

Chelmsford School Committee

Meeting Minutes

October 24, 2023

Meeting Time: 5:30 p.m.

Meeting Location: CPS Central Administration Office, 230 North Road, Conference Room

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

Also Present: Jay Lang (Superintendent), Linda Hirsch (Assistant Superintendent), and Joanna Johnson-Collins (Director of Business & Finance)

Massachusetts House of Representatives Legislators for the Town of Chelmsford:
Representative James Arciero, Representative Simon Cataldo, and Representative Rodney Elliott

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. by Chair Newcomb.

Chair Newcomb thanked the House Representatives for coming to this meeting to discuss Chelmsford Public Schools Short- and Long-Term Capital (Facility) Planning and Legislative Priorities that affect the schools.

Dr. Lang presented historical information on work the district has done since 2016 to study and improve the school facilities. Increasing enrollment, space limitations, and aging buildings all contribute to the need for a new building. Adding to enrollment that is predicted to rise due to younger families moving to new and existing neighborhoods is a proposal for the Commonwealth to house homeless and migrant families in local hotels.

CPS has worked with Dore & Whittier Architects since 2016 on a Comprehensive Facilities Assessment. At that time the town approved \$7.9 million to construct 22 modular classrooms to assist with overcrowding and allow for full-day Kindergarten at all the elementary schools. This was intended to be a short-term solution. Dore and Whittier suggested a shift to a long-term project of building a new high school. CPS made unsuccessful bids with MSBA in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The Chelmsford High School plan was not compelling to the MSBA because the HS was too new (completed in 1974) and too well kept up. Although it is no longer considered state-of-the-art, MSBA did not call Chelmsford to its list of school project.

A new facilities plan was conducted with Dore & Whittier in 2021. Dr. Lang described several goals and proposals. In April 2023, CPS submitted an application to MSBA for the construction of a new building to replace Parker Middle School on Graniteville Road. Parker School was built in 1965. It is overcrowded, not up to code, and includes ten modular classrooms that are reaching the end of their useful life.

The goal, expected to receive support from the Town of Chelmsford, is to build a new school to house all 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students at the new school and use McCarthy Middle School for all students in grades 7 and 8.

This would ease crowding at both the middle and elementary school levels. CPS is seeking the support of our state legislators in this process.

Representative Cataldo said that \$300 million has been allocated for the Green Schools program. Representative Elliott followed that there are at least a dozen bills in process to increase the funding for MSBA.

Next on the agenda was the Transportation budget for homeless students. This year approximately \$40,000 is budgeted. Reimbursement from DESE is a year in arrears. Representative Cataldo said there is a new pilot program for communities to receive expedited reimbursements. So far 22 communities are involved and Cataldo suggested we get in touch with DESE as soon as possible to inquire about being part of the pilot.

CPS expressed gratitude for everyone who worked on Chapter 70 money. The increase in state funds was a huge boost to the Town of Chelmsford.

Chair Newcomb concluded the meeting by thanking the representatives once again for coming and urging them to contact the MSBA on our behalf.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.