

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
September 15, 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. The Committee has just concluded an executive session to discuss labor contracts.

Consent Agenda

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

Ms. Newcomb motioned to accept the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of September 1, 2020. Ms. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that school is starting tomorrow!

Ms. Santos congratulated Jen Orsini, who is the CHS counselor for Whittier House and executive advisor to the Mentor Board. Members include Alison Dorsey, Emily Arpino, Mary Hamilton, Caitlin Fox, Kate Doherty, George Hayward, Kate Kruger, Adam Fielding and Jenifer LaRochelle. They organized breaking down the houses by cohorts and hosting the freshmen at CHS and did an excellent job!

Public Comment

Ben Cole, 82 Brick Kiln Road, vice president of the local CFT, called to speak about the MOU approved by membership on September 8, 2020. Last week it was agreed that was not feasible to service all students with special education remotely. It was agreed that SPED teachers would have a few special needs students in their "hybrid" SPED classes. SPED teachers are reporting several "remote" students being scheduled in their "hybrid" classes, which Mr. Cole feels is in violation of the MOU. Dr. Lang has addressed this issue with several teachers grades K-three. For grades four through twelve the issue is not resolved. He feels that the situation needs to be addressed. If not, he foresees grievances and "unfair labor practices".

Shelley Bethel, 47 Joffre Street in Lowell, CFT secretary and Spanish teacher at McCarthy, spoke on behalf of the "specialist teachers" which include world languages, art, technology, physical education, health, computer, library and music. Her concerns are for teachers at the middle schools and elementary levels. These teachers have been placed in the remote learning plan but want to be in the hybrid plan to see their students in-person. She is concerned about many inequities between the "specialist" teachers' roles, expectations and schedules and those of the classroom teachers. The concerns of the group Ms. Bethel represents include but are not limited to: class size; time-on-learning; lack of computers; small size of Google Class meet; and assignments outside of their specialist content area. She also is worried that students will not receive the in-person contact in these areas or really get to know their teachers.

Glen Williams, a parent who resides at 64 Graniteville Road, stated that he and his wife work in the medical field and have chosen the remote learning plan for their two children. He expressed concern about transparency when COVID causes the quarantine of certain cohorts. He wonders if the class will receive notification if a family member of a student tests positive.

New Business

1. Ratification of Reopening of School MOU with the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers

Ms. Newcomb motioned that the Chelmsford School Committee ratify the Memorandum of Understanding with the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers for the 2020/2021 school year. Ms. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Ms. Newcomb motioned for a working group to be formed, consisting of teachers, administrators and School Committee members to discuss how the different teaching models are staffed and supported. The first meeting to commence no later than next Friday, September 25, 2020. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

2. Return-to-School Planning Update

Dr. Lang invited school principals Rob Asselin, Jason Fredette, Jeff Parks and Steve Murray to join the meeting virtually and share information on the work which has been done for the reopening of schools at all levels. Tomorrow schools will reopen in the fully remote model. Principal Fredette shared a "welcome back to school" video which was created for all the Byam families, but due to technical difficulties, it was cut short and Principal Fredette spoke about the contents of the rest of the video. Additional videos have been made to update the Byam families. Principal Asselin also looks forward to teachers and students returning to school. He is assured by the safety protocols in place. He asks for patience and support as this different type of school year begins. *** (Break taken to resolve technology issues.)

- a. Student Enrollment: Learning Model Selection – Final**
- b. Student Enrollment: Class Size and Teacher Assignment**

Tonight's agenda packet contains up-to-date numbers on both learning models and class sizes and teacher assignment.

Overall the percentage was 70 percent hybrid and 30 percent remote. Dr. Lang shared slides detailing the enrollments and teacher assignments. An extra section of kindergarten was added to each elementary school. Class sizes are good at all elementary schools. Class sizes at the middle schools are higher but are being adjusted and some of these classes are being co-taught. At CHS class sizes are high teens to mid-twenties. Special education and ELL staff will be supporting in-class instruction as well as pull-out groups. By the end of October, Dr. Lang will update the numbers and share them at a Committee meeting.

Ms. Newcomb is concerned over the status of the "specialist" teachers and would like to see that addressed soon. Dr. Lang spoke of how difficult it is to provide "regular" education in a hybrid. For the safety of the students they have cohorts. Currently, it is not safe for them to gather with other students for their "specialists". Changes to schedules will be made and school days lengthened when it can be done safely. Dr. Lang responded to Committee questions and, again, expressed optimism that positive changes will be coming as the school year goes on.

*** (After a brief technological break, the meeting returned to New Business item #2 and the principals sharing the plans for their schools.)

Principal Asselin spoke of the amount of technology training staff has received to enhance education through either teaching model. His staff are eager to see their students either in-person or remotely. Principal Parks shared that the staff professional development and team meetings over the past few weeks have been beneficial, and the staff are looking forward to the reopening of school. He is grateful for the support shown by the families in preparing for school. Principal Murray shared that his staff have been preparing over the past two weeks. Information has been shared with families to help students to prepare for Google Meets. He is especially impressed by the hard work and success of the Freshman Mentor Program. He was so happy to see the freshman in the building today. A video was shared with those students who chose the remote learning option. Student activities will be kicking off and information will be sent out. Mr. Murray applauded all the work done by Bill Silver and his technology staff for preparing the district for the beginning of this school year. CHS is ready!

Dan Hart, CHS Athletic Director, joined the meeting and said that athletics information is on the web site. MIAA is allowing many fall sports with restrictions, which make it extremely difficult to proceed. Some fall sports are being moved to a different season. CHS Swim has been moved to the late fall season. Volleyball will only play one school a week. The games will be held outside as will all other early fall sports. Transportation protocols are strict and details may be found on the website. Information on tryouts and health precautions will be sent to the families of participating students. He looks forward to a positive return to sports. For complete details on all CHS sports please refer to the document dated September 17th on the district's web site.

Brian Curley, Director of Facilities Services, joined the meeting next (virtually as well). He shared a Power Point presentation which detailed the responsibilities of the day time CPS custodians and the contracted cleaners, including the additional cleaning necessary due to COVID 19, for which supplemental labor has been hired. Deep cleaning days will take place on Wednesdays and Saturdays. (For more details on the contributions remotely of the above people, please view tonight's meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.)

c. Student Transportation: Prioritization of Additional Riders

Dr. Lang stated that a recommendation will be presented at the first meeting in October for the next tier of riders to be added. The Chair shared an excel spreadsheet which ranked the student populations who are potential tiers to be added to the buses. Dr. Lang believes that there may be room to add riders to the middle school routes. Ms. Johnson-Collins shared that those being transported currently are: K-6 who live over two miles from school; K-6 under two miles who receive free/reduced lunch; and 7th and 8th grade siblings of students in 5 and 6 who qualify for transportation. Ms. Santos reminded the group that transportation is a big need for the EL students. The Chair adjusted his excel sheet according to Committee recommendations.

d. Fall Athletics Update: MVC and MIAA

This information was shared by Dan Hart earlier tonight.

e. Review of Cleaning and Sanitation Protocols

This information was shared by Brian Curley earlier in tonight's meeting.

3. School Committee Self Evaluation Process

The Chair included a summary of the self-evaluation done by Committee members in tonight's agenda packet. Most members feel a good job is being done, but several suggested areas for improvement, which are included in the comments section. General comments are summarized at the end of the document. This will be helpful in October when goal-setting begins.

4. FY2021 Recommended Budget Transfers

Ms. Newcomb motioned to recommend the school committee vote to approve this FY2021 local operating budget transfer of \$ 84,290 from the salary reserve lane change account to the various labor accounts as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Liaisons

Ms. Newcomb attended to Chelmsford Friends of Music last week. Teachers will be able to apply for grants soon. Bottle and can drives have been cancelled for the foreseeable future.

Ms. Santos shared that McCarthy sponsored a teacher lunch today. Harrington is planning to do the same. A surprise will be coming for CHS.

The Chair will attend Center School's PTO meeting on September 24th.

Action/New Items

There will be a Tri-Board meeting next Monday. It will be a virtual meeting.

Public Comments

Ms. Newcomb received an email from Ryan and Alex Moore, expressing concern over the music program. Concerts will be missed. Music has a big impact on many students and supports their growth and future. Music is a gift discovered by many students during their education in the CPS. This is true for all the arts programs.

The Chair heard from Hana Barker who would like a “pop-up” placed on the website to remind families to do the daily health checks for their children before they head to school each day. She also praised Dr. Lang for his frequent updates.

Adjournment (8:41 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio*