

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
January 21, 2025
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Mr. Dennis King (Chair), Ms. Maria Santos (Vice Chair), Ms. Diana Lebeaux (Secretary) and Ms. Susan Mackinnon. Mr. John Moses is not in attendance tonight.

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 January 7, 2025**

Ms. Santos moved to approve the minutes of the regular school committee of January 7, 2025. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. Motion carries with three ayes and one abstention.

CHS Student Representative Announcements

Patrick shared that Term Two closes on January 24th. All missing work must be turned in. Senior wrestler, Masi Sadat made headlines in *The Boston Globe* covering his life story “from fleeing his home in Afghanistan at age 13 to now scoring points on the mat for the CHS Varsity Wrestling Team”! The Council of Chelmsford Schools is inviting parents and guardians of all Chelmsford students to hear Katie Greer speak about digital health and safety this Thursday at 6:30 at the PAC, Midterms are scheduled for this Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for CHS students taking “half-year” courses.

Lana added that last Wednesday “Reverse College Day” was held allowing CHS students to hear from alumni about their college experiences. It was a great event! Last Friday The Leadership in Motion Everywhere Club hosted a musical showcase at the PAC. Proceeds from ticket sales went to The Lowell Humane Society. At the DECA District Conference twenty out of fifty-four CHS students in the competition qualified for “States” which is twice the number from last year!

Good News

Dr. Hirsch shared that this Friday will be the 90th day of this school year!

Ms. Lebeaux attended a school concert last week for the fifth-grade band and jazz band and was impressed by all the student musicians!

Public Comments

None

New Business

1. Spotlight on the Schools: Parker Middle School

Dr. Lang introduced Josh Blagg, Principal of Parker Middle School, and Mark Souza, Assistant Principal, who are presenting updates on the happenings at their school. They are accompanied by many student ambassadors who did a wonderful job of sharing the service projects completed by each of the eight teams at the school! Mr. Blagg shared that, in the second year as a grade 5 and 6 school, Parker is “jelling as a community”! The first Parker School Improvement Plan is to “achieve 100% median to typical growth on iReady spring 2025 math diagnostic”. Based on data collected students in need of progress are given Tier Two interventions/supports. The interventions take place during WIN (What I Need) Block schoolwide (25 minutes each Wednesday) as well as before and after school. Mr. Souza spoke that the interventions include academics, behavior, social emotional growth as well as enrichment. The interventions run for six weeks and are tracked through Panorama. The Panorama platform and library also helped with professional development for Tier Two interventions and goal setting and attainment.

Mr. Blagg shared the second Parker Improvement Goal that “Parker will ensure students have strong relationships with staff and their peers, so students feel welcomed, included and safe in school.” Second Step is still used as a SEL curriculum but this year the SEL block takes place at the beginning of each Wednesday (25 minutes). By cutting home room numbers by half each staff member meets weekly with ten to twelve students to provide for more “intimate conversations”. Additionally, “service learning” has been initiated so students may do things to improve the lives of others. “Parker Be the Change you Wish to See in the World” was begun and completed in December with each of the grade level teams (eight in all) choosing their own service project. Tonight, student reps from each team spoke about the projects which included: holiday cards; candy; welcome folders for new Parker students; care bags for children at Emerson Hospital; food pantry donations; a book drive; bracelets; place mats and a water project for drinkable water for South Sudan which raised \$1,200 to contribute. To fully appreciate this wonderful presentation, you may watch it on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube. There were many rounds of applause as the students presented to The Committee.

2. Presentation – DMGroup: Strategic Plan Mid-Year Update

Dr. Lang welcomed back Tess from the DMGroup to provide a “Year Three” midyear update on the five-year Strategic Plan. This summer meetings were held to plan action goals and initiatives for this school year. Progress is monitored during the year and adjustments are made. The Academic Achievement Priority focuses on mathematical achievement in grades k through 8. This past year students exceeded the goal! To “promote inclusive instructional practices within the general education classroom to meet the needs of students with disabilities” 15 professional development sessions have been offered to teachers which were received positively. iReady Pro is being used this year to provide additional data. The Equity Priority initiatives include the new role of paraprofessionals as well as the implementation of the new IEP format. Data is being pulled to show “where” and “by whom” students receive their services. The data is available through Panorama. iReady and X2. For the Social Emotional Learning Priority “the district will focus on sense of belonging and relationship building for K-12 students”. Student surveys to measure this are conducted mid-year and at the end of the school year. The results are encouraging and show improvement! Restorative practices have been well-received and “train the trainer model” is going well. The Human Capital Priority has been supported by professional development to support diverse learners and provide inclusive practices. The district has applied for grant funding under the “Educator Diversity Act” to enable more diversity in hiring. Regarding Operations and Facilities “The district will enhance educational facilities to provide students with safe and modern facilities that support innovative student learning.”

Acceptance into the Feasibility Study Phase for the new Parker Middle School is wonderful for the district! Additionally, all ten capital improvement projects submitted were approved by the Town of Chelmsford. The new adjusted roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals which were developed last year have begun implementation this year through training and professional development. Progress is being monitored this year. Adjustments as indicated are being made during the current school year. Feedback is being gathered through surveys. The working group overseeing these changes meets regularly to address challenges that arise. DESE recently shared modules to be used to bring new paraprofessionals onboard. This will be investigated as will the retention rates of paras going forward. This pertinent presentation and accompanying slides may be viewed on Chelmsford Telemedia. Tess will return in the summer to provide another update.

3. Reminder: 2025/26 School Year – Kindergarten Registration Dates

Ms. Johnson-Collins shared that on January 28th and 29th families may register for kindergarten for next school year. Appointments can be booked online for a fifteen-minute session with the school clerk and will take place in Central Office. As of today, 217 appointments have already been booked!

4. Update – 2024/25 School Committee Presentation Schedule: Schools & Departments

In tonight's agenda packet, Dr. Lang has included an update for the school and department presentations which will take place during the rest of this school year.

5. Update on High School MCAS Competency Determination

Dr. Hirsch provided a thorough update of the MCAS Competency Determination in response to a change mandated from the ballot question in November 2024. The law went into effect on December 5, 2024 and will affect only high school students. MCAS will still be administered to CHS students. Basic competency must be demonstrated in math, ELA as well as science, technology and engineering and becomes effective with the graduating class of 2026. Chelmsford has specific graduation requirements as well that must be met for a student to receive a diploma. More changes may be coming but the district's task now is to look at the class of 2025 and take care of the few students who did not pass the MCAS. Two of these students moved to CHS this year from another state where MCAS was not taken. The other six students were able to retake the MCAS tests. Dr. Hirsch's clear explanation of the CD law can be fully appreciated by watching it on Chelmsford Telemedia/YouTube.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the adoption of the updated Competency Determination language for the class of 2025 and earlier classes which includes the identification of specific coursework in ELA, math and science/technology/engineering that meet the 2023 standards as the graduation requirement in accordance with the new law. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

6. Cell Phone Use Guidelines and Policies

Dr. Lang included information on the district's guidelines and policies regarding cell phone use in the Chelmsford Public Schools. Currently there is no policy concerning cell phones but there is a reference to a policy concerning staff cell phone use. His memorandum and supporting slides may be found in tonight's agenda packet. The 2024/25 Student Handbook contains information on cell phone use and consequences for violating these. The CHS handbook has specific guidelines for high school students. Basically, phones should be off and stored during classes at CHS. Dr. Lang will be sharing this with school administrators soon. Handbooks will be updated this summer and newer technologies will be included in them.

7. FY2025 Budget Report: 2nd Quarter Financials (October 1 – December 31, 2024)

Ms. Johnson-Collins included a memorandum and supporting data sheets in tonight's packet to accompany her presentation on this budget update. The operating budget for FY2025 totals \$73,880,000. There are only minor changes since the first quarter report given in October.

8. Recommended FY2025 Budget Transfers

Ms. Santos recommended a vote to approve this fiscal 2025 local operating budget transfer for \$8,280 from the instructional software account to the administrative software account as presented. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

Ms. Santos motioned to approve this FY2025 local operating budget transfer for \$6,721 from the retirement sick buy-back account to the local capital land and building account as presented. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

9. Update – FY2026 Budget Preparation

Dr. Lang stated that he and Ms. Johnson-Collins have been working to prepare the FY2026 budget which will take effect on July 1st. This will be presented at the next meeting on February 4th. Dr. Lang has been in conversations with Town Manager Cohen about the budget. Also, the State Governor's budget will be released tomorrow which will provide details on what will be happening with local aid including Chapter 70 and the Circuit Breaker funding. Dr. Lang and Mr. Cohen will be meeting again after these details are released. The School Committee will receive an update from Dr. Lang on the upcoming budget. This year's budget will be lean compared to the last few years but based on good planning in previous years our schools should be in good shape for the 2025/26 school year.

10. Approval of Contract for On-Call Engineering Services

Dr. Lang shared that many districts have these services to assist with upcoming projects as they arise. Bids went out and NV5 Planning & Design Inc. was selected for these services. The contract will run for three years and may cost up to \$200,000 total. Payment will only be charged for services as needed and will be tied to capital projects for the schools.

Ms. Santos moved to vote to enter into a three-year contract with NV5 Planning and Design Inc. as proposed to provide on-call engineering consultant services. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

11. Approval of MOU – Foster Care Transportation Reimbursement

Ms. Johnson-Collins included a memorandum in tonight's agenda packet and also explained that to receive any of this funding an MOU must be agreed upon with our school district and four other parties in this federal funding (ESSA). The MOU must be approved at Town Meeting in April.

Ms. Santos moved that we vote to approve seeking partial reimbursement for foster care transportation costs through a federal ESSA funding model for a portion of our foster care transportation costs and request a vote at the Spring 2025 Town Meeting that authorizes the Chelmsford Public Schools to enter into the MOU. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

12. Personnel Report: December 2024

No action required.

13. Valley Collaborative – Quarterly Reports on Collaborative Business: FY2025 Second Quarter

Dr. Lang share this report and the current *Valley Collaborative Newsletter* in tonight's packet.

Ms. Santos moved that we accept the quarterly reports on the Collaborative business for fiscal year 2025 second quarter as presented. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

Reports

1. Liaison Reports

Ms. Lebeaux attended the South Row PTO meeting. A presentation was made on the roles of the math specialists. Family Engagement Night will focus on digital safety and ADHD and similar student needs. "Kindness Challenge Month" and service-related activities will be led by the Student Council.

Ms. Mackinnon went to the Harrington PTO meeting. This Saturday they are holding a movie night. The book fair will take place the week of February 11th. Harrington will hold a "Cultural Diversity Night" from 6:00 p.m. through 7:30 on February 12th. Ms. Mackinnon continues her work on the Town's Strategic Planning Steering Committee. A plan is in place for the Select Board and the School Committee to begin meeting twice annually.

Ms. Santos attended the CHS PTO meeting. As a fundraiser for the prom, they hope to hold a pickle ball tournament. They made over \$800 on their December fundraiser. They are offering "Grab and Goes" for the staff this school year. She also attended a zoom meeting for the Chelmsford Council of Schools. The community "Read-In" will be held from March 3rd through the 7th. Katie Greer will be coming to Chelmsford to present on digital health and safety. This will be held at The PAC on January 23rd at 6:30 p.m. and she will come back again in April.

The Chair added that the Parker Building Committee held their first meeting and focused on choosing a sub-committee to select the "Owner's Project Manager". This choice will be presented in May to the MSBA. Dr. Lang added that the designer will be selected between May and August. Mr. King also shared that The Alumni Association is scheduled to meet tomorrow night.

Action/New Items

Contract negotiations will begin on Monday.

Public Comments

None

Adjournment: 8:45 p.m.

Ms. Santos moved to adjourn. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

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