

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
December 17, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

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

Also present: Dr. Jay Lang (Superintendent) and Dr. Linda Hirsch (Assistant Superintendent) and Ms. Joanna Johnson-Collins (Director of Business & Finance).

Call to Order

Mr. King 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 Policy. 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 December 3, 2024**

Ms. Santos moved to approve the minutes of the regular School Committee meeting of December 3, 2024. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Patrick shared that Lori Trahan announced that three CHS students were winners of The Third Congressional District's "annual app challenge". Their app "Ecosense" was selected by judges from submissions sent from middle and high school students. The app provides data on "nearby water stations and animal habitats mapping geographic coordinates to locate species across the country" by tracking the animals and supplying statistics on water quality and comparing these to the US Government's safety standards! He added that the "long awaited" two-week winter break begins on December 20th!

Lana added that the CHS Student Council is running a "Gifts for Teens" drive and so far over 140 items have been donated! The Plus Block which donates the most will be given a holiday breakfast on December 20th. Freshman, Sophia Lin, received a first-place award for her submission on climate change! It was called "Imagine a World" and depicted a polar bear, sea turtle and others impacted by our changing climate. The CHS Gift Club in collaboration with The Paul Center offered a holiday celebration this past Saturday with many fun activities!

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that there have been many activities at the schools heading to vacation with lots of energy and spirit! Ms. Mackinnon said that she has heard great comments about the students' concerts! The Chair added that CHS officially was granted accreditation from NEASC for another ten years!

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Spotlight on the Schools: McCarthy Middle School

McCarthy Principal Parks and Assistant Principal Calobrisi along with staff and students came to the table to share updates on the activities at McCarthy Middle School. Additionally, they have shared a complementary slide show in tonight's agenda packet. Principal Parks began by speaking about the two primary "School Improvement Goals". The student achievement goal is a "Specific focus on Mathematics for students" which aligns with the district's Strategic Plan. The program, Breakthrough Results, is an intense ten-week program taking place in 7th and 8th grade math classes. Teachers collaborated to identify specific "standards" for each grade. Progress monitoring is carried out by the teachers including weekly team meetings.

Ms. Calobrisi spoke of "School Climate" which is the second goal. Feedback was gathered from staff and students for last year which was year one of the new middle school configuration. Also, SEL data was considered especially focused on the students' sense of "belonging". They are continuing with the PBIS framework started last school year and teaching and reteaching the schoolwide expectations and rewarding students who demonstrate the expectations. There are also weekly raffle rewards. Activities outside the academic setting take place for students and staff to interact. Staff volunteers of the "Bring on the Fun Committee" plan activities for the staff as well. This year the teaming structure has been adjusted to create "smaller teams" within the school.

Principal Parks added that new vestibule is up and running to provide strong building security. Officer Linstad is the SRO officer this year for McCarthy. New staff have been hired at all levels this school year.

Social Worker, Julia Gannon, spoke of the "STEP" program at the school. CHS has had this program for ten years. This is the first year for McCarthy. The program responds to the needs of students who experience long absences from school due to health reasons and who have challenges adjusting to a return to the school day. It also assists students who are in "crisis". This classroom is available all day every day that school is in session. Students use of the program is flexible to meet their individual needs. On an average, students utilize this program from four to twelve weeks. This school year nine students have participated in the program and three have already transitioned out. Counseling is available for the students and their families.

Student leaders, Addie and Emma, spoke about the McCarthy Student Leadership Program is made up of eighth graders who meet often to plan fun activities for the school. They also attend state-wide student leadership conferences to strategize for the school. The student leaders provide tours for upcoming 7th graders who will be attending McCarthy and assist parents during school orientation. Additionally, they assist with Project 300 to provide food to the local Salvation Army. Student leaders also plan "field day", pep rallies and school spirit weeks.

2. Presentation: TOC Decarbonization Roadmap & EV Policy – Christopher Haley, DPW

Chris Haley, the Town's Sustainability Manager, joined the meeting to provide information on The Town of Chelmsford's Decarbonization Roadmap & EV Policy. He spoke of The Climate Leader Program which may provide some future funding toward the purchase of electric vehicles. Super Chargers are available in the town and take between 25 to 45 minutes to charge an automobile. In tonight's agenda packet Mr. Haley has included a copy of the new policy. Although he had hoped for the Roadmap and EV Policy to be approved by The Committee this evening (the deadline is December 31, 2024) a special meeting has been scheduled for this on December 30th to give The Committee more time to review and ask questions.

Mr. Moses motioned to vote on the EV Policy. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion fails 2-3.

3. October 1, 2024 Student Enrollment Report: Elementary Level ELL Student Enrollment Follow-Up

Dr. Hirsch included an update in the packet tonight to address question about ELL student enrollment which were posed at the last meeting. There are more ELL students at Center School. The WIDA level for services to these students is gathered by a screening test. Kindergarten students receive services only if they speak no English. An additional ELL teacher floats between the elementary schools, but, due to higher numbers spends more time at Center School providing services.

4. MSBA Invitation to Conduct a Feasibility Study: Parker Middle School

Dr. Lang shared the good news that the MSBA has invited us to participate in the feasibility study for Parker! This was two months earlier than we expected to hear! Right after New Year's the Building Committee will be able to start meeting to work on the next 18 to 20 months tasks including hiring an OPM by April and a designer by summer's end. Public forum sessions will begin in the September. Press releases have already been made about this milestone.

5. FY2026 Capital Plan Update

Dr. Lang shared that the ten capital projects submitted for the schools were all approved by the town's Capital Planning Committee in the amount of \$ 2,767,500. Documentation demonstrating this is included in tonight's agenda packet. This recommendation will go to Town Meeting in April. The bids will go out in the spring to allow for much of the work to be done during the summer. Gratitude was expressed to Mr. King for his work on this committee.

6. Proposed 2025/26 School Year Calendar

The proposed school calendar for 2025/26 is included in tonight's packet. One change is that Good Friday will not be a school holiday on this calendar. Religious holidays are listed on the back of the calendar and those who practice those holidays are exempt from attendance.

Ms. Santos moved to accept the proposed 2025/26 school year calendar with the minor change of a color added to the 26th of November, the color shall be of the superintendent's choosing. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

7. Proposed FY2026 Budget Calendar

Dr. Lang shared that at the meeting on February 4, 2025, he will provide his recommended budget for FY2026 with background and overview. Tuesday February 25th will be the posted public hearing on the budget where it will be presented page by page and questions and concerns will be addressed. March 11th will be an additional budget meeting if needed.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the proposed fiscal year 2026 budget calendar timeline as presented. Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

8. Personnel Report – November 2024

No action required.

8. Approval of Field Trip Requests

Ms. Santos moved to approve the McCarthy Middle School grade eight students enrolled in French/World Language Culture and Language enrichment experience from May 2nd to the 4th, 2025 to Quebec City, Canada. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

Reports

1. Liaison Reports

Ms. Lebeaux attended the McCarthy/Parker PTO meeting. McCarthy noted there was better turnout at parent conferences than expected. The band, chorus and orchestra have been invited to perform at "Middle School Day" at the Red Sox game on May 6, 2025. Parker's student led "Be the Change" project is showing success. Parker is hosting a craft fair and a science fair which will be held in March. Ten people attended Officer Linstad's presentation on internet safety.

Ms. Mackinnon went to the Harrington PTO meeting where they announced a committee is working on fourth grade events for the end of the school year. January 18th will be "Night at the Riverhawks". There will be a movie night on January 25th and the Book Fair will be held from February 9th to the 14th. They also stocked the staff room and held a "Candy Apple Bar".

Mr. King reported that the Tri-Board meeting was held to look at finances and next year's outlook is not positive compared to past years. The Town Manager predicts a \$2.5 million shortfall for level funded budgets. The departments in town will have to propose cost cutting measures or look at other ways for funding. Dr. Lang stated that budgeting will be a challenge especially with contract negotiations taking place. He is hoping to maintain the current level of services.

Action/New Items

Mr. King would like to discuss what will be done for seniors who have not passed MCAS. Dr. Hirsch stated they have already done a retake of the exam and results will arrive on January 16th. Competency Determinations are being undertaken. A presentation will be given in the new year.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment: 8:00 p.m.

Ms. Santos motioned to adjourn. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Giglio,
Recording Secretary*