

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
March 7, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Ms. Donna Newcomb (Chair), Mr. Jeff Doherty (Vice Chair), Mr. Dennis King (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 & Finance)

Call to Order

6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Opening Statement

“This 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 the Chelmsford School Committee Public Participation Guidelines. Anyone speaking tonight during the public input portion of this meeting has notified the superintendent’s office of their desire to speak and has been provided with these guidelines. Upon request written comments received no later than 12:00 p.m. on the day of this meeting will also be read and made part of the record of the meeting during the second public comment session.”

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that there was a “great turnout” for the K-12 Youth Art Month Exhibit at The Chelmsford Public Library. Mr. King added that Thomas Brown, a CHS sophomore, won the New England Championship in wrestling! Jack Walsh also made it to the N. E. Championships! Ms. Santos expressed appreciation for the improved district website. She stated it is not only an informative tool for the district but also “a good storyteller” for what is happening in the district.

Public Comments

Dr. Lang invited Evelyn Thoren, Chairman of The Arts and Technology Education Fund, to the table to speak about the upcoming program. Applications for these awards are open and must be submitted and received by midnight on March 31, 2023. Awards will be announced the first Monday in June at The Board of Selectmen’s meeting.

New Business

1. Spotlight on the Schools: South Row Elementary School

Principal Terri Gilbert and Assistant Principal Jayson Ramalho came to the table to share highlights of this school year from South Row School. Their thorough presentation was accompanied by video clips of

students and staff demonstrating different components of the foundation skills for the reading programs. The phonemic awareness curriculum, Heggarty, which is used for kindergarten, grade one and special education was demonstrated. This involves rhyming and manipulations of sounds. The Foundations curriculum (grades K-3) was demonstrated by a second-grade student who began using this program in kindergarten. The student described this as “fun”! PD is offered on an ongoing basis for Foundations. The Fountas and Pinnell program is used for comprehension and vocabulary, Components of this include: guided reading; IRA; word study; iReady; enrichment book club and co-teaching to promote inclusion in the classroom.

Regarding Math, Mr. Ramalho spoke about “math centers” which are supported by teachers and paraprofessionals. The focus can be on Tier 1 Instruction and small group support also facilitates ways to learn different topics. IReady offers more targeted work for students at their individual levels and provides challenges. Enrichment is offered to students who are working above grade level. An interventionist supplies Tier 2 support for students who may be struggling. A video was shown featuring math centers in a fourth-grade classroom where students spoke of being able to collaborate with their classmates.

Principal Gilbert expressed appreciation for the curriculum coordinators for Science, Mr. Jon Morris, and Social Science, Ms. Stephanie Quinn, who support teachers and offer in-person monthly sessions for staff. The school has six weeks of science every day followed by six weeks of social studies daily. These lessons are tied in with the Fountas and Pinnell reading program. The students enjoy hands-on, project-based, real world experiences. Each spring the parents assist in sponsoring an “Engineering Day”. “Parent Discussion Night” is offered annually and supported by the School Council. Stations which are available offer parents a view into the school day of their children and greater understanding of curriculum.

Goals moving forward include: personalized learning experiences for all; partnering with families; and keeping up with newest technologies, resources and opportunities to meet student needs. This presentation may be fully appreciated by watching this segment of tonight’s meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia. The School Committee expressed appreciation to Ms. Gilbert and Mr. Ramalho.

2. Presentation: CPS Strategic Plan Implementation & Special Education Opportunities Review Update

Dr. Lang invited John Kim and Talia Mercado from the District Management Group to join the meeting with an overview and updates on the Strategic Plan and Special Education Opportunities. They have been working with the district for over a year. Mr. Kim reviewed the Chelmsford Public Schools’ Mission and described DMG’s “Theory of Action” which will enable Chelmsford to implement initiatives to reach the “outcomes” stated in the Strategic Plan. The five-pronged priority initiatives of the Strategic Plan are: Academic Achievement; Equity; Social Emotional Learning; Human Capital and Facilities and Operations. There is a steering committee for each of these initiatives with district leadership assigned for each one. DMG continues to collaborate with each of the committees.

Regarding the Special Education Opportunities Review, the project goals include: understanding current Special Education practices and intervention in the district; aligning current practices with best practice research to raise achievement for students with disabilities and aligning staff practices with best practices for sustained change in classrooms and improved teacher “work life”. Their findings for the district will include commendations (areas where the district does well) and a short list of areas where the district will have the highest opportunities for improvement. The School Committee is looking forward to the findings and moving forward with the Strategic Plan’s goals. Frequent updates will be provided to ascertain that the district is “on track” with the flexibility to reprioritize as needed. The complete presentation from tonight’s meeting, including slides, may be viewed on Chelmsford Telemedia.

3. Recommended FY2023 Budget Transfers

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the FY2023 local operating budget transfer for the Chelmsford Public Schools as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

4. School Committee Policy Updates

Dr. Lang thanked Mr. King and Ms. Santos for working as a subcommittee to look at current policies and recommending updates based on guidance from MASC. The first two policies have been vetted by legal counsel. Changes were prompted in these by changes in Massachusetts legislation.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy AC: Non-Discrimination Policy Including Harassment and Retaliation as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy ACAB: Sexual Harassment as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy GBA: Equal Employment Opportunity as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy GCF: Professional Staff Hiring as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy IHBEA: English Language Learners as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy IHBG: Home Schooling as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy JB: Equal Educational Opportunities as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy JFBB: School Choice as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy JIC: Student Discipline as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to approve the amendments to Policy JICA: Student Dress as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to rescind Policy EBCFA: Face Coverings as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee vote to establish a new policy, Policy JEBA: Upper Entrance Age / School Admissions. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Dr. Lang stated that the district website would be updated so that newly approved policies are able to be viewed.

Liaison Reports

Mr. Doherty shared that the Boosters Club is holding a St. Patrick's Day party on March 11th, at The Establishment starting at 7:00 p.m. The tulips for the fundraiser may be ordered online and can be picked up on April 4th. The CHS PTO meeting was held last night. They still need volunteers for "The After-Prom Breakfast".

Mr. King added that the CHIPS PTO met and continue to offer many enrichment programs. They will sponsor eight new enrichment activities between now and June. Center School's PTO will meet on March 15th. Their Science Fair will take place on March 16th.

Mr. Moses stated that both Parker and Byam PTO's will meet tomorrow night.

Ms. Santos attended the "Competitive Play" this past weekend. She had high praise for parents of the Theatre Guild and the students involved.

Ms. Newcomb attended South Row's PTO meeting last night. They have many in-person enrichment activities planned by their "really terrific group of parents". The Community Read-in will take place next week and volunteers may receive more information on the district website.

Public Comments

Mr. Moses asked when the School Choice applications will be available. Dr. Lang this will be addressed at the first meeting in April.

Adjournment (7:33 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*