

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
March 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 February 1, 2022**
- 2. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 8, 2022**
- 3. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 14, 2022**
- 4. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 17, 2022**

(The minutes from February 17, 2022, are tabled until the next meeting pending clarifications of comments and discussions.)

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the meeting minutes from February 1, 2022, School Committee meeting; February 8, 2022 School Committee meeting and February 14, 2022 School Committee meeting. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

## **CHS Student Representative Announcements**

Katrina shared that it is now term 3 and guidance counselors are going to meet with juniors to talk about senior year and their plans for after CHS. Applications for The Senior Capstone Program are still being accepted until March 4, 2022. CHS House Olympics will be held starting March 14 and will include hockey, dodge-ball and trivia. The next CHS dance is scheduled for March 18<sup>th</sup>. Thomas Brown, a freshman wrestler at CHS, became the first freshman All State Champion in CHS history and the first freshman All State Heavyweight Champion in Massachusetts history! Jack Walsh placed 7<sup>th</sup> in this competition! MCAS begins March 9<sup>th</sup>. March 12<sup>th</sup> the SATs will be held. The Career Center is getting new furniture for the presentation area. The Crescendos and The Thursdays competed in ICHSAC quarterfinals with The Thursdays placing second and the Crescendos third! Both groups will move on to the semifinals. The CHS Winter Newscast which features videos, Dr. Whittlesey's new books, the ECO Club stand on climate change, and Character Strong, may be viewed at chstv.org. Today the electives were presented to the underclassmen. The Therapy Dogs visited CHS today!

## **Good News**

Mr. King added that Wrestling Coach Chris Piscione was named the Division 1 Coach of the Year!

Mr. Moses requested a moment of silence for the people of Ukraine, whose children (although seeking shelter underground) continue to learn with their teachers. Our support is needed.

## **Moment of Silence for Ukraine observed.**

## **Public Comments**

Kathy Paluso, of 10 Bentley Lane, has been a paraprofessional for 13 years and Vice President for Support Staff. She states that she only receives \$1.30 more per hour than newly hired paras. She is concerned that those who are "trusted with the most vulnerable of our students" earn less than high school students who work part-time jobs. Paras provide not only social and emotional support but also support content areas for the curriculum. She also spoke of the importance of the school secretaries and clerks in the schools, who support the needs of students and staff on a daily basis. Additionally, she described the recess aides as "the unsung heroes of each building" who keep children safe at recess, handle conflicts and create a playful environment for all students. She is asking that the upcoming fiscal year budget for 2023 "reflects a salary adjustment for support staff that brings our salaries in line with surrounding districts". She requests support staff receive "a livable wage".

Peter Malloy, of Three Village View Road, who spoke as a parent, a taxpayer and an educator. He states that a living wage in Massachusetts is between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year, while the poverty line is \$27, 800 a year for a family of four. Support staff in Chelmsford earn an average salary of \$22,129. Support staff in North Andover and Wakefield make about 20% more than those in Chelmsford. He states that education in Chelmsford is "massively underfunded". He requests that: The School Committee; The Town Select Board; The Town Manager; and school administrators speak up for the underpaid support staff to bring them close to the minimum standard of living for Massachusetts. This would cost about 1.5% of the 2023 proposed budget.

Margie Lotto, of Jordan Street, read a poignant letter of gratitude she received in 2019. She would like to see support staff receive the wage increase they deserve.

Lauren Cochran, of 46 Augusta Way, CHS teacher and President of the Chelmsford Federation of Teachers, spoke of the "We're Worth It!" campaign. She is concerned that the proposed 2023 budget does not address the "severely underpaid paraprofessionals and support staff in our district". She asks

that the 2023 budget provide rewards for those who have worked so hard during the pandemic, but still do not make a “living wage”.

Donna Taylor, of 53 Bartlett Street, who is a paraprofessional at Parker Middle School, and has worked for The District for over 25 years. The responsibilities of paras have steadily increased from only supporting academic needs to now supporting students with academic, emotional and behavioral issues. Salaries do not reflect the increased responsibilities. She requests a “fair, livable wage” for the paraprofessionals.

Mary Frenette, of 19 Walnut Road, is a career paraprofessional. She clearly articulated all the academic requirements she meets as an eighth-grade para as well as her attending unified arts classes with her students. She works at additional student support jobs outside of the regular school hours and in the summer. She asks that the 2023 budget make a difference for the paraprofessionals by giving them a “living wage”.

Kathleen Lopez, of Seven Bonanza Road, who is a mother of three children of color and a paraprofessional in the district questions why the 2023 budget does not include an increase in pay for the paraprofessionals. She shared a poignant story explaining that her “why” for being a para is to create relationships that foster inclusion for all students.

Aamina Mian, of Seven Hemlock Drive, has worked as a para in Chelmsford for 24 years. She was hired in 1998 and earned \$10.00 per hour and in 2022 makes less than \$17.50 hourly. She looks forward daily to working with her students at CHS and feels trusted by her students. She makes a difference in many classes from ninth to twelfth grade and needs to keep up to date on curriculum and find new ways to assist student learning in those classes. She helps seven special education students each day and many other general education students who rely on her as well.

Regina Jackson, of Nine Essex Place, is a taxpayer and a parent of children who have greatly benefitted by the support of Chelmsford paraprofessionals. She strongly advocates for raises for paras to reflect the importance of the services they provide. They help not only in the classroom but also with hygiene issues, feeding, mobility challenges as well emotional issues. The strong bonds paras form with the students and communication they provide for the families helps the students to be successful. The current pay paras receive is a disincentive to their staying with the CPS. They need “a decent livable wage”.

Lisa Tice, of Seven River Meadow Drive, has taught in Chelmsford for 19 years and currently teaches fourth grade. She wants to see a fair and equitable wage increase for the paraprofessional staff included in the budget. She spoke of the many ways paras support their students each day with academic understanding, social support, behavioral support, following the requirements of IEPs and assist in resolving crisis situations for students. Paras also work closely with school nurses for students who have health challenges and foster more inclusion in classrooms. They are also required to substitute for teachers at a moment’s notice.

Kim Atkinson, of 35 Oak Hill Road in Weston, who is a special education teacher at Byam, stated that the paras in her SPED program “play a key role in the academic, behavioral, and social learning” of the students and she is concerned about the hiring of paraprofessionals, as many of these positions remain unfilled for months at a time. Retaining existing talented staff is a problem. The demands and expectations of the job is disproportionate to the pay. Existing paraprofessionals continue to meet the needs of the students with whom they work. She encourages the community to come and substitute as a para to “experience the depth and intensity of that work”!

Mr. King thanked all the speakers on behalf of The Committee, as well as those who sent emails which will be read later in the meeting. The Committee respects and appreciates the work of all staff throughout the school year. Contract negotiations with several of these groups will begin soon.

## **New Business**

### **1. UMASS Lowell Teaching Excellence and Achievement (TEA) Fulbright Scholars**

These scholars were not able to attend the meeting tonight.

### **2. Spotlight on the Schools: Byam Elementary School**

Jason Fredette, Principal, and Betsy Dolan, Assistant Principal, joined the meeting to share the happenings at Byam focusing on the positives which have come from the COVID pandemic and will remain in place going forward. The slides supporting their presentation tonight are shared in the meeting agenda packet. Ms. Dolan shared that some of these changes include communication, daily routines, technology for SEL, virtual field trips and student collaboration. They found that videos to families were a good supplement to newsletter for communication during the pandemic. They also pre-record morning announcement videos, so teachers may share them at the time that is best for their class. They shared a virtual field trip to Denali Park in Alaska, as well as a video of virtual math learning. Second grade teacher, Jennifer DeDevoir, demonstrated how she uses technology to reinforce Social Emotional Learning. A highlight of which is her "talking dog" Freddie sending a video to students! A video of students collaborating using their Chrome Books was shared. Finally, they shared their new arrival and dismissal systems which have been streamlined with the help of technology.

### **3. FY2023 Budget Hearing**

The budget will be reviewed item by item. When all questions have been satisfied, a motion will be voted on for approval of each page. Amy Reese will be at the table to address new special education positions and programming for middle schools as well as additional social worker positions recommended for all levels. This review will begin on page 11 of the 2023 Budget binder.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 1110 School Committee on page 11 for the fiscal 2023 budget, total amount \$34,050. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 1210 Superintendent on page 12 for the amount of \$449, 689 for the fiscal 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 1220 Assistant Superintendent on page 13 for the amount of \$256,685 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 1230 District Wide on page 14 for the amount of \$420,700 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 1410 Business and Finance on page 15 of the budget for the amount of \$437, 984 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 1420 Human Resources on page 16 for the amount of \$349,592 for the FY 2021 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

When questioned about the increase in this line item 1430-1435, Dr. Lang explained the increase in this line item is due to the upcoming collective bargaining cycle which will involve all contracts except the custodians. Legal costs increase during collective bargaining years.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 1430-1435 Legal Services and Settlements on page 17 for the amount of \$178, 000 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

When asked about the increase in budget on page 18, Dr. Lang stated the reason is continuing to support the existing infrastructure for the network and wireless internet and to cover annual maintenance agreements.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 1450 Districtwide Mis on page 18 for the amount of \$1,422,680 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2110 Curriculum Directors on page 19 for the amount of \$1,325,968 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2110 Curriculum Directors Special Education on page 20 in the amount of \$936, 347 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Dr. Lang stated on page 21 there are new line items to pay for stipends for staff who will be assisting with next year's CHS accreditation which occurs every ten years and begins in the spring.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget item 2210 School Leadership on page 21 for the amount of \$2,917,971 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2300-2305 Classroom Teachers - Regular Education on page 22 for the amount of \$25,385,515 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Regarding page 23, Dr. Lang stated the increase in tutoring is for employees (mostly part-time) to be hired to work in classrooms. This model has been used at the elementary schools and will be brought to the high school and the middle schools due to its success.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2310 Teacher Specialist – Regular Education on page 23 for the amount of \$2,098,640 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

On page 24, Dr. Lang recommends adding three additional SPED positions. Amy Reese came to the table to respond to questions. She stated that students will be selected for this language-based program based on entrance and exit criteria in fifth grade. Students will remain in their general education classroom with support from the SPED teacher. Pull-out groups also support the program. Both the SPED and general education teachers will receive specific training for this program. An additional teacher will be hired for the CHS PAVE Program and one for the STEP Program.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2310 Teacher Specialist – Special Education on page 24 for the amount of \$6,899,777 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 2320 Medical/Therapeutic Services on page 25 for the amount of \$412,390 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Dr. Lang is recommending an increase on page 26 for substitutes including an increase in the rate paid for daily substitutes, long-term substitutes, para substitutes and substitute recess aides to offer comparable pay as neighboring districts.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 2325 Substitutes on page 26 for the amount of \$811,000 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2330 Paraprofessionals on page 27 for the amount of \$4,249, 008 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2340 Library Media Center on page 28 for the amount of \$792,616 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2357 Professional Development on page 29 for the amount of \$218,275 for the FY 2023 budget.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2410-2415 Textbooks and Instructional Materials on page 30 for the amount of 563,440 for the FY 2023 Budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2420 Instructional Equipment on page 31 for the amount of \$161,450 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2430 General Supplies on page 32 for the amount of \$594,808 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2440 Other Instructional Services – Special Education on page 33 for the amount of \$190,000 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2451-2455 Classroom Instructional Technology and Software on page 34 for the amount of \$695,000 for the FY2023 project. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Dr. Lang stated that page 35 has increases since the part-time psychologists at McCarthy and Parker are both being increased to full-time positions. Also, the recommendation includes three social workers providing one for each level, to work with struggling students and their families to access resources they need. A recommendation is also made to include compensation for late summer meetings for the CHS guidance people.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 2710-2800 Guidance and Psychological Services on page 35 for the amount of \$2,705,864 for the FY2023 budget.**

Dr. Lang is including a recommendation on page 36 to increase the daily substitute nurses pay to be competitive with other districts.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 3200 Medical and Health Services on page 36 for the amount of \$884,101 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Dr. Lang stated that page 37 will include an increase for regular education bus transportation. Additional small busses will be added to service CHIPs and help with some elementary bus runs.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 3300 Transportation on page 37 for the amount of \$4,298,419 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 3400 Food Services on page 38 for the amount of \$123,174 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 3510 Athletic Department on page 39 in the amount of \$922,338 for the FY 2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Recognition was given to Athletic Director, Dan Hart, for all he has been doing the past two years to keep the athletic program running during the pandemic challenges.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 3520 Other Student Activities on page 40 for the amount of \$202,690 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 3600 School Security on page 41 for the amount of \$192,351 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

Dr. Lang stated that the contracted services fees will be increasing, new equipment will be purchased for the district and that the custodial contracts are expiring and will be going out to bid.

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 4110-4210-4230 Custodial Services on page 42 for the amount of \$1,972,196 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 4120-4130 Heating of Buildings and Utility Services on page 43 for \$1,273,070 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve budget category 5150 Employee Separation Costs on page 44 for the amount of \$249,632 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the budget category 9300 Tuitions on page 46 for the amount of \$2,874,580 for the FY2023 budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the bottom line budget number of \$67,500,000 for the FY2023 budget as referenced on pages 10 and 47 of the budget. Mr. Doherty seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### **4. Approval of Field Trip and Travel Request**

**Mr. Moses motioned to approve the field trip applications as presented. Mr. Doherty seconded. Motion carries 5-0.**

#### **Liaison Reports**

Ms. Santos shared that McCarthy's grade seven dance is upcoming, as are student bingo and adult "Rock and Roll Bingo". The Wellness Committee met, and the district is back in compliance and will remain so for the rest of this year. The Wellness Committee was pleased to have a student representative in attendance.

#### **Action/New Items**

Ms. Newcomb reminded The Committee that they need to review the COVID policies.

The Chair would like to resume reviewing The Committee's goals. He would like feedback and will put this on the agenda for the next meeting. There will be an "Executive Session" on March 7, 2022, at 6:00. Also, there will be a meeting with the Select Board on March 14<sup>th</sup>. The next regular meeting of The Committee will be held on March 15, 2022.

Dr. Hirsch shared that three more sessions will be held on March 9<sup>th</sup> to work on the Strategic Plan. Meetings with middle and high school students will take place on March 8, 2022.

#### **Public Comments**

Mr. Michael McIver, of 221 Littleton Road, is the founder of "Kid Lives Matter" which is a non-profit organization. He wants to be sure that CPS students are not taught "really bad things" or "critical race theory". He also advocates banning certain books from the libraries and is concerned about SEL programs.

(My apology for any misspelling of names as I summarize the emails received tonight.)

Ms. Newcomb read an email from Tracy Truncoso and family praising the work of support staff and requesting that they receive a livable wage.

Mr. Doherty read one from a CHS special education teacher, Courtney Farrell, showing gratitude for the "dedication and compassion" shown by paraprofessionals, despite the many challenges of the last two years. She requests that these "unsung heroes of special education" receive a livable wage.

Mr. Moses read an email from Andrea Marvo, who is an ELL teacher at Harrington, stating that the CPS support staff play "a crucial role in the success of our special ed students". She asks The Committee provide money in the FY2023 budget for the support staff to earn a livable wage.



Ms. Santos shared an email from Alyssa Camaro, of 24 Colonial Drive, who is a special education teacher at Byam and a parent of child at Center School who requires “substantial para support” daily and expresses her thanks to all paras in the district. She is saddened by the pay given to the paras who work so closely to support the neediest students. She is concerned about eleven para positions that remain unfilled. She believes this is due to the wages offered. She pleads with The Committee to increase the pay for the paraprofessionals.

The Chair shared an email from a para, Jennifer Colbert, who has worked for the district for six years. She sees the job as “educator, encourager, comforter, moral and emotional support” and listener. The role is ever-changing, and this has been true more over the past two years. She is grateful to the paras who work with her son to help him succeed. She would like a salary increase for the support staff.

Ms. Newcomb read an email from Barbara DeFreitas of 44 Kensington Drive, who works in the library at Harrington and has been in the district for 21 years. She sees daily the effect that support staff provide for student success. Paraprofessionals assist the teaching staff as well as students. She respects the support staff and would like to see a broader compensation scale for their years in service. She would like to see dedication and loyalty rewarded.

Dr. Lang read an email from para, Lisa Darwin, who has 15 years’ experience in the district. She finds her work rewarding each year. The responsibilities of the role increase each year. Please recognize the importance of paraprofessional by providing wages which “reflect our commitment and dedication to the students”.

Dr. Hirsch shared an email from Alison Souza, who is a first-year paraprofessional at Center School. She receives joy from her work. She moves to many classrooms to assure students receive the help they require and feels connected to her students.

Mr. Doherty read an email from Elaine Dedinsky, who is a para at Parker and has worked for the district for 14 years. She requests a salary adjustment of more than 2% be included in the budget. She is concerned that the wage increase for newly hired paras lags behind the percentage increase for minimum wage in Massachusetts.

Mr. Moses shared an email from Bridget Descoley who has been a paraprofessional at CHS for 22 years. She loves her job, despite the “unlivable” salary. She supports students with academics and social emotional learning. The past two years of COVID have increased the roles paras must play to support their students. She is now working two jobs “to be able to live”. She would like to see enough money in the FY2023 budget to earn “a livable wage”.

Ms. Santos read an email from a parent whose children entered CPS during the pandemic. She has been amazed by the support received from the staff at Byam who worked hard to meet needs indicated by her son’s IEP and her older son’s “in-depth diagnosis” and support given to him at school. Both her children are “thriving” at Byam. She thanks the support staff for helping her children to enjoy going to school and learning. The paras involved with her children are great at communicating with her family. She implores The Committee to increase the salary for paras to a livable wage.

The Chair shared an email from Stephen McCormack who has children in the Chelmsford Public Schools. He wants to be sure the district has enough qualified paraeducators in the classrooms as children are catching up due to COVID both academically and emotionally. Stronger wages are needed to maintain the quality of staff in the district. He would like to see a cost-of-living increase that is equal to or exceeds the current cost-of-living in the state. He applauds the CPS staff for their efforts, especially during the last two years. He would like to see the FY2023 budget provide a livable wage for the staff.

Dr. Lang read an email from a CHS junior, Courtney Farrell, in support of a livable wage for paras. The academic and emotional support of paras helps this student to succeed. She works part-time and makes just \$2.00 per hour less than the CPS paraprofessionals.

Dr. Hirsch shared an email from a current ABA para from Byam, named Alexandria Daley, who has worked in the district for 13 years. She loves her school, the staff and appreciates the professional development opportunities provided to her. She is also a "Registered Behavioral Technician". The roles of paraprofessionals vary from year to year and with the specific needs of each student and reflect the goals set by the student's team of professionals. She would like to see paras' wages increase so that they do not need to work an additional part-time job.

Next, Ms. Newcomb shared an email from Marie O'Donnell who teaches Kindergarten at Byam and has been teaching in the district for 27 years. The paras who work with her "pour their hearts and souls into their work with their students". Paras are by the sides of the students to support them no matter what situation arises. She dislikes the fact that many paras have to work seven days a week and two or more jobs to survive financially. She wants to see the district pay paraprofessionals the living wage they deserve.

Marsha Cohen, of 24 Lamplighter Lane, sent an email, which was read by Mr. Doherty. She has been a para in the Chelmsford Public Schools for 19 years. During these years the responsibilities have increased but the salaries do not reflect the greater requirements of the job. Along with academic support, paras now provide emotional and behavioral support. Due to unfilled para positions, those in the district are overextended daily. Some of her colleagues have sought employment in nearby school districts who provide better wages and better working conditions. She would like for paraprofessionals to receive a fair livable wage in the FY2023 budget.

Mr. Moses shared comments from Catherine Burgess, who is a special education teacher at Byam. She has fortunately worked with many talented paraprofessionals over the past twelve years. Paras make it possible for students to receive the support needed to succeed. Paras are flexible and will fill in when needed to substitute for teachers at a moment's notice, especially during the current lack of available substitute teachers. Sadly, many paras need to work a second job to pay their bills. Please offer paras "a respectable and living wage".

Ms. Santos read an email from Wendy Rozkowsky, who has been an ABA para at CHIPS for twelve years. She works hard to ensure that her young students "learn social skills, emotional skills, coping skills, confidence, address personal hygiene and more". She wants to see a competitive increase in the pay for paras in Chelmsford who are paid significantly less than paraprofessionals in surrounding towns.

The Chair shared comments from a CHS junior, Natalia Veracano who has benefitted from para support beginning with freshman year. She thanks all her paras for supporting her.

Renee McLaughlin, who is a union representative and a para at CHS and has been employed by the district for 18 years. The salary is not in line with the work that is done by the paraprofessionals. She would like to see a "fair value wage".

Mr. Doherty shared an email from Michael Goff, of 37 Dunshire Drive, who is an ABA para at Byam. He thanks the district for their support especially during the past two years. He is asking for increased wages for support staff who are "severely underpaid" forcing many to work a second job. Many "remarkable paras" leave the district each year to work for more pay elsewhere. The current wages do not attract qualified support staff to work in Chelmsford. Please pay paraprofessionals what they deserve.

Catherine Nebbs's email was shared by Ms. Santos. She states that "paraprofessionals have the hardest position in the school and it is a shame that they are paid the least." She was told this earlier in the year when she began to work as a para at Harrington. Not only do paras provide academic and emotional support but they also provide data to document student progress or assist in creating more successful strategies for student success. Please provide a livable wage for the support staff.

Dr. Lang read an email from Kim Mara who is a teacher of 16 years and a parent of a child who has an IEP. Paraprofessionals perform "magic each and every day". Please provide them with a salary adjustment beyond a two percent raise.

The Chair thanked all for the public input shared during tonight's meeting. He looks forward to starting negotiations soon.

**Adjournment (10:07 p.m.)**

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

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*