

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
December 21, 2021
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Mr. John Moses (Vice Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Secretary), Ms. Donna Newcomb 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. 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 December 7, 2021**

The Chair requested changes to these minutes. They will be amended and presented at the next meeting.

- 2. Approval of the minutes of the school committee workshop meeting of December 14, 2021**

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the minutes for the school committee workshop on December 14, 2021, as presented. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Katrina shared that the “Winter Concert” was held with the CHS band, orchestra and chorus performing for a large audience and all ensembles did “very well”! The CHS girls’ soccer team raised \$793.50 for The Hope and Friendship Organization which provides programs for patients and families with “stage four breast cancer”. On January 27, 2022, the incoming freshman parent curriculum night will be held. Parents will receive information on this event soon.

Sarah announced that the CHS TV Arts Department will offer a new show called *The Search*. This is fictional and focuses on a few students who are dealing with a mystery in their home town. The writing

Team is working hard, and actors will be needed. The release date will be sometime in the spring. On Friday, January 14th, the annual "In Tune Concert" will be held to celebrate CHS student musicians. All donations received will be given to the "Clean River Project" to help clean up the banks of The Merrimack River. Auditions for this will end tomorrow. An assembly was held today for seniors to learn about the new "Capstone Experience" which will provide opportunities for internships, community service or a research paper or project for term four. Applications will be due in February.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch announced that in January five CHS art students will participate in the fourth annual "Greater Lowell Regional Art Show". Loading Doc Gallery of the Western Studios in Lowell is the sponsor. Students will collaborate with students from Groton Dunstable High School, Innovations Academy, and Tyngsboro High School. The art projects will focus on the pandemic and will be displayed. The CHS students are Meghan Haynes, William Lambert, Josie Lee, Avery Marr and Daniel Jeong. The Math Civics Learning Coalition has awarded a civics grant to Chelmsford which will focus on the eighth-grade civics programs at the middle schools.

Mr. Doherty also gave a rave review to the CHS "Winter Concert"!

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Dore & Whittier Architects Update on Districtwide Facilities Master Plan

Dore & Whittier's presentation tonight by Jason and Brad is accompanied by a detailed slide show. Decisions about moving forward will be discussed at the first meeting in January. To fully appreciate the information shared tonight, it would be helpful to watch this segment of tonight's meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia. With regard to the capital improvement plan from five years ago, The District and The Town are doing a good job of maintaining and improving facilities. The decision about a priority project to be submitted to MSBA will be addressed with and determined by The Committee in January. Focus for the priority project is currently at the middle school level. Consideration is also being given to the number of elementary schools and projected populations in those schools. Grade level considerations and the number of middle schools needed are also being discussed. The Master Plan will be looking at potential projects for the long-term. MSBA's timeline from SOI submission to the completion of the new building is an average of seven years. If all six/seven projects were to be approved by MSBA the final project would not be completed until midway through the current century. Many project options are being considered by Dore & Whittier. All are fully presented in tonight's update. (A pause to address Committee questions and comments.) The presentation resumed with implementation plans and the timeline going forward, including potential costs. These plans are included in tonight's agenda packet. More details will be provided for the next Committee meeting. This segment concluded with Committee members questions and comments. Some concerns were expressed for the overcrowded elementary schools and aged modular classrooms at McCarthy.

2. FY 2023 Capital Plan Update

Dr. Lang said that of the eight items submitted to The Town, six of them were recommended for funding according to John Sousa, Town of Chelmsford Finance Director/Treasurer. One of the projects not recommended is the tennis court replacement project at CHS (\$1.2 million). Mr. Sousa will be looking for alternative funding for this costly project. The second project not recommended was updating exterior lighting at CHS (\$13 K) because it is under the \$25,000 minimum for capital project funding. The District

should be able to cover the lighting expenses. The other six projects totaled \$1.614 million and include: HVAC duct work repair/servicing; stair treads at Byam; renovation of restrooms for code compliance at Westlands; gym walls at South Row and Center Schools; kitchen upgrade at McCarthy; and replacement of the boilers at CHS. These projects will be moved forward at Town Meeting in the spring. Thanks to Mr. Doherty for representing the School Committee projects for approval. In the event that project costs have accelerated, a supplemental request will be submitted to The Town in the fall or The District might be able to supply the additional funds, so the projects may be completed.

3. COVID-19 Cases, Pool Testing, Test and Stay, and Vaccination Status Update

Dr. Lang's COVID updates include a slide show presentation which is part of tonight's agenda packet. Almost 40% of the children ages 5-11 are fully vaccinated! There is small growth in the vaccination rate for the others from 12-19 years of age. Clinics were held at McCarthy to vaccinate the 5-11-year-olds. More clinics will be scheduled. Staff were able to receive their booster shots at CHS. Upcoming clinics will be advertised on the website. DESE will updating their vaccination guidelines early in 2022. Pool testing and "Test and Stay" are continuing and people can opt in to either of these on the district website. Positivity rates for the schools remain low. Most positive cases seen in schools are familial. Updates are provided each week.

4. New On-Line Payment Processing Platform

Ms. Johnson-Collins included a memorandum tonight about changing to a new on-line platform for families to register and pay for bus transportation and sports. The one used for many years is no longer able to meet the needs of the Chelmsford Public Schools. The new one she recommended has a different fee structure than the one used in the past. Her question for The Committee tonight is whether or not to pass the transaction fees on to the families to pay. With the prior platform CPS has absorbed the fee of 2.5% to 2.7%. The new platform will begin with a fee of 3.95% with an increase to 4.95% in July. Prior cost absorbed by the district was \$21,000, but the new platform fee will be closer to \$36,000 per year. If the difference in cost is passed on to the families, the bus and athletic fees. Early Bird Bus fees would increase from \$175 to \$178.50. She has included in her memorandum a chart detailing the change in fees. If the new platform works well other payments normally made by check would be payable through this on-line platform such as students activity fees, or field trip fees. Since the transaction fee is a percentage this could lead to even larger fees in the future. Payment in this manner is much easier than processing hundreds of checks, with the possibility of "insufficient funds". Committee members reacted to this proposal, discussing whether the fee might be waived for maybe transportation, but not for fund raisers or activity fees. After listening, Dr. Lang asked if having the district continue to cover the transportation and sports fees for now until next July, when the addition of this on-line platform to process other fees may be chosen, is agreeable to The Committee. The Committee agreed to this arrangement, with reconsideration to happen later.

5. Recommended FY2022 Budget Transfer

This motion will allow for the additional costs needed to complete the Center School playground.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the FY2022 local operating budget transfer of \$38,143 from employee separation costs account to the capital land and building account as presented. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

The Committee would like to have a discussion going forward about the funding for school playgrounds and the role that individual school PTO's fill in these needs.

6. Update pertaining to On-Demand Tutoring Service Usage: Paper

Dr. Hirsch provided an update on the tutoring service called "Paper", which was introduced in October and is available to students in grades five through twelve. This online program is available 24/7. It is funded through ESSER funds. Content area experts are available to help students. As the slide show included in tonight's packet demonstrates, student response has been positive (86%). Most students are connected to assistance in a minute or two. Monthly meetings are held with The District and Paper for evaluations and updates. Data on usage for November through December is included in tonight's agenda packet slides. The program is being promoted through teaching staff, counselors and student mentors from CHS to assure access for all middle and high school students.

7. Personnel Report: November 2021

No action required.

8. Valley Collaborative Annual Report: 2020 – 2021

The entire annual report is shared in tonight's agenda packet.

9. Valley Collaborative Winter Newsletter: 2021

The Winter Newsletter is shared in tonight's agenda packet.

Liaison Reports

Mr. Doherty shared that the Alumni Association's deadline for scholarships for senior is January 7, 2022, and for alumni it is January 21st. Ms. Santos reported that Harrington's holiday sale went well, and the students enjoyed being able to do their own shopping. Mr. King, along with Dr. Lang, attended the Select Board meeting last night where the development agreement was again discussed. Dr. Lang said that the latest draft of the agreement with the West Campus was shared. \$60,000 had been requested by the District from the developer to cover the cost of enrollment projection and potential redistricting. This has been included in the current agreement draft. At a Planning Board meeting an additional \$120,000, which would help to cover "soft costs" which might arise moving forward. The Select Board agreed with the \$180,000 amount to be used toward school/educational purposes. The attorneys are working on the draft. Virginia Timmons, Select Board member came to the table to say the agreement could be signed in January or by early February.

New Items

The Committee needs to meet to discuss negotiations and will do so on January 11, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. This will be an executive session and not public.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment (8:08 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*