

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**All Members Attended Remotely by Logging on to**  
**GoToMeeting.com**  
**June 2, 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). CHS Student Representatives Katrina and Sudeep.

**Call to Order**

6:06 p.m.

**Chair Opening Statement**

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. The comments will be read during the "Public Comments" portions of the meeting agenda.

**Consent Agenda**

1. **Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of May 19, 2020**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the meeting minutes from the regular school committee meeting on May 19, 2020. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**CHS Student Representative Announcements**

Sudeep shared that he went to the senior cap and gown pickup today. Many teachers attended, and social distancing was observed. It went very well. In school things are starting to wrap up as the end of the year approaches.

Katrina added that the Student Council will be taking a survey of all students regarding remote learning. This data will be useful to have if remote learning extends into next school year.

**Good News**

Dr. Hirsch shared that a parade was held today for the seniors. Other events are taking place and are highlighted in the weekly newsletter from Dr. Lang. Harrington had a send off for their fourth graders in the parking lot. Lots of celebrations will be happening with everyone keeping friendly social distancing.

Ms. Santos raved about an incredible painted sign which was put up on the grass at CHS and a banner from the PTO, along with gifts given to seniors as they drove by. The parking lot was full of CHS staff congratulating the seniors. "Thank you"!

## **Public Comments**

Ms. Santos said the content of emails may be shared as they relate to specific parts of the agenda.

Ms. Newcomb spoke as a Committee member and a Chelmsford citizen about her “concern, frustration and anger for the recent events”. The murders of Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd would have been discussed at school, but the school closure has made that impossible. She is hoping the Committee and the Chelmsford community can find ways to provide opportunities for students and community members to express their thoughts and feelings. She would like to consider providing a forum to meet this need.

Mr. Moses, tearfully, expressed support for Ms. Newcomb’s idea. He shared how difficult it has been for him as a parent of two small children to discuss topics like: rioting; peaceful protests; murder and what is happening in the world. This is a time for our country to do better and for our school district to provide for our students.

Ms. Santos expressed how difficult this week has been for her. She has been dealing with this for years as an immigration attorney. Her own daughters have questioned how we can come through this and why we are not caring for people just because they are people. “Diversity is what makes us strong”. We need to address these issues soon. She is thankful to all in the Chelmsford school district who have done such good work reaching out to meet the needs of our community during this difficult time. It is so important that The District continues its support of diversity and provides education for our students in many facets of life.

Mr. King and Mr. Doherty echoed the concerns shared by the other Committee members.

## **New Business**

### **1. Update on the Status of the Chelmsford Public Schools Closure**

Dr. Lang shared that the links from the individual schools are on the District’s website and that those are keeping everyone up to date at all schools. Also, his weekly online newsletter provides additional coverage. Plans for a graduation which would take in person are being worked on by the CHS staff as well as The Student Council and advisors. Saturday, August 8, 2020 is the graduation date and, in the event of rain, it would be held on Sunday, August 9, 2020. It will be held outdoors on the football field but depending on the status of the State due to Covid 19 guidelines and Governor Baker’s decisions on public gathering decisions will have to be made on social distancing requirements and number of family members who are able to attend for each student. If it must be smaller than the whole class of 2020 then there may be separate ceremonies for each of the three houses. If, the Governor will not allow events of this size by then, the graduation will have to be a virtual one. Ms. Santos shared that there are special online events happening to help celebrate senior week, as well.

Dr. Lang then addressed summer programming. Special Ed summer programs will need to be held remotely. It is possible that by summer’s end face-to-face evaluations and IEP meetings might take place. There might also be small group tutoring by then. Most out-of-district placements will also be held remotely and there will be no bus transportation provided. There will be no in-person Community Ed courses offered this summer. There will be some remote programs offered online by Community Ed this summer for students and adults.

The food program officially ends Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup> as far as CHS goes. Those families are being provided with information on other places they may receive meals and food during the summer. The Table of Plenty will be offering “Grab and Go” meals on Tuesday nights this summer.

Transitions for students heading to the middle schools and high school (grades 4 and 8) are being addressed in the newsletters from the principals. Some schools are preparing introduction videos where students meet the team teachers. Since the plan for school reopening is not decided, teacher and team assignments will be made later this summer. If schools are reopening at summer's end, there will be additional live tours scheduled for the schools. CHS mentoring program for freshmen will be part of this coming school year.

## **2. Fall 2020 Re-Entry Planning**

Dr. Lang shared that The Town is being granted money under the federal "Cares Act" in the amount of \$1.3 million plus. This money may be used from March-June 30<sup>th</sup> for FY2020 OR from July 1<sup>st</sup> through the end of December for FY21. For FY20 the only need for the schools is reimbursement for the adult portion of the meals provided since the closure of school. The amount will be close to \$60,000. The funding must be used specifically for COVID19 expenses. The District will work with The Town to use the rest of the money during FY21.

An elementary and secondary "Emergency Relief Fund" will bring an added \$311,000 to our District. We will apply for the funding after July 1<sup>st</sup> and use the funding for FY21. The guidelines for the use of this money are very flexible!

The State has formed a 30-person working group dedicated to exploring the reopening of schools. By mid-June The State will be forwarding guidelines to the school districts. We will be creating "The Chelmsford Return to School Working Group" which will include advisory groups on: the physical learning environment; SEL; teaching and learning and operations. Surveys will be sent (including middle and high school students and all parents) and information will be provided seeking staff who would like to be a part of these groups. The CHS Student Council will also be doing a survey which will provide additional helpful data. Our groups will be looking at the state frameworks and "Chelmsfordizing" them! Our groups will convene starting the end of June and continue to work through July and early August. The School Committee, families and staff will be updated as this process proceeds. There will be a large steering committee of 12 to 15 people and working sub groups of six to eight people. Dr. Lang plans for panels to record updating sessions for the public starting in late July. A lot of work is being shared amongst the Merrimack Valley superintendents, who meet regularly.

Ms. Santos stated that she received an email from Esther MacKinnon, a retired Chelmsford elementary teacher, who favors a return to schools. She is concerned about the social impact of remote learning especially for our younger students.

Dr. Hirsch added that PD is ongoing and larger courses may be offered through Fitchburg State. The technology department and TIS staff provided training for all staff once the schools were closed to make remote learning work, especially supporting Google Classroom. TIS staff have offered new PD sessions each week for our staff during the past 13 weeks. They continue to update staff on web sites and applications that are beneficial and appropriate for Chelmsford students. As the plans for re-entry to school progress, additional PD will be offered.

Transportation will be studied for the possible return to school. The district provides bus transportation for 3,400 students K-12. The busses have not been used since March 16<sup>th</sup> saving The District \$1.1 million. Issues will arise with re-opening depending on what The State says about social distancing on the busses. The State requires only that the districts provide transportation for students in grades K-6. Dr. Lang plans to survey parents this summer to determine which families would choose to use the busses when school reopens. Due to COVID19 many parents may choose to transport the children themselves. More discussion on this topic will take place at future School Committee meetings.

### **3. Recommended 2020/2021 Employee Handbook Revisions**

Ms. Kirkpatrick has provided the updated employee handbook for The Committee to see and highlighted the changes from last year. The policies are now linked to the MASC policies online. Dr. Lang recommends accepting the changes as presented.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the 2020/2021 teachers' handbook as presented. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

### **4. Student Transportation Registration and Program Fees: 2020/21 School Year**

Ms. Johnson-Collins reviewed her memorandum included in tonight's packet detailing the bus rates as well as the online informational booklet provided to parents for registration purposes. All students who will ride the bus need to register, even if they are not required to pay a fee. School is scheduled to open on September 1<sup>st</sup> as of now. The early-bird discount will be available until July 5, 2020. Ms. Santos expressed concern that many families would not opt for the early discount because it will not be determined yet if schools reopen in September and what bus rides will look like. She does not expect parents to do early registration, unless they may receive refunds if they are not happy. Dr. Lang believes the data on bus riders will be helpful to the planning process. If the policy changes for which grade levels receive transportation and it eliminates bussing for already registered students, those families will be entitled to a refund.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the 2021 transportation fees and schedule for the collection calendar. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-1 with Ms. Santos voting in the negative.**

### **5. Preliminary Kindergarten Enrollment: 2020/21 School Year**

Dr. Lang thanked the workers in Central Office for putting together a drive-in procedure to facilitate kindergarten registration during the pandemic. Dr. Lang is surveying 336 families who have registered to ascertain if they are considering withdrawing because of the pandemic. Accurate numbers will inform the decision of whether each elementary school will need four or five sections of kindergarten. No action is required tonight. Dr. Lang will share the survey results later for The Committee to decide on the number of sections needed for each school.

### **6. Superintendent's Recommended FY2021 Revised Budget**

Dr. Lang shared a memorandum in tonight's agenda packet. The original budget proposal was for a total amount of \$63,000 million. Because of the pandemic less money is expected to be received from The State. The Town has requested the school proposed budget be reduced by 1.09%, bringing the total budget to \$61,667,000. Dr. Lang is recommending specific changes to the original budget to meet this request, without a reduction in staff or student services. On June 16<sup>th</sup>, the Committee will be able to vote on the revised budget for FY2021.

### **7. Recommended FY2020 Budget Transfers**

**Mr. Moses motioned for the School Committee to approve from the FY2020 local operating budget a transfer of \$120,928.25 from the Transportation Category to the Employee Separation Costs Category as presented. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned for the school committee to authorize the prepayment of FY2021 tuitions in accordance with MGL Chapter 71, Section 71D, and MGL Chapter 40, Section 4E. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned for the school committee vote to approve the FY2020 local operating budget transfer of up to \$ 1,100,000 from the Transportation Category to the Prepaid Tuitions Category as referenced. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the new bottom line budget number for FY20/21 school year in the amount of \$61,667,000. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### 8. FY21 Valley Collaborative Board Member Appointment

**Mr. Moses motioned to appoint Dr. Jay Lang as the FY21 board member for the Valley Collaborative. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### Action/New Items

Emma Walsh a CHS junior will be holding a vigil to honor George Floyd and the other black lives that have been lost and to support The Black Lives Matter Movement this Friday evening from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. on The Town Common. Community Services Coordinator, Jen Melanson, and Deputy Police Chief, Dan Ahearn have assisted in the planning and logistics in response to this request. Everyone in attendance is requested to wear a face mask and remain socially distant.

The Chair congratulated Mr. Doherty on his election to the School Committee today. The Committee also congratulated Mr. King on his re-election. Reorganization of The Committee will take place at the next meeting on June 16, 2020.

#### Public Comments

Hanna Barker emailed to thank The Committee for their dedication to planning for "back-to-school" however it transpires in September.

#### Adjournment

**Mr. Moses motioned to adjourn tonight's meeting at 8:52 p.m. Ms. Newcomb seconded. A roll call vote was taken Motion carries 5-0.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Giglio*