

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
February 1, 2022
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Secretary), Mr. John Moses, 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 January 18, 2022**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the regular committee meeting minutes of January 18, 2022.
Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Katrina shared that term 3 is starting and February Break will be coming up soon. On January 27th a meeting was held for the parents of eighth grade students. The event was successful and concluded with tours of CHS. A group called “College Bound” will zoom with parents with information on how to save money for college on February 7th. The annual “In Tune” concert will be held on February 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Sarah added that The Crescendos and The Thursdays will competing this weekend. They have won many awards through the years and, hopefully, will do so again. Yesterday saw the “Mock Trial Competition”. CHS defeated Arlington. A team of students led by Michael Kelliher, Jennie Huynh, Mahijith Chava and Larry Yang recently received a “shout out” from Chelmsford Telemedia TV on the new “CHS Door Painting Project”. The paintings on the doors are chosen to reflect the personality of the teacher for each room.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that there has been great interest expressed in upcoming student trips. In 2023 a trip is planned for The Galapagos Islands and registration for that event is already full! There are still openings for the Spanish and French exchange student programs. Details for these are on the World Languages website. Middle school students were able to enjoy snowshoeing thanks to last weekend's snow storm. CHS performance classes are getting ready for the trip to Disney later this month. McCarthy will present *Moana Junior* on February 4th and 5th. In a partnership with The Chelmsford Water Department, "The Pathway" for science is being developed for life sciences.

Mr. Doherty added that he virtually attended the recent mock trial and the students were wonderful! Our student rep, Sarah, did a phenomenal job "under heavy grilling and cross examination"!

Public Comments

None.

New Business

1. Spotlight on the Schools: South Row Elementary School

South Row School's Principal, Ms. Terri Gilbert, and Assistant Principal, Mr. Jason Ramalho, joined the meeting tonight to update The Committee on happenings at South Row. Their presentation focuses on partnering done with students, staff, families and community. To help welcome students and families back to the school-4th grade "play dates" were held during the summer. This also provided Ms. Gilbert with an opportunity to meet people since she is new to the South Row community. Kindergarten orientation and K-4 tours of the school also took place. Videos were shared for "moving up" to the next grade. The PTO supported all the events. SEL is important and students are rewarded for realizing positive expectations by receiving PRIDE tickets and PRIDE stickers and "shout outs" during morning announcements. A photo is taken of the student with his/her PRIDE sticker and is shared with the family. "Happy notes" are also being sent home for students. In January the whole school participated in a door decorating challenge, based on the themes of respect, responsibility, safety and kindness! Included in South Row's slide show are students from Ms. Stagnone's class talking about the door decorating experience. Additionally, fourth graders are involved in Student Council and all are encouraged to apply. These students are seen as student leaders, contribute to ideas for the school and assist in school jobs and tasks (safety patrol, kindergarten helpers, and classroom readers). The slides included students sharing about the Students Council Leadership Program. Visits from therapy dogs are very popular with students and families alike. The PTO, with the assistance of CHS students, painted games on the blacktop in the recess area. "Officer High Five Friday" brings monthly visits to the school from police officers, and members of other town departments in the future. Monthly "Walk to School Day" events are also popular. The focus is on safe walking routes and overall wellness. Recently the School Council held a "Parent Discussion Night" which focused on wellness. It was virtually attended by over 35 participants. Academic initiatives have included DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and include PD, podcasts, teacher/staff collaboration and student grade level meetings. Fun reading and math challenges are included for students to work on at home with their families. In October alone students read for over 57,000 minutes with their families! In January almost 10,000 minutes of math facts were highlighted!

Mr. Ramalho closed the presentation by sharing additional happenings which make South Row such a special school. Each month the school focuses on doing a kindly act that benefits others and also supports the "Wish Project Partnership". The school also has a monthly "Spirit Day" to help build community. The PTO and other committees foster events through the school year like the science fair, pumpkin fair, gardening and an international festival. To fully appreciate South Row School the entire presentation may be viewed on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube.

2. Dore & Whittier Architects: Districtwide Facilities Master Plan Options Discussion

Brad and Michelle came to tonight's meeting to follow up on the detailed presentation given two meetings ago about the master building plan. Dr. Lang is hopeful that The Committee will be able to decide after tonight's comparison between McCarthy and Parker is shared. The slide show for tonight is included in the agenda packet, but to fully appreciate all of the details involved, watching the Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube is advised. The cost of repairs/maintenance over the next ten years will cost close to \$7 million dollars for Parker. ADA compliance for Parker would be much costlier to implement to bring the building up to code. Without modular classrooms McCarthy has space to serve 800 students, Parker's capacity is only 572. Movement of students through Parker is more difficult than McCarthy. To bring Parker up to current code three additional elevators would need to be installed. Movement through the McCarthy building is very direct and simple. Restrooms are convenient at McCarthy, unlike Parker. To bring ADA up to code at McCarthy would be less costly than at Parker. McCarthy's auditorium (Parker only has a stage area in the cafeteria) was recently renovated. During that time ADA issues were addressed. Dore & Whittier believes the district should move forward with submitting Parker for the MSBA process. The Committee agrees on submitting Parker. Dr. Lang will be asking for a formal vote when the Statement of Interest application is being fleshed out.

3. Superintendent's Recommended FY2023 Budget

Dr. Lang presented the proposed FY2023 budget. The details are not contained in tonight's agenda packet but will be posted on the website tomorrow for public view. Dr. Lang shared slides of the budget tonight during his presentation of highlights to The Committee. After tonight The Committee will have a month to review the budget, share input and ask questions before the meeting on March 1, 2022, when the budget hearing will be held. The Committee members were given a budget packet tonight and Dr. Lang will share it with the town reps. The budget format is the same as the past few years. It begins with a narrative and moves into the system-wide budget. The summary is found on page 10. On March 1st, the meeting will start on page 11 and each category level detail will be presented for questions or comments. The budget totals \$67.5 million dollars, which is an increase of \$2.5 million over last year. The increase amount was recommended by Town Manager Cohen. The staff salaries are listed in the personnel section of the budget. The appendices at the end of the packet include: student enrollment data and projection; data for clubs and activities; a grant level summary and revolving accounts and other summary documents. The FY2022 budget is in great shape. To fully appreciate Dr. Lang's presentation, you should view it on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube. Dr. Lang also highlighted several additional items for the budget to be discussed further on March 1, 2022. Building administrators and special ed staff will attend that meeting to elaborate on a program or service to be considered for the budget. Some of these include: a middle school language-based program to be begun in grade five; for CHS two additional special ed teachers (one for the PAVE program, the other for the STEP program); for the middle schools an increase of 1.5 FT psychologists to help meet the increasing needs of the middle school population (COVID has increased the needs); for three social worker/family counselors for each education level to meet increasing mental health and counseling needs; a pay increase for substitutes (teachers, nurses and paras); and funding for the final 1:1 Technology Initiative which will be in its fourth year. Committee members should contact Dr. Lang with questions on any of these.

4. Update to CPS COVID-19 Mitigation Strategy: At-Home Rapid Antigen Testing

Dr. Lang shared that of the over 4600 COVID tests administered this past year, only 37 tested positive. The district has been doing very well keeping track of the virus. Adopting "Pool Testing" and "Test and Stay" worked well. Recently the case numbers are falling (after a spike after the holidays). DESE has made "at home" test kits available for staff. Now they are promoting a program where staff and students

are able to do a weekly test at home. Pool testing will be maintained to support this. The test kits will be sent home every other Friday starting this week. This program is voluntary but **positive tests must be reported to the school!** Any positive cases reported to the district will be tracked. Contact tracing and “test and stay” will be discontinued. Dr. Lang has sent a letter with all the details about the new mitigation procedures to all district families and the community.

Liaison Reports

Ms. Santos shared that the Steering Committee for the Strategic Plan met. The Chair said that Center School PTO met last week. They are working on providing three enrichment activities for each grade during this school year. They also gave classroom supplies to each teacher. They are doing a calendar raffle with local restaurants for their major fund raiser. They are excited that their new playground will be constructed this summer! CHIPS PTO will hold a virtual meeting on February 7th. Ms. Newman shared that The Chelmsford Friends of Music have money available for classroom teachers to purchase musical instruments like keyboards and ukuleles. They also have scholarships available for which information is available at The College and Career Center.

New Items

Next meeting is next Tuesday. The Select Board would like The Committee to attend a meeting with them between March 14th and 28th.

Public Comments

Parent, Laurie McCarron complimented Amy Reese for her attention to a special ed situation.

Adjournment (8:15 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*