

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
December 2, 2025
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). Ms. Joanna Johnson-Collins (Director of Business & Finance) is not present this evening.

Call to Order

Mr. King called the meeting to order at 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 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 November 18, 2025

Ms. Santos moved to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of November 18, 2025, Mr. Moses seconded. Motion carries 5-0.

CHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Patrick shared that 16 CHS students were invited to attend a National Merit Recognition Breakfast on November 20th at CHS. Congratulations to all! Special congratulations to senior Jacob Lazar who is a semi-finalist at the National Merit Scholarship Program and is in the top 5% of Massachusetts seniors in academics! Chelmsford beat Billerica during the annual Thanksgiving football game! Thanks to Billerica Superintendent, Dr. Carrie Cleary for coming to CHS yesterday to congratulate Chelmsford on the win. Winter sports have begun this week.

GOOD NEWS

Dr. Hirsch congratulated the football team. The play, *Oklahoma*, was "amazing"! "The kids did an amazing job!" SEPAC will hold a virtual meeting tomorrow starting at 6:30 p.m. The Speaker will be Leslie who is the project director for the Massachusetts SEPAC.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Spotlight on the Schools: McCarthy Middle School

Dr. Jeff Parks, McCarthy Principal, Chris Cowan, Assistant Principal, and a McCarthy 8th grade Student Leader, Lena Felzani came to the table to share what is happening at McCarthy this year. Dr. Parks shared that this is third year for McCarthy as a 7th and 8th grade middle school and the school is “heading in a great direction”. The McCarthy School Improvement Plan includes a focus on student achievement with a focus on mathematics in conjunction with the district’s current Strategic Plan using the iReady diagnostic tool. Math teachers have been meeting weekly collaboratively setting short-term and long-term goals and following through to assure consistent delivery of these goals. The schedule has been changed to accommodate common meeting times for teachers. A second goal is a focus on “School Climate” and includes having smaller teams to help students feel welcome and connected to improve positive behaviors. Clear cut consequences exist when mistakes are made but more deliberate processing is being used for the students including reflection sheets as well as discussions with various staff members. This is helpful to students for making future decisions and positive outcomes are being seen.

Lena next shared her experiences about student leadership which includes a dozen 8th graders. Meetings are held to discuss fun events and changes that may be made to the school. They attended a workshop at SNHU to improve their leadership skills. This year’s leadership group will help the staff select next year’s leaders. For the current school year, they planned pep rallies/spirit weeks and a dance for 8th graders after winter vacation which will be in addition to the dance held annually in June. The annual “Project 300” drive will be held in January.

Dr. Parks introduced Chris Cowan, assistant principal, who joined the McCarthy staff three weeks ago. Mr. Cowan spoke of his experiences in education which precede his role at McCarthy. Dr. Parks added that this year McCarthy has added a second “Supervisor of Students” who is Kevin Branco. Dr. Parks stated that there are two times a week that all 8th grade teachers are free at the same time which allows all of the content teachers to meet together and meet with department coordinators as desired. This enables all to meet “across team”. Last year the school social worker, Julia Gannon, introduced the STEP Program. She is currently on maternity leave so Mr. Cowan is providing an update. Students in this program are those who need assistance with transitions to many classes in a model different from what they knew at Parker Middle School or have recently missed school due to life circumstances (hospitalization; mental health issues, et al) . STEP gives students who have missed school a way to progressively return to classes and is designed at a pace to meet each student’s specific needs. Integrated support for this program includes a social worker and two interns to provide for both therapeutic and academic needs. Currently five students are involved in STEP. In the past as many as ten students participated at one time. The presentation concluded with photos of cafeteria upgrades and outdoor upgrades which include street hockey rinks, basketball courts and a tennis/pickle ball court. These will be fully operational by spring. To fully appreciate this presentation and slide show please watch this segment of tonight’s meeting on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.

2. FY2026 School Facility Work Order Summary: 1st Quarter (July – September 2025)

Christine Clancy, Director of Public Works, came to the table to provide an update on school facility work done during July, August and September. For both the schools and the town they continue to use the program “Asset Essentials” which was rolled out in January 2025, and augments data input and allows a focus on preventive work planning. 404 work orders were generated with a completion rate of 76%. This was partly due to having an electrician’s position unfilled until recently. It also took a while to fill the position of “Playgrounds Coordinator” following a retirement. As of October, the department is completely staffed. In the past several weeks many additional work orders have been completed and will be reflected in the next quarterly report (October, November, December). To see the slides included in Ms. Clancy’s presentation you may view this segment of Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.

3. Private School Approval Process and Request for Consideration: Drake Academy

Dr. Lang shared a new updated request from the Drake Academy in Chelmsford. The earlier application they submitted this past summer showed they had not completed all the items required by DESE. The current application meets the DESE requirements. They plan to open for the 2026/27 school year.

No vote will be taken until the meeting on December 16th. Dr. Lang will reach out to Drake Academy with clarifications Committee members are seeking.

4. 2025/26 School Improvement Plans

Dr. Hirsch has compiled information on this year’s school improvement plans and has shared this in tonight’s agenda packet. These are related to the district’s current Strategic Plan and meet DESE’s requirements. These are reviewed throughout the school year to determine if the goals will be met.

5. October 1, 2025 Student Enrollment Report

Dr. Lang explained that the October 1st enrollment statistics are sent to DESE as a basis for what financial aid (Chapter 70) the school will receive. As of this school year our district has increased by about 60 students over last year. Tonight’s agenda packet has all the data provided by the individual schools. Additional sections of each grade are provided wherever the enrollment and class sizes are high. These certified numbers are shared to The Committee by Dr. Lang annually in December.

6. SC Policy Discussion: IKFE – Competency Determination (CD)

Dr. Hirsch included a memorandum in tonight’s packet regarding DESE’s requirement for a Competency Determination (CD) in order to graduate from high school. MCAS is no longer used for competency determination. Each district, including ours, has developed a CD for our students to graduate. We approved this in June and uploaded the information to DESE (which is also contained in the CHS handbook). DESE now wants an actual **CD policy** from all districts. Along with local districts, Chelmsford has created such a policy which needs to be voted on by our School Committee and sent to DESE by December 31, 2025. Policy IKFE is found in tonight’s packet for its “first read”. At the next meeting on December 16th the policy will need a final vote.

7. Tri-Board Budgetary Meeting: Monday December 8, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Dr. Lang reminded The Committee of this upcoming meeting.

8. Parker Middle School Building Project – Community Visioning Sessions:

a. Wednesday December 17, 2025, 7:00 p.m. Chelmsford Elks, 300 Littleton Road

Dr. Lang reminded the public of the meeting on December 17th, concerning the Parker Middle School Building Project.

REPORTS

1. Liaison Reports

The Chair shared that he will attend the SEPAC zoom meeting tomorrow. He will also attend the final meeting of the Committee on Capital Projects on Thursday and will report on this to The Committee on December 16th.

ACTION/NEW ITEMS

Ms. Santos shared that she attended *Oklahoma* and appreciated the “incredibly talented students”! She also was pleased with the diversity of our students involved in this production. Mr. King added that the school calendar will be discussed at the next meeting. There are some details to be worked out concerning: the first day of school; Labor Day and Election Day. Dr. Lang will present calendar options at the December 16th meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Olesia Plokhii of 7 Clear Street in Chelmsford spoke and thanked the group for their dedication to the students and the items covered in tonight’s agenda. Her son will be attending Center Elementary School in first grade next fall. She is concerned about “excessive technology use” and screen time in elementary schools across the country in the younger grades. She seeks help from those in the room and those watching from home. She is concerned about math/reading scores, student aggression and distraction as well as AI. She would like to see an option of “tech free” classrooms for younger students.

ADJOURNMENT at 8:00 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary