

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
August 1, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Ms. Donna Newcomb (Chair), Mr. Dennis King (Vice Chair), Ms. Susan Mackinnon (Secretary), Mr. John Moses and Ms. Maria Santos.

Also present: Dr. Linda Hirsch (Assistant Superintendent) and Ms. Joanna Johnson Collins (Director of Business & Finance). Dr. Jay Lang is not in attendance tonight.

Call to Order

Ms. Newcomb called the meeting to order at 6:00

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 July 18, 2023.

Mr. Moses motioned to approve the minutes from July 18th's School Committee meeting as presented. Ms. Santos seconded. Motion carries 3-2 with two abstaining.

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that there are some great articles on the district website about Christina Mitza, who is the new dean of Hawthorne House at CHS, and one on Josh Blagg, the former dean of Hawthorne House at CHS, and now the principal of Parker Middle School.

Mr. King shared that he just learned that Massachusetts will be providing free lunches for the upcoming school year. Ms. Johnson-Collins explained that, although that is included in the current State budget, the governor has ten days to approve the budget as presented or veto line items. So far this has not happened but will be known within the next ten days.

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Care Solace Mental Health and Substance Abuse Support and Cartwheel Service Updates

Shannon Bischoff, District Coordinator of Counseling and Social Emotional Learning, came to the table to provide updates on two mental health resources which provide service to the district. Care Solace has been used for the past year and one-half. Feedback has been “wonderful” for the services which may be accessed 24/7 throughout the year with a response time of ten to fifteen minutes. It provides translators in 200 languages. Clients may be referred from school staff, family or anonymously. Support is included regardless of insurance status. There are between 30 to 40 district cases reported monthly. Most frequent referrals are for: anxiety; depression; trauma and ADHD.

Cartwheel began as a pilot program in October to particularly help to find psychiatric follow-up after an initial diagnosis. This will be evaluated this coming October. Their services are offered to students in grades five through twelve, with a response time within 48 hours. They will get an assessment by a psychiatrist and a written evaluation with recommendations with follow-up plans for other providers. They will consult with faculty and staff but do not provide district staff with written assessments.

2. FY2023 End of Year Budget Report – Final

Ms. Johnson-Collins presented the FY2023 end-of-year budget report. She had presented the preliminary figures at the July 18th meeting and tonight’s reports have very minor changes. Her memorandum and supporting details are included in tonight’s agenda packet. ESSER 1 and 2 funds have been completely spent. ESSER 3 funds must be spent by 9/30/24. The Committee thanked Ms. Johnson-Collins and her team for their excellent work!

3. 2022/23 End-of-Year Academic Update

Dr. Hirsch presented the year end academic update. Her slides providing supporting data are included in tonight’s agenda packet. iReady is the benchmark system used for math. After beginning of the year testing results are available this program adapts for each student going forward. This is helpful for students who have not met grade level standard expectations as well as for those who have exceeded expectations. Students in grades 2 and up are still working through the effects of the pandemic. Although some grades exhibit gaps in math learning, Chelmsford is doing better than many surrounding districts at this point. More support services in both math and reading will be provided for the schools that would benefit from this intervention at both elementary and middle school levels. Even those students who are not performing up to grade level are exhibiting significant growth! This growth does not vary due to the race of the students. Growth for all races is over 100% which is a positive. Benchmark testing is done in the beginning of the year for ELA/Reading just as it is for math. Interventionists are placed for reading at both elementary and middle schools as need indicates. Reading scores before COVID and after were stable. Chelmsford reading scores were higher than the average State scores. High growth was achieved in reading for all grade levels and races.

4. Approval of 2023/24 Student Handbook & Addendum Updates

Dr. Hirsch presented the updated student handbook. There were only a few changes and those changes were approved by the district’s attorneys. The links for the handbooks may be found on the district website pending Committee approval this evening.

Mr. King motioned to approve the 2023/24 Chelmsford Public Schools student handbooks and CHS addendum updates as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

5. Approval of 2023/24 Employee Handbook Updates

Dr. Hirsch presented the updated employee handbook which was also approved by the district's attorneys. The changes addressed health care flexible spending amounts and tax-sheltered annuity maximums. The Family Medical Leave Act policy is also included for the first time.

Mr. King motioned to approve the 2023/24 Employee Handbook as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

6. Approval of Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan Updates

Dr. Hirsch presented the Bullying and Intervention Plan updates which can be found as a link in the handbooks. The Chair is pleased with the document and thanks all those involved in preparing it. Although the district is only required to update this plan every two years, In Chelmsford it is updated annually to keep staff fully knowledgeable. This has been approved by the district's attorneys. With regard to social media when issues begin to impact the learning environment this plan is employed.

Mr. King motioned to approve the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Approval of Field Trip and Travel Requests

Mr. King motioned to approve the Chelmsford High School band trip to Seattle, Washington for the Western International Band Clinic from November 17 through the 21st, 2023. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Mr. King motioned to approve the CHS Performance Music Ensembles field trip to New York City from April 11 through the 15th, 2024. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Action/ New Items

An update is requested following the Town Manager's notification on an influx of new students moving in to The District and the effect on enrollment numbers.

Mr. King would like updates on capital projects and how the middle school realignment is working out.

The Chair requests all Committee members forward their information on the superintendent's evaluation.

Public Comments

none

Adjournment (7:20 p.m.)

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

***Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio,
Recording Secretary***

