

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
March 2, 2021
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 read those questions or comments during our second public input session at the end of the meeting.”

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 16, 2021.

Ms. Newcomb motioned for the school committee to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 16, 2021. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that book group meetings are being held by The Committee, the administration level and the teacher level to discuss *How to Be an Antiracist*. There are 38 teachers involved in this book group. Other professional development in the form of book groups will take place going forward.

Ms. Santos shared a letter written by Mary Moriarty from The Table of Plenty thanking CHS for collecting food for the month of February.

Public Comments

Katy Sullivan of Seven Robin Wood Road in Littleton spoke first. She thanked the district for all the planning to bring students back to school. She shared that The White House announced today that all school staff should be vaccinated by the end of March. She asks that The Committee focus on the necessity for vaccinating school staff.

Alexandra Bishop of Three Lovett Lane read from a letter she wrote. She thanked all for finding safe and creative ways to continue education in Chelmsford. She would like to see more in-person learning the schools. She would like to see a survey for the CPS community concerning increasing in-person learning. She would especially like to see the younger grades spend more time in school.

The Chair shared that email questions received will be addressed during tonight's meeting when the issues are discussed per the meeting's agenda items.

New Business

- 1. Presentation: Spotlight on the Schools – South Row Elementary School**
- 2. Presentation: Spotlight on the Departments – Health and Physical Education**

Dr. Molly McMahon, Principal, and Mr. Jayson Ramalho, Assistant Principal, of South Row joined the meeting virtually along with Ms. Katie Simes who is the Department Coordinator for FCS, Health and Physical Education for The District. The focus of the presentation tonight is on the connection between Social Emotional Learning and Wellness at South Row. The presentation which includes slides and videos may be viewed in its entirety on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube. Dr. McMahon addressed multi-tiered behavior support for students/staff and the five competencies for student success. Included this year have been supports for families as well. Mr. Ramalho spoke of the social emotional supports for the South Row students which help to meet the expectations to "Be Respectful – Be Responsible – Be Safe". He also spoke of the monthly grade level meetings which have been continuing virtually during this school year. Student "spirit days" and "monthly kind acts" continue including sending letters to people in nursing homes. The fourth grade Student Council continues to meet monthly and includes students who are hybrid and remote. Dr. McMahon shared information about numerous supports for staff and families, including online videos to help parents support at-home learning. She expressed gratitude for all who have made this school year so successful.

Ms. Simes provided updates on SEL across the district. She was pleased to receive a \$10,000 grant from DESE to support curriculum and professional development for SEL. As part of this process the district will survey all students in grades 4, 5, 8 and 10. This March survey will provide data on where students are currently on: Self-Management; Self-Awareness; Responsible Decision Making; Social Awareness and Relationship skills. DESE will provide the data analysis. There is a district focus on "staff wellness". Much of these initiatives which were implemented to help during the pandemic, will continue when school is back to full-time. She shared the "Family Fitness Challenge" which will take place during March for all four elementary schools. Ms. Simes's slides and presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.

3. UMASS Lowell Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) Fulbright Scholars

Dr. Hirsch shared that this is the seventh year of this collaboration with UMASS. Due to COVID there are only two TEA scholars who were able to travel and work with CHS teachers Veronica Gadbois and Michelle Kender. Dr. Beyranevand joined the meeting virtually to express appreciation for the two TEA scholars who came to Chelmsford.

Abiodun Mathias Idowu who is a chemistry and biology teacher of 14 to 18-year-olds from Nigeria spoke to The Committee. He is grateful for the opportunity and especially appreciated being able to create lessons and to participate in workshops which enhanced his video and technology skills. He will bring fun science learning to his students when he returns home and institute positive changes in his school. He also enjoyed touring Boston and learning about the American Civil War and current issues faced by African Americans and non-binary students.

Chi Anestine Lum, an English as a Foreign Language teacher from Cameroon, joined virtually and shared that her experiences in Chelmsford have inspired her to return home and teach her students techniques to help them solve their individual problems. She was impressed by the high level of energy exhibited by the teachers here. Co-teaching was enjoyable for her since the French class was about French-speaking African countries, of which Cameroon is one. Her experience was wonderful, and she is grateful. Her partner teacher Ms. Gadbois also joined virtually (this is her third year participating in the program) and found the experience “a blessing”!

4. School Committee Mid-Year Goals Review

The Chair shared that the focus for this year was to succeed despite the changes to learning created by COVID. He believes that it has gone well, and he expects the next four months to bring more of the same. The goals and action-steps are included in tonight’s agenda packet. Ms. Newcomb expressed concern over who should be responding to emails sent to the whole group. This will be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

5. Superintendent’s Mid-Year Goals Review

Dr. Lang and Dr. Hirsch reviewed their goals which are shared in tonight’s agenda packet. The academic achievement goal is going well. He included updates on SEL as well as financial resources in support of the schools. He would like to see more work done this summer on the ten-year plan for capital improvements. The Chair would also like to resume progress on the Strategic Plan.

6. COVID Update

a. Community & School COVID Data Trends

Dr. Lang’s slide show presentation began with sharing data trends. The district has done well at following protocols which has succeeded in keeping spread of the pandemic out of the schools.

b. Staff COVID Vaccine

The COVID vaccine being available for school staff would be a big help toward returning to full-time school. This may be a possibility as early as next week. With the cooperation of the Chelmsford Board of Public health over 700 staff members have already signed up to receive the vaccine as soon as it is available to them. Dr. Lang is in contact with Lowell General Hospital to set up clinics for CPS staff. Dr. Lang will email staff as soon as this plan is ready.

c. Staff and Students COVID Pool Testing

Dr. Lang announced that CPS has received approval for pool testing at all eight schools (which includes Westlands School). It is not recommended that Pre-school students at Westlands are included, but the staff may opt to be. CIC Health and Meet Care Givers have been paired with CPS to assist in this labor-intensive task. Samples will be tested daily by CIC in Cambridge. Our school nurses will be trained to do follow-up PCR tests on individuals in any positive test pool. Dr. Lang’s slide show included in tonight’s agenda packets provides complete information on the “Pool Testing” process which will commence this month. Parents and staff will receive comprehensive consent forms electronically to participate in this voluntary program.

d. Planning for Additional In-Person Learning

Dr. Lang stated that DESE (The State Board of Education) will hold a meeting this Friday to consider doing away with “hybrid learning” for the rest of this school year. Beginning on April 5th, this would leave schools with either the option to finish the year fully remote or return to full in-person learning five days per week. More information will be shared at the next meeting on March 16th.

In planning for additional in-person learning opportunities, Dr. Lang assured students who had selected fully remote, will be able to remain fully remote for the remainder of this school year. His detailed slide show covers increasing learning opportunities for special populations allowing for four days in school. In the general education classrooms there is limited capacity to increase the student population at elementary and middle. At CHS there is room to increase capacity. Increases at elementary is limited to students on IEPs, some ELL students and other students who have been identified as “struggling”. At the middle school level there is room to add more students with IEPs or ELLs or who are struggling to give them additional time in school. There may be staffing issues at some schools. There is more capacity at CHS so more of those students can be increased from two to four days a week (high needs population, struggling students, new students, seniors and freshmen).

Dr. Lang continued his presentation by providing details on suggested three phases that would increase in-person learning opportunities for students. The first phase would bring students into the schools on Wednesdays, hopefully by March 17th or 24th with approval from The Committee. The second would be to increase half days to full days, to begin in early April. The cohorts would remain unchanged. Thirdly, to bring even more students into classrooms renegotiations with the union would be necessary. Part of this phase would be decreasing the 6-foot distance between students. This phase would begin sometime after April vacation. By that time school staff who wish to receive the vaccine would be able to. Watching Dr. Lang’s entire presentation on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube is the best way to fully appreciate the proposed plans. Input from The Committee with specific questions followed the presentation.

Mr. King motioned to increase in-person learning opportunities on Wednesdays on a rotating in-person basis between cohorts starting on March 24, 2021. Ms. Newcomb seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

At the meeting on March 16th, there will be more discussion on phases two and three and specific questions on the phases will be addressed by Dr. Lang.

7. Personnel Report: January 2021

No action required.

Liaisons

Mr. Doherty attended the CHS PTO meeting where the predominant conversation was about ways to celebrate the Class of 2021. Dr. Lang believes graduation exercises in June will be held outdoors.

Ms. Newcomb shared that the Bottle and Can Drive will be on March 13, 2021. She attended South Row’s PTO meeting. A Zoom Dance is planned for March!

Ms. Santos met with The Wellness Committee. Assignments were given to rewrite certain sections of the policy. CHS raised money for “Project Bread” by holding a talent show entitled “In Tune”.

The Chair reminded all that there is a joint meeting with The Select Board on March 8th at 6:00 on Zoom.

New Items

March 31st there will be a parent meeting on standardized report cards.

Adjournment (9:59 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*