote to Approve Non-Affiliated Staff Salary Schedules

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the FY21 through FY25 salary schedule for non-affiliated Central Administration staff members as outlined. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the FY21 through FY25 salary schedule for non-affiliated Elementary, Middle and High School Principals as outlined. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

4. Update on the Status of the Chelmsford Public Schools Closure

Governor Baker has closed schools in Massachusetts for the rest of this school year. Dr. Lang reviewed what has been accomplished during the past six weeks of remote learning. During the past two weeks new concepts were being introduced by the teachers. Now we are ready to map out the next 8 to 10 weeks of school and provide updates to what should be expected to occur during this time. The State is considering which standards they want districts to focus on and what will happen with standardized testing for the next school year. During the next week, Dr. Lang would like to focus on our students in transition: fourth graders going to middle school; eighth graders heading to CHS; and graduating seniors. In particular, focusing on those who will be leaving the District's school system and not returning. He will be talking with area principals on Friday to ascertain how the different districts are handling senior activities. He looks forward also to input from CHS students. The food programs will continue. Dr. Lang thanked the food service staff and custodians for their hard work. Whether or not summer programs will be held is not known at this point. Dr. Lang will share updates on the website as they become available. There are also many questions about what the reopening of school will look like. Times will have to be scheduled for students to return to schools to pick up their personal items and for staff to close the classrooms. Once the school year has ended Dr. Lang plans to set up focus groups to reflect on the distance learning and look at best practices, in case it may have to happen again. Dr. Hirsch added that communication needs to continue between students and teachers, as well as parents and teachers so that the students needs will be met.

Ms. Santos has received emails from parents of sixth graders concerning language selections and what courses will look like in grade seven. Those heading to CHS have questions about how to select their mentors. What transitional activities will take place for students in grades four and eight? Ms. Newcomb proposed that a parent forum be set up for each school with administrators, psychologist and guidance staff to address some of the student anxieties over the upcoming transitions and the current remote learning practices. Dr. Hirsch stated that the guidance counselors have put together a packet for the students and she will be sure it is shared in this week's newsletter. The principals' weekly newsletters are addressing these issues and others. Dr. Lang said information on the proposal to go to standards-based report cards is still on the radar and suggests The Committee put together information to share on this. He does not feel that plans and changes need to be put off due to the school closure. The District will be reaching out regarding transition issues and course selections soon.

Ms. Santos also wondered if the proposed budget should be revisited prior to Town Meeting, as there may be additional costs associated with reopening schools. Dr. Lang thinks the \$63 million budget seems fine. If the budget is approved, The Committee will be able to make line item changes as needed throughout the next school year. Safety needs to be the priority going forward. Mr. Moses added that the remote learning situation is different for each family and that home is not the same controlled environment as a classroom.

5. Vote to Accept MGL Ch. 41 Sec. 56 – Single SC Member Warrant Signing

According to the MASC this would allow The Committee to have just one member sign the warrants instead of continuing to require three members to come to the office to sign. Even if there is one appointed member to sign, all members are still welcome to come to Central Office to review the warrants.

Mr. Moses motioned for The Committee adopt provisions of Mass. General Law Chapter 41, Section 56 and further authorize The Chair to appoint a single signatory for warrants. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

The Chair offered to be the signatory since he regularly needs to be at Central Office, but if anyone else wants to volunteer he/she should let him know.

6. Vote to Approve Student Opportunity Act (SOA) Submission

Chelmsford will only be receiving \$150,000 in new money from The State. The balance of the money for the school budget comes from The Town. The full report is included in tonight's agenda packet.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the SOA plan as presented and authorize the superintendent to submit the SOA Plan to Mass. DESE for review and approval. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

7. MSBA Vote: Vote to Authorize the Superintendent to Submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority a Statement of Interest (SOI) for Chelmsford High School

Mr. Moses motioned having convened in an open meeting on Wednesday April 22, 2020, prior to the closing date, the School Committee of Chelmsford, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated April 21, 2020 for Chelmsford High School located at 200 Richardson Road which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future, including the elimination of existing severe overcrowding; prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments; replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility; and replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the City/Town/Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

The complete application may be found in tonight's agenda packet.

8. Vote on School Choice Program: 2020/21 School Year

Dr. Lang shared the details of the School Choice Program and added that revenues raised by this (up to a maximum of \$250,000) will be used to fund the 1:1 technology initiative.

Mr. Moses motioned to accept fifteen (15) additional/new students, two (2) at McCarthy/Parker Middle School in Grade 5, twelve (12) at Chelmsford High School in Grade 9, and one (1) at Chelmsford High School in Grade 10 under the Commonwealth of Massachusetts School Choice Program bringing the total School Choice participation in the Chelmsford Public Schools to fifty (50) enrolled students during the 2020/21 school year. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

9. Vote to Approve Substitute Teacher Rate Increase – 2020/21 School Year

Mr. Moses motioned to recommend the Committee vote to approve an increase in the substitute teacher rate from \$ 75/day to \$ 90/day effective at the start of the 2020/21 school year. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

10. FY20 Financial Report – 3rd Quarter (January – March 2020)

Ms. Johnson-Collins included a memorandum providing details on this quarterly report in tonight's agenda packet. She shared details of this favorable report with The Committee.

11. Recommended FY20 Budget Transfers

Dr. Hirsch articulated the reasons for the requested transfers.

Mr. Moses recommended the school committee vote at the regular school committee meeting on April 22, 2020, to approve these FY2020 local operating budget transfers for the Chelmsford Public Schools as presented. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

12. Language Interpreting Service

Dr. Hirsch spoke of this new program, LanguageLine Solutions, which will provide on-demand 24/7 interpreters available for our families whose primary language is other than English. Professional development for the administrators has already taken place and this program connects directly to Google Chat and GoToMeeting.com. This is an addition to the face-to-face interpreters who attend scheduled meetings. Ms. Santos was pleased especially with the degree of privacy this will provide to our ELL families. A detailed slide show about this program is found in tonight's agenda packet.

13. Personnel Report – March 2020

No action required.

14. School Committee Policy Updates

Mr. Moses motioned to accept the proposed revisions to the School Committee Policy IHBEA English-Language Learners. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve "Proposed revisions to Student Handbook," (Sections on Codes of Conduct and Due Process) and "Proposed revisions to CPS Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures." Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

A proposed change on restraint procedures will be reviewed and presented for a vote at the next meeting.

Action/New Items

Ms. Newcomb expressed a desire to have more frequent Committee meetings. Due to the schools being closed, she is being contacted by many parents. The Chair stated that the next regular meeting is scheduled to be held on May 5, 2020. Another update should be coming from The Commissioner of Education later this week concerning distance learning for the rest of this school year. Further discussion on additional meetings will take place on May 5th.

The Chair reminded people to fill out the 2020 Census Report.

Public Comments

Ms. Santos shared the she heard from the Lopez family that they were pleased that students were included in the recent survey. They request there be more discussion about “leveling”. They are pleased with the “Capstone Project” and would like to see students do more research. Overall, they are pleased with the education their children received in the Chelmsford School District.

Adjournment

Mr. Moses motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:47 p.m. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio*