

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
March 21, 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.”

Consent Agenda

1. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of February 28, 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes for the regularly scheduled meeting on February 28, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

2. Approval of the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of March 7, 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes for the regularly scheduled meeting of March 7, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

3. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of May 4, 2021

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of May 4, 2021. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

4. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of July 20, 2021

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of July 20, 2021. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

5. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of March 7, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of March 7, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

6. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of August 16, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of August 16, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of November 15, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of November 15, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 4-0 with Mr. King abstaining.

8. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of December 6, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of December 6, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

9. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of December 12, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of December 12, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

10. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of December 20, 2022

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of December 20, 2022. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

11. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of January 3, 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of January 3, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

12. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of January 9, 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of January 9, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

13. Approval of the minutes of the executive session school committee meeting of February 7, 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that the School Committee approve the minutes of the Executive Session School Committee meeting of February 7, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Lana shared that spring sports have officially started. For the third year Student Council will be hosting the Leadership Conference on Tuesday, April 4, 2023. Panels of distinguished speakers will address: college; arts; STEM; leadership and financial literacy.

Keya added that winter sports awards will be held tonight at the CHS gym. The Class of 2024 elections were held. Congratulations to these “outstanding students” who were elected. House Olympics which is a school wide competition between the three houses has ended. Emerson House came in first and were followed by Whittier House and Hawthorne House placed third.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch stated that “Good News” will be presenting this evening.

The Chair addressed Mr. Doherty with praise for his lifelong dedication to the service of others. As a lifelong educator, mentor and an advocate for the students and staff of the Chelmsford Public Schools, he returned after his retirement to serve the district’s needs. “Your patience, thoughtfulness, compassion and wisdom helped guide us through some really difficult times, COVID in particular.” To serve on the School Committee is a voluntary position requiring an “extraordinary” amount of time! She expressed that the Committee will miss him. Mr. Doherty was presented with a gift to a round of applause! Mr. Doherty expressed deep gratitude to everyone whose efforts guided the district through the COVID pandemic. He shared accolades for many specific people by name. “I love you all...thank you so much”!

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Spotlight on the Departments: World Languages

Ms. Jessica Nollet, Department Coordinator for World Languages and Student Exchange Programs, came to the table to provide updates on World Languages. She spoke first about the “CHS Seal of Biliteracy” which began in 2020. Senior students who receive the “Seal” show proficiency in English and one other world language. Her slides provide details on the number of students who received the seal and the languages in which they are proficient, including American Sign Language. Testing is ongoing but as of today three seniors received the “Massachusetts Seal of Biliteracy with Distinction” and 13 seniors earned the “Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy”. These students will be recognized at the Senior Awards Ceremony in June.

Ms. Nollet was pleased to report that finally this year the “Cultural Exchange Program” was realized. CHS hosted students from Spain in September and those from France in October. Leah who is a senior at CHS spoke of activities she shared as a “host” as well as her experiences in Spain. She shared that students and their host families remain in contact with one another. She was grateful to be able to participate. Will participated in the French Exchange Program which began when his family hosted a

student from France. A lot of culture was exchanged. Lots of travel happened on bikes in France instead of cars. Narissa, a senior, also participated in the French exchange and was inspired to participate by her French teacher. She and her host sister became great friends! There were many tearful partings when the CHS students left to return home, but the students continue to correspond and build on their friendships.

Ms. Nollet shared that the “Seal of Biliteracy” program will continue. Students who wish to participate in next year’s exchange programs will be able to enroll this spring. French 4 and Spanish 4 will be offered in the dual enrollment program through Middlesex Community College for the 2023/24 school year!

2. Spotlight on the Departments: Fine & Performing Arts

Dr. Christina Whittlesey, Department Coordinator for Fine & Performing Arts, came to the table to update and celebrate “Youth Art Month” and “Music in our Schools Month”. There is a new three-pronged framework and Chelmsford is providing culturally responsive arts programs to address the new frameworks. This year’s Professional Development work is focusing on this. Additionally, collaboration between the schools and the Town of Chelmsford is ongoing. With the middle schools’ orchestras working with a composer on a new piece of music. Community partnerships have also been formed within the visual arts programs. Amy Brown who teaches art at Byam and was named the MAEA Elementary Art Teacher of the year, joined Dr. Whittlesey (to a round of applause!) and spoke about the Artist in Residence Program which took place at Byam. Artwork produced by students will be displayed in the cafeteria. Ms. Brown expressed gratitude to be able to work in Chelmsford where the arts are so supported! Recent highlights of the arts programs include: a month-long visual arts exhibit at the Chelmsford Public Library; 50 pieces of art displayed at the Massachusetts Art Educators Association Exhibit; two middle school students have artwork on the cover of the *Massachusetts Music Educators Journal*; three students won awards from The Massachusetts Education Theater Guild, Inc.; two CHS students attended the Western International Band Clinic in Seattle; and eight students were inducted into the CHS Tri-M Music Honor Society! In addition, 22 CHS musicians were selected for the MMEA All State Treble Choir and seven more were selected for the MMEA All State Music Festival! The Thursdays and The Crescendos a cappella groups advanced to the International Championship of High School A Cappella Northeast Region semi-finals. The Crescendos joined the meeting to perform to the delight of all in attendance!

3. Presentation: Chapter 70 State Aid and Net School Spending Analysis – Mr. Roger Hatch

Mr. Hatch joined the meeting remotely. Dr. Lang asked him to address the seeming increase in funding this year in the governor’s budget and would like to know if this increase can be expected in future years. Mr. Hatch said that fiscal 2024 due to the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) will be the first year of six years with of changes in the rates. He provided slides and verbally explained the new formula and how that has provided an increase in funding to Chelmsford. To fully appreciate the specifics, you should watch tonight’s presentation on Chelmsford Telemedia and view the detailed slides that accompany Mr. Hatch’s presentation. Factors contributing to this change in funding include an increase in low income students and more students enrolled in pre-kindergarten. Inflation also has an impact. Dr. Lang and The Committee appreciated Mr. Hatch’s review and enlightenment.

4. Facility Naming: W. Allen Thomas, Jr. Tennis Courts at Chelmsford High School

Demolition and rebuilding will take place this summer at the CHS for the tennis courts, basketball courts, and street hockey venue.

Mr. Doherty recommends that The School Committee formally vote to name the tennis courts at Chelmsford High School the “W. Allen Thomas, Jr. Tennis Courts”. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

All members of The School Committee support this move and feel that it is well-deserved! A nice biographical piece on Mr. Thomas is included in tonight’s agenda packet relating the many ways in which he has positively affected and contributed to the Chelmsford Public Schools through his many years of dedicated service. Dr. Lang shared that a formal dedication will take place in the fall.

5. Approval of School Committee Warrant Signing Procedure – Revised March 2023

Mr. Doherty moved that The School Committee vote to approve the Warrant Signing Procedure as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

6. Approval of School Committee Handbook – Revised March 2023

The Chair thanked Dennis King for his work on revising the handbook.

Mr. Doherty moved that The School Committee vote to approve The School Committee Handbook as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Discussion on legislative matters for the benefit of public education and Chelmsford Public Schools

Committee members want to discuss the new middle school building proposal with the legislators. Also, raising the cap on the inflation rate which may help lead to more Chapter 70 aid and higher minimum aid per pupil. The “Day on the Hill” will be held in person this spring in Boston and The Chair recommends scheduling appointments to meet all four legislators on that day or schedule a meeting with them on another day in May. Committee members are encouraged to talk with the individual reps with whom they already have a relationship.

8. Vote on School Choice Program: 2023/24 School Year

Dr. Lang included a memorandum in tonight’s packet which indicates that nine of the current “School Choice” students will be graduating while 26 will be remaining in the district. He recommends adding 14 more for the 2023/24 school year. The “School Choice” income provides for the 1:1 technology initiative.

Mr. Doherty moved that The School Committee vote to approve to accept 12 additional students at CHS in grade 9, one additional student at CHS in grade 10 and one additional student at Parker Middle School in grade 5 under the Commonwealth of Massachusetts School Choice Program bringing the total School Choice participation in the Chelmsford Public Schools to forty (40) enrolled students during the 2023/24 school year. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

9. MSBA Vote: Vote to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority a Statement of Interest (SOI) for Parker Middle School

Mr. Doherty moved that having convened in an open meeting on March 21, 2023, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of the Town of Chelmsford, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated March 21, 2023 for the Parker Middle

School located at 75 Graniteville Road which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: Priority 2 – Elimination of existing severe overcrowding, Priority 4 – Prevention of severe overcrowding expected to result from increased enrollments, Priority 5 – Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility, and Priority 7 – Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with state and approved local requirements; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Chelmsford to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

10. FY2023 Budget Projection

Ms. Johnson-Collins included a memorandum and spread sheets in tonight's agenda packet providing an updated summary to date.

11. Approval of Non-Affiliated Employees Rate Increase

Mr. Doherty recommends that The School Committee votes to approve a 6% increase of the annual salary of hourly rate of pay as specified for the central administration's clerks, secretaries and support positions effective July 1, 2022, at the regular School Committee meeting on March 21, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty recommends that The School Committee vote to approve the Appendix A, Non-affiliated principals salaries covering FY24 through FY27 as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty recommends that The School Committee vote to approve the Appendix B, Non-affiliated salary schedule for the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction covering FY24 through FY26 as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. Doherty recommends that The School Committee vote to approve the Appendix C: Non-Affiliated Central Administration Licensed and Non-Licensed Staff salary schedule covering FY24 – FY26 as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 5-0.

12. Update on Middle School Realignment for 2023/24 School Year

Dr. Lang shared that work is progressing "very well"! His presentation and slides provide updates on: transition team meetings; teaching assignments (teachers have all received their assignment for the 2023/24 school year); school leadership; transportation and scheduling. This work is being done in collaboration with DM Group.

13. Personnel Report: February 2023

No action required.

14. Approval of Field Trips

Mr. Doherty moved that The School Committee approve the CHS METG Students – Theatre Guild field trip to Boston, Massachusetts on March 30 – April 1, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Liaison Reports

Mr. Doherty shared that The Boosters Club Shamrock fund raiser was a huge success!

Mr. King attended the Center School Science Fair which was held in person and well-attended. Center PTO meets tomorrow.

Ms. Santos added that “The Community Read-In” was “wonderful”!

The Chair announced that The Chelmsford Friends of Music will meet on Thursday.

Action/New Items

Mr. King stated there was a change made to “public comments” and would like The Committee’s attorney to confirm that Chelmsford policy is still in compliance. Dr. Lang will contact the attorney.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment (8:50 p.m.)

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

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary*

Jay Lang, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Donna M. Newcomb
Chair, Chelmsford School Committee