

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
August 24, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Secretary), Ms. Donna Newcomb and Ms. Maria Santos. Mr. John Moses is not present tonight.

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. In-person public participation will be taking place tonight in accordance with social distancing and safety protocols established by the Chelmsford School Committee Public Participation Guidelines. Anyone interested in speaking during the public input portion of the meeting would have notified the superintendent’s office by yesterday afternoon and would have been provided with the guidelines and assigned a time to attend the meeting to speak. 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 their comments or questions during our second public input session at the end of the meeting.”

Consent Agenda

1. **Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of August 9, 2021.**

Ms. Newcomb motioned to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting on August 9th. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that new faculty will be coming in tomorrow and on Thursday. This past week staff came back to school to set up their classrooms. Ms. Santos said that some student activities have begun including “Band Camp” this week. They will be performing on Thursday at 5:00 p.m. at the stadium. Athletics also begin this week.

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Approval of 2021-22 Student Handbooks

Dr. Hirsch included a memorandum and a copy of the handbook in tonight's agenda packet. An addendum which pertains only to CHS is also included. There are not many changes, but a few language changes have been made concerning attendance. Last year the handbook included small disclaimers which addressed issues required due to the COVID outbreak. Those sections have been removed **except for the section on "health"**. The ALICE protocols have been added and are replacing the previous "lock down" protocols.

Ms. Newcomb motioned for The School Committee to approve the Chelmsford Public School District Handbook for the school year 2021-22. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

Principal Murray has joined the table and thanked the CHS staff for an amazing job done during the last school year. He is also thankful for changes made this summer to CHS both inside and outside the building. He spoke of changes to the CHS Addendum, including the new safer procedure for visitors entering the school. The varsity jacket program is being revived. Absent students will no longer lose academic grade points for unexcused absences. Homework on vacations is being eliminated. Proposed changes have also been made to "credit recovery", "independent studies" and "jobs and mentoring". The Chair made a correction to the addendum to change the student activity fee from \$100 to \$50 as previously voted by The School Committee. The grade point average has been adjusted to 5.0.

Ms. Newcomb motioned for The School Committee to approve the Chelmsford High School Handbook for the school year 2021-22. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

2. Approval of Contract: Update to Facility Conditions and Districtwide Master Plan

Dr. Lang stated that only one proposal was received, and it was from Dore & Whittier Architects, Inc. who we have contracted with in the past. He recommends that the School Committee approve this contract for \$75,000. The cost will be covered by an ESSER Grant. The contract is being prepared by The Committee's attorney. The work will begin soon after Labor Day and should be concluded by February vacation week.

Ms. Newcomb motioned for The School Committee approve authorization to enter into a contract with Dore & Whittier Architects for the purposes of an update to the facility conditions and districtwide master plan at the cost of \$75,000. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

3. 2021-22 School Committee Self Evaluation

In tonight's agenda packet, The Chair has included the combined results of the self-evaluation. Most responses to the categories were "agree" or "strongly agree". The exception being The Strategic Plan which has been delayed due to COVID. This will be good to share for the upcoming workshop.

4. School Committee Workshop – Discussion

Dr. Lang included a memorandum in the agenda packet advising that a workshop could be scheduled for September 28, 2021, with Dr. Paul Ash, from Ribas and Associates. Dr. Lang proposes a 6:00 p.m. start time for the workshop which will last for two to two and one-half hours. A follow-up session may be scheduled for six months later. The Committee agreed to the time and date.

5. 2021-22 Return-to-School Planning

Peggy Gump, the District Coordinator for School Nurses, joined the meeting. Dr. Lang spoke of the need for safety to be at the forefront as well as the need to return to “in-person” school. To complement tonight’s presentation Dr. Lang has created a slide show which is included in the agenda packet for the meeting.

a. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Roadmap

Dr. Hirsch discussed what the district has already been doing (which is being endorsed by DESE). The process begins with connecting with students and families. Next is reviewing prior student information including benchmark data, with a focus on students returning to and staying in school. Assessment schedules at the beginning of the school year, data collection and progress monitoring will be necessary. Additional assessments in ELA and mathematics are being added for the high school. Programs/tools for grades 7 – 12 are being added in social studies and perhaps later in science to offer additional support. Curriculum adjustments and pacing guides be made based on data results. SEL and diversity programs are being enhanced and being supported by professional development. More interventionists will be hired, after school, on-demand tutoring programs are possible and additional extended school day learning opportunities will be offered. To fully appreciate all that is happening and planned, please view Dr. Hirsch’s full presentation from tonight on Chelmsford Telemedia.

b. Student Enrollment Update

Data was compiled on August 21st for enrollment and the slide is included in tonight’s agenda packet. The total number of students is 5,032 so far which is comparable to enrollment before COVID. More enrollments are expected during the next few weeks. Based on guidance from DESE and DPH schools are required to be in-person, full-time for five days a week for the 2021-22 school year.

Mitigation: Dr. Lang shared the CPS mitigation strategies which are in place to support a healthy return to school. CPS requires all students and staff to wear masks while inside the school buildings. As of today, this is a DESE mandate for the entire Commonwealth. Masks are required at all times on school busses per the Department of Transportation. Students and staff need to continue to self-screen for COVID symptoms (and stay home if symptomatic) and use proper hand hygiene. Additional mitigation measures will be in place as well. The District encourages all who are eligible to be vaccinated.

c. COVID-19 Pool Testing

The District will continue with weekly pool testing for all staff and students who volunteer to participate. This is recommended mostly for those who are not vaccinated. Pool testing was quite successful last school year. The Commonwealth will continue to pay for the pool testing for this school year.

d. Protocol for COVID-19 Positive Case Management

Peggy Gump, Coordinator of School Nurses, joined the meeting to elaborate on pool testing and review COVID symptoms.

e. Procedure for Identification of Close Contacts and Quarantine Options

Ms. Gump shared that a “close contact” is someone who has been within six feet of a COVID-19 positive individual indoors for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. A person who is fully vaccinated and symptom-free is not considered to be a “close contact” and will be exempt from the quarantine protocol. Since all are wearing masks on the busses (with open windows) “close contact” does not apply.

f. Notification of COVID-19 Positive Cases and Close Contacts

Ms. Gump reviewed the protocols for quarantine for those who test positive for COVID-19. She provided details of the three options available for those who have been exposed to the virus: test and stay; quarantine and test; and quarantine. Her presentation and slides may be viewed by watching tonight's meeting. Dr. Lang reviewed the notification protocols in place for the coming year. There will be one communication this year to advise whether or not the student or staff has been deemed a "close contact" and their options moving forward. CPS will provide a school by school dashboard, updated weekly, with the number of positive COVID-19 cases. Staff and students will be given the opportunity to share their vaccination status with the district by uploading their vaccination card.

g. School Facility Cleaning Procedures

Increased school cleaning will be done by hiring extra contracted cleaners during the school day and Wednesday nights and Saturdays. ESSER funding will cover these costs. CPS custodians will "fog" all common, educational and office areas twice weekly.

h. School HVAC System Assessment and Improvements

Working with The Town significant improvements have been made to the HVAC systems. All systems are in the highest working order with the best possible filtration systems in place. The website will soon have a link to the HVAC reports and updates. Current details may be found in the slide show of tonight's packet. There are air purifiers in any spaces that do not have clean air exchange. All filters are replaced on a regular basis.

i. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All schools are well-stocked in PPE. Students and staff are encouraged to use their own masks, but additional masks will be available at all schools.

j. School Nutrition Services (Breakfast and Lunch Program)

The USDA will be paying for the breakfast and lunch program again this school year. Meals will be available for all students. Dr. Lang shared that lunches will be taken in the cafeteria areas. Elementary and middle school students will eat at assigned tables each day. Masks will be removed only while eating. While the weather is nice middle and high school students may opt to eat outdoors.

Arts Safety Protocols: This slide shot specifies protocols for performing and visual arts this coming school year. Masks, sanitizing hands and as much spacing as possible should be in place at all times indoors. Music classes will be moved outside when possible, where masks will not be required. Masks and distancing indoors will be required for physical education classes, with mask breaks being given. Classes will be held outdoors when feasible. Equipment will be sanitized at the end of each school day and more often when possible.

k. Extracurricular Activities (Activities and Athletics)

Activities and athletics will take place this year. Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) guidelines will be followed.

Action/New Items

Ms. Santos would like to hear more about how technology will continue to be implemented in the curriculum when schools reopen.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment (8:48 p.m.)

Ms. Newcomb motioned to adjourn. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*