

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
April 13, 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 congratulated Donna Newcomb for her re-election to The School Committee in an uncontested race. (Applause.)

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

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

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that some senior nights have been held for the sports and after-school programs. These events are posted on social media and the District Website. The CHS Debate Team have students competing nationally as well as with the UK. Student Council ran their first Leadership Conference with Congresswoman Trahan and Arun Venugopal, CHS Alumni, who were the keynote speakers. The Class of 2022 is holding Senior Class elections using Google forms and the TV Club has broadcast speeches during Plus Block. The Civics Club with the TV Club ran a candidate debate night for the Select Board geared for students. Science kits for K through grade 4 are organized and delivered to the classrooms. Students will be planting grains and vegetables and will be given sunflowers to "spread some happiness"! Fourth graders received shrimp eggs and will be hatching shrimp at home. At CHIPS it is "Space Week" and Dr. Hirsch and Dr. Lang have been invited to attend. Dr. Hirsch sent a "shout out" to Brian Curley and the entire custodial staff getting the schools ready for a return to in-school learning at all levels. Parker Middle School Pride reps are decorating the school, planting flowers and writing on the sidewalks with chalk to welcome all back.

Ms. Newcomb shared that the CHS acapella groups The Thursdays and The Crescendos participated in the ICHSA Northeast semifinals. The Thursdays who placed first will advance to the finals! The outstanding concerts by both groups may be viewed on the website.

Public Comments

One email was received from Cynthia Dorman, of Five Douglas Road, concerning CHS bus service when full return takes place on May 3, 2021. She believes the shuttle busses are not effective as many parents are still driving their children to CHS. She would like to see a return to regular bus routes. Dr. Lang stated there will be an update on transportation later in tonight's meeting.

New Business

1. Reorganization of School Committee

a. Election of School Committee Chair

Mr. King was elected and will continue as the Committee Chair.

b. Election of School Committee Vice Chair

Mr. Moses was elected and will assume the role of Vice Chair.

c. Election of School Committee Secretary

Mr. Doherty was elected and will assume the role of Secretary.

2. Presentation: Chelmsford and State School Funding

Mr. Roger Hatch, a retired MA DESE school finance administrator, joined the meeting remotely to review an updated report he provided pertaining to how state funding (Ch. 70 aid) effects school finances in Chelmsford – historically, now, and looking into the future – considering enacted legislation at the state level, joined the meeting remotely. A copy of his report, and his slide show presentation are included in tonight's agenda packet. He explained that the state formula provides a "foundation budget" which is the adequate funding level for each school district. It then determines what part of that budget should be paid by local contribution from the town's property taxes. The remainder of the budget is then funded by state aid through Chapter 70. The amount that Chelmsford receives is expected to stay at the minimum of \$30.00 per pupil. The formula is based on the student enrollment data from October 1st of the previous school year. Due to COVID, enrollment dropped about 3% for the current school year across the state. It has not yet been decided how this may/may not influence funding for the FY22 school year. To fully appreciate his detailed presentation, please watch tonight's meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia/YouTube.

(Brief recess)

3. FY2020 MA DESE End-of-Year Audit Report

Dr. Lang thanked Ms. Johnson-Collins and her staff for another "finding free" audit from Powers & Sullivan for the school district's finances for FY2020. The information is included in tonight's agenda packet.

4. HVAC Assessment Update

Dr. Lang reported on upgrades which have been ongoing in the schools throughout the heating season. Assessment and repairs from the initial phase have been 100% completed. The rebalancing has also been completed in elementary, middle school, and Westlands. They are now working on CHS and should be completed by the end of April vacation. Long range capital planning will be next. Some of the COVID funding will be able to be used. Ms. Johnson-Collins provided an update on the grants and their expiration dates. Once the HVAC work is completed, Dr. Lang will share a final report.

5. Return-to-School Update

Dr. Lang addressed the return to school and shared a slide show which is available in tonight's agenda packet.

a. Community and School COVID Data Trends

Dr. Lang stated that for three weeks in a row the COVID numbers for the Town are rising. The school community spread remains low. His slide shows the data from 1/4/21 through 4/7/21.

b. Staff COVID Vaccination

These are continuing for staff. Second doses are scheduled within the next two weeks. Most staff have chosen to receive the vaccines.

c. Staff & Student COVID Pool Testing

Dr. Lang shared a slide with data on "Pool Testing", which is going well but he would like to see increased participation. Testing has involved almost 3500 staff and students with only two positive case results. Administration is looking at ways to incentivize middle and high school students to participate, especially since they will be returning to full time in-person learning. The State will cover the cost of testing through the end of the school year and maybe into the summer.

d. Elementary School Return to Full In-Person Learning

Elementary students who wanted to do so returned to full in-person learning on April 5th. Staff and students were very excited! It all has gone well so far. About 80% of students returned to school. Mr. Doherty shared that the CHS Honor Society and school athletes helped with setting up furniture in the elementary schools. Dr. Lang said that many new desks were delivered so the younger classes would be spaced further apart than at tables, as in the past. When they arrived, they had to be assembled and moved to their rooms. The many people who helped made this possible! Additional volunteers will be needed to help with setting up CHS and the middle schools during school vacation next week. Staffing was worked out at each individual elementary school by administrators and teachers. Professional staffing worked out well. More paraprofessional and lunch and recess aides have been hired over the past few weeks.

e. Planning for Middle and High School Full In-Person Learning

Scheduling-wise, Dr. Lang believes it will be easiest to have CHS return to full in-person learning. About 80% of students returned to school. That return will take place on May 3rd. Middle school students will return on April 28th. The middle school and high school schedules will be presented at the next meeting on April 27, 2021. Transportation will continue as it has been for middle school. CHS students will still be transported by shuttle busses. More busses and additional bus stops will be added on April 26th.

Dr. Lang shared that the last day for seniors will be May 28th. Graduation will be held on Saturday, June 5th at 10:00 a.m. at Simonian Alumni Stadium.

f. MA DESE Waiver Request Approved: Grade Level Configuration

DESE approved the waiver, which means fifth grade students will start back to full in-person learning on April 28th with the other middle school grades.

g. MOA Reopening Schools Amendment

An agreement has been reached with the teacher's union. A copy of the MOA Amendment is in tonight's agenda packet.

Liaisons

Mr. Doherty shared that the CHS PTO will host a "beach themed" grab and go for the staff tomorrow. Additional ways to celebrate CHS seniors are still being planned. The Alumni Association Hall of Fame is still waiting to hear from UMASS Lowell for a date. Alumni Scholarships will be awarded, but there will not be a formal "Scholarship Night". CHIPS will be putting up their "Little Free Library" over April vacation. May 3 - 7th is Spirit Week. They are working on field day activities for June.

Ms. Santos said that Harrington's PTO had a very successful book sale. They are preparing 4th grade end-of-year activities and are planning for Teacher Appreciation Week.

Ms. Newcomb met with the South Row PTO who had a successful Zoom Dance Party. They have done well keeping families and students engaged in the school community this school year.

Mr. King will be attending Center School's PTO tomorrow night.

New Items

Ms. Santos would like an update on SEL and plans going forward to address social emotional needs for the whole school community at the next meeting. Mr. King stated that Book Club will meet at 5:30 on April 27th. MASC is holding their "Day on the Hill" this Friday for the whole day, remotely. MASC is looking for new resolutions. Town Meeting is being pushed until June 17th this year and will be held in the CHS gym.

Public Comments

Mr. King shared an email from Jill Comins which said that CHIPS will be moving to a four day a week program, with the exception of intensive needs children who will continue to be five days per week starting in the fall. Registration is online and students not on IEPs may choose a two or four-day option. She is concerned about the number of days available to general education students as well as those on IEPs. Dr. Lang will be meeting on this concern and more information will be available at the next Committee meeting.

Adjournment (8:48 p.m.)

Mr. Moses motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*