

## CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

August 18, 2020  
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 try to read those questions or comments during our second public input session at the end of the meeting.”

The Chair welcomed all and stated that at the last meeting The Committee voted to start the school year with a hybrid model of instruction, while allowing families to choose a completely remote option. More details will be presented tonight. He thanked all who have sent emails regarding the reopening plan. Due to the volume of emails received many have not been responded to but the questions and concerns will be addressed tonight. There will be parent information sessions held later this week. A “Frequently Asked Questions” document will be available on the district’s website.

### Consent Agenda

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of July 28, 2020. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of August 4, 2020. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

### Good News

Ms. Newcomb shared from Byam who hosted a food drive to support “The Table of Plenty” and collected enough food to fill two vans!

## **Public Comments**

Kristen Erickson, of 291 Acton Road, and Amy Domo, of Five Autumn Lane, called in together. They, along with two others, are the interim leaders of Chelmsford SEPAC. Parents of children with IEPs and 504s are concerned about delivery of services. Parents are concerned about making decisions about which learning plan to select for their children without knowing more about the specifics of each plan. These parents will need to know more about health issues, SEL support, access to appropriate delivery of instruction, access to appropriately trained personnel, and more. They would like to see specially trained paraprofessional staff involved in either model. Pull-out professional services like reading, therapies, arise concerns when delivery will occur during shorter days and fewer days in school. They are also worried about professional nurses' services their children should receive (G-Tube care, toileting) and other safety and health challenged by COVID-19. These include social distancing, health of others and PPE materials. They are worried about referrals and evaluations for SPED students, since many of these that had been started last spring were not completed. Ms. Erickson will be forwarding a letter to The Committee and school administrators from the director of an outside support group for parents of students with special needs. Ms. Erickson and Ms. Domo are offering suggestions to The Committee. They would like SPED families to have a chance to ask questions in a public forum. They would like details regarding special education services under the hybrid and remote learning models. Secondly, they want assurance that the lines of communication between parents, guardians, teachers and specialists will remain open in either of the two models. They would like to see a communication plan developed for each family before the new school year starts.

The Chair shared that the order of new business may need to be interrupted when an expert on the new district website arrives at 7:00 to discuss the website. He is also planning to have Peggy Gump, who is the CPS Director of Nurses, do a separate session or she may come to a Committee meeting soon to address the COVID-19 questions.

## **New Business**

Thursday night at 7:00 and Friday morning at 9:00, Dr. Lang will host information sessions. Information on these will be sent to all families. The FAQ document should be on the website by this Friday.

### **1. Return-to-School Planning Update**

#### **a. CPS Learning Plan Adoption: Hybrid Learning Model**

##### **i. Bargaining with Employee Unions – ongoing**

Dr. Lang shared that meetings with the unions have been taking place and more are scheduled in the upcoming days.

##### **ii. 2020/21 School Calendar – to be amended**

The State has agreed with the AFT and MTA to allow ten days at the beginning of the school year for staff to work prior to students starting school. This will allow for additional training and planning for both hybrid and remote, professional development workshops, and safety protocol instruction. Negotiations are ongoing, so a definitive start date for school has not been determined. Dr. Lang states the school year for students will not start earlier than September 14, 2020. Parents will need to be aware that students will not be in school the week before Labor Day and the week after. Many will need to arrange for child care those weeks.

#### **b. Communication of Plan Options and Parent/Student Preference Selection Timeline**

Last week a communication was sent to families (a copy of which is included in tonight's agenda packet) asking them to look at the information by August 21<sup>st</sup> and select the education model they choose for each child. Dr. Lang's slide show tonight will provide clearer details about both plans.

#### **c. Community/Parent Information Sessions**

Community forums will be held this Thursday night and Friday morning as previously stated earlier tonight. These will be online sessions. Some families may choose to wait to respond to the learning choice for their children until early next week. Over 3,000 have already responded. At the end of the first term (in November), a change in selected model may be possible.

#### **d. Special Populations Programming Update**

Amy Reese, Director of Special Education, in conjunction with her staff have worked on FAQs for families whose children receive services. She joined the tonight's meeting at 6:30 p.m. Her FAQ slides may be seen on the district's website. This includes students who are ELL, or have IEPs or have 504 plans, as well as students who are homeless or in foster care. Social emotional learning issues are also addressed. DESE has provided guidelines saying that some of these students with high needs may require additional in-school learning time. These are also incorporated in the FAQs. The proposal for these students is that they attend with both cohorts which would mean they would be in school four days each week instead of two. Depending on staff recommendations, some additional SPED students would be asked to attend three days or maybe four per week. Parents should feel free to contact the Chair for the SPED team at their child's school. Families will receive documentation detailing their child's schedule and when services will be delivered in person or remotely.

Regarding pre-school, a model is being put together for the CHIPS students. Students with IEPs will probably go four days. Four those with intensive needs they will have a four-hour day, while others will go for two hours. Additional services like PT and speech therapy will take place in person. A survey is in place which will inform whether the "peer models" program will take place.

IEP meetings will be held remotely in the beginning of the year. Evaluations that were not completed in the spring will be addressed first. All mental health professionals including psychologists, social workers and guidance will be available, both for whole classes and for small group instruction. Accommodations for 504 students will be made both for the hybrid and remote models.

For ELL some newcomers may need more than two days in school. Translation services will continue to be offered as in the past. Ms. Reese's presentation provided many details. You may wish to watch it on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube.

\*\*\* At this time, item #3 under New Business was addressed, thus taken out of order.

#### **e. Student Transportation Registration Update**

Ms. Johnson-Collins provided a memorandum and spread sheet on transportation in tonight's packet and provided a review during the meeting. Dr. Lang did add that unfilled seats on the bus would be offered first to K through six students who receive free and reduced lunch (this may bring total riders up to 1,150).

Ms. Johnson-Collins said that the registration for K through six who live more than two miles from their school total 692. This includes 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who have a fifth or sixth grade sibling. She estimates that 320 or so have yet to register. This would require 27 busses for elementary and 19 for middle school. This does not include the busses that provide transportation for SPED. Dr. Lang added that it may be possible to phase in other riders once the hybrid starts and ridership numbers are determined. Ms. Santos expressed dismay that there will not be bus transportation for CHS students. She would like the administration to study this possibility.

**Ms. Newcomb motioned that The School Committee add transportation for students who receive free and reduced lunch from grades K through six who live under two miles from their school. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

**f. Community Education Childcare Programs**

The community education program at the Westland's School is prepared to offer Lions' Pride for pre-school children. The Lions' Den at CHS is being suspended for the year. The extended day programs for elementary and middle school students before and after school will not be running this year. Adult education programming will begin this fall but only in the remote format. Music lessons will be offered virtually, until it is safe to offer in-person classes.

At this point in the meeting, Dr. Lang provided slides to address some of the questions and concerns that have come up recently. Viewing these and listening to Dr. Lang's details will be very helpful for anyone who was not watching tonight's meeting live. The slides will be posted on the district's website along with the FAQ document. While sharing the slides Dr. Lang answered Committee questions and provided cogent details about the plans. Anyone who missed tonight's meeting would most likely benefit by watching this section on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube.

**2. Update on 1:1 Technology Initiative Implementation**

Tonight's agenda packet includes a detailed memorandum from Mr. Silver which shares with families updated information on technology for CPS. This provides information for the students who will be heading to grades five and nine this fall and their process for picking up their individual Chromebooks before school starts. Additional Chromebooks (2,000 of them) will be acquired thanks to a grant and matching funds from The Town. Chromebooks will also be distributed to students who do not have a device of their own, to facilitate remote learning.

**3. Update on CPS Website Redesign \*\*\***

\*\*\* Brian Bahim, of Stellar Web Studios, provided an overview of the design of the new district website and school home pages. Highlights include an "Action Center" for parent awareness during the school year. The "Latest News" section will be updated with links provided. There will also be sections for "Events" (which will link to a full page of description), "Latest Videos", places for "Twitter", "Instagram" and "Facebook" channels. The footer would provide necessary contacts and links. Banners can be added on any page. Departments and each school will have a link to their "home" page. Details from the older website will be transferred to the new district web page as deemed necessary. The "News" section will

contain links to archived news. The calendar section will easily aggregate additions from across the district. The web site will be completely ADA compliant. Completion is predicted to be by the end of 2020 for a launch early in 2021.

#### **4. School Committee Self Evaluation Process – discussion**

The Chair shared that it is time for The Committee to do their self-evaluation forms and to set new goals for the upcoming year. The Chair will share the self-evaluation forms for the next regular meeting.

#### **5. School Committee & Superintendent Goals - discussion**

Due to COVID-19, it may make sense to work on short-term goals for success for this coming school year for both the superintendent and The Committee members. Work on The Strategic Plan may resume later.

#### **6. School Committee Policy Updates**

Dr. Lang has included information from MASC with recent policy updates due to the pandemic, including a policy of the wearing of masks. Dr. Lang is in favor of masks for all K-12 students, but not for our pre-school children. The Committee will review other amended MASC policies at their next meeting.

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to adopt the adapted MASC policy on face coverings for grades K-12, policy EBCFA. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### **Action/New Items**

Ms. Newcomb shared that on August 20<sup>th</sup> the public library will host a book group. *Hair Love* will be discussed at 11:00 a.m. and *New Kid* will be discussed at noon. Information is available on the library website.

#### **Public Comments**

Tracy Concoso emailed concern that the hybrid plan might change. She has safety concerns if the day is lengthened.

Lisa Barrasso is disappointed with no full in-person plan.

Lisa Bernowski has questions on how to enroll her children for transportation.

Joe Comtois missed the meeting and would like to get the information. The Chair shared that the information is on the district's website as is the full agenda packet for tonight's meeting.

Laurel Harris states that making busses available for CHS would affect her choice of learning plan.

Melissa Sloan asked about masks for K and grade one.

Tracy Concoso wanted to know if children who own their devices would need to bring the device to school.

Will Crawford wanted to know who to notify if their child exhibits COVID symptoms. What people will then be informed?

These questions will be addressed in the FAQs on the website.

Ms. Santos added her appreciation for all the hard work to assure all CPS students will receive a good and a safe education through the plans put in place.

**Adjournment (9:55 p.m.)**

**Ms. Newcomb motioned to adjourn the general meeting and go in to executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation and to not return to the general meeting. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Giglio*