

**CHELMSFORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
February 3, 2026
Meeting Minutes**

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

Also present: Dr. Jay Lang (Superintendent), 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 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 January 20, 2026

Ms. Santos moved to approve the minutes of the regular school committee meeting of January 20, 2026. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

CHS STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Patrick announced that the “2025 Congressional Act Challenge” was won by CHS junior, Reya Kannan, whose act called “Yard2Yum” brought together restaurants, composting facilities and farms “to lower food waste, support local farms and create a more environmentally friendly food system”. Congratulations to the CHS January Students of the Month. The Thursdays and Crescendos participated in “Any Voices” and the Thursdays placed first. Congratulations to Rose Lovett for “Best Soloist” and Mikey Lays for winning the “Best Arranger”.

Richie added that the CHS Theatre Guild will put on a play this weekend written and directed by Kayla Lamb who is a CHS junior. On Saturday the CHS LIME Club will host an “In-Tune” event will take place in the McCarthy auditorium. This Thursday is a half day of school and February break begins in two weeks.

GOOD NEWS

Dr. Hirsch stated that the UMASS Lowell “Teaching Excellence and Achievement Fulbright Scholars” are coming to Chelmsford again this year. Six of them will be placed at CHS and hail from India, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria and Slovakia. CHS teachers who are working with them are: Jessica Ferronetti; Brian Acheson; Michelle Kender; Linda Tanini; Peter Zopes and Veronica Gadbois. All 21 of them will be attending our next meeting on February 24th. Tomorrow is the 100th day of school!

Ms. Lebeaux added that she attended the McCarthy Middle School play last weekend and it was “really wonderful”!

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None

NEW BUSINESS

1. Spotlight on the Schools: South Row Elementary School

Dr. Lang welcomed South Row Principal, Terri Gilbert, and Dr. Jayson Ramalho, Assistant Principal, to the table to provide updates on their school. Ms. Gilbert shared that since Dr. Ramalho is an adjunct professor at UMASS Lowell the relationship between UMASS and South Row has become stronger to the point where South Row has become a “Learning Lab”. They are also partners with Merrimack College’s undergraduate teaching program and have hosted students from Bridgewater State College and hosted teachers from other districts to observe several programs at South Row. Tonight’s focus is on the UMASS partnership where education students from the university are welcome to meet with South Row staff to provide a variety of opportunities.

Dr. Ramalho spoke of research that attests to the importance of student (pre-service) teachers and teacher mentors working together in reflecting together and sharing new ideas. The experience enhances classroom management practices and often places first year teachers who experience this on a par with those who have taught two previous years. Many opportunities for reflection and feedback take place. Dr. Coleen Tapley from UMASS who is an assistant teaching faculty member and co-directs the UMASS program, as well as Sara Zatorski from UMASS who is responsible for most of the field work placements came to the table to share their experiences with South Row of which they spoke highly! The UMASS program offers dual certification in both elementary K to 6 and special education K to 8. Their “Pre-Service” students begin field work during freshman year and continue through graduation. Ms. Zatorski has overseen many placements at South Row and said, “they are one of my favorite schools to work with”.

Mrs. Driscoll, a second-grade teacher at South Row, and Mrs. Hevey, a South Row special education teacher, came to the table to share the benefits of the partnerships through teachers’ perspectives. Mrs. Driscoll shares the benefit of having two adults in a classroom to meet Tier 2, IEP and 504 needs. Small group and differentiated instruction are facilitated. It enables more reflection on your teacher practices.

Mrs. Hevey added that having a student teacher gives students two trusted adults with whom to develop a relationship. There is extra support for “struggling” students and those who seek enrichment as well as more opportunities to provide feedback. Clara, who is a fourth-grade student at South Row, said that she liked having a student-teacher to ask questions of and get help when needed. Ms. Cote helped her with reading, math and topics to write about. Jack, a second grader, added that his student-teacher, Ms. Pontbriant, is nice, fun and helps him with his work in math and getting ideas for writing. The students were rewarded with a round of applause!

Student-teachers Macayla Cote and Sarah Pontbriant spoke about the importance of “hands-on learning” and the opportunities to apply what they have learned in college. As time went on they increased the amount of teaching. They valued their experiences at South Row which offered experience with MTSS and PBIS and thanked both UMASS and South Row. This multi-faceted presentation may be viewed in its entirety on Chelmsford Telemedia YouTube.

2. Approval of Non-Affiliated Employees Salary Schedules

Dr. Lang stated that items #2 and #3 were discussed in the last School Committee Executive Session. He recommends approval of all.

Ms. Santos moved to approve an increase to the annual salaries as specified by the central administration support positions effective July 1, 2025. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the Appendix A: Non-Affiliated Principals Salary Schedule covering FY27 – FY29 as presented. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the Appendix B: Non-Affiliated Central Administration Licensed and Non-Licensed Staff salary schedules covering FY27 – FY29 as presented. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the Appendix C: Non-Affiliated Salary Schedule for the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction covering FY27 – FY29 as presented. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

3. Vote to Approve Assistant Superintendent’s Contract

Dr. Lang recommends approval of this contract.

Ms. Santos moved to approve the three-year employment agreement, covering the period from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2029, with Dr. Linda Hirsch to continue to serve as Assistant Superintendent in accordance with the terms and conditions as outlined. Ms. Lebeaux seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Motion carries 4-0.

4. Superintendent's Recommended FY2027 Budget

Budget binders were distributed to all at the table. Dr. Lang shared that planning for next year's budget begins in October with meetings with the schools, principals and departments to ascertain upcoming needs in coordination with our Strategic Plan. In finalizing the budget Dr. Lang works closely with Town Manager Cohen. Level service funding will be adhered to for both The Town and The School District. This will maintain the "current level of staff, services and programs" from FY26. Major contracts were ratified in the spring and the FY26 budget is in "good shape"! Dr. Lang shared how Chelmsford measures up to "comparable DESE districts" (from last audit 2024) and the Massachusetts State Median in: net school spending; per pupil spending; student to teacher ratio and average teacher salary. In most of these comparisons Chelmsford falls in the bottom third, but academically we fall into the top third! FY27 proposes a budget of \$78.15 million which is an increase of \$2.5 million above the FY26 budget of \$75.65. The budget binder includes the narrative of the budget, summary level totals and many pages of category level details. At the next School Committee meeting on February 24th the budget will be reviewed page by page and attendees at the meeting will have the opportunity to ask questions. Ultimately, that night, a motion will be made to approve the budget of \$78.15 million. It will then be presented at Town Meeting in April. Dr. Lang asks The Committee to review the budget within the next two weeks and forward any questions to him. The Chair added that this budget has no cuts in staff, in programming and no fee increases! "This is outstanding compared to many other school districts" which are struggling financially! To fully appreciate Dr. Lang's presentation of the FY27 budget please view it, with accompanying slides, on Chelmsford Telemedia You/Tube.

5. Approval of Field Trip & Travel Requests

Ms. Santos moved to delegate the motion for these field trips to CHS student representative Patrick Keough to whom both field trips are important.

Patrick moved to approve the field trips and travel requests as follows: The Chelmsford High School Wrestling Team to the New England Wrestling Championship Tournament March 7th to March 8th in Providence Rhode Island and the Chelmsford High School Service Learning trips for interested students to South Africa from February 11th to February 21st 2027. Ms. Lebeaux seconded the motion. Motion carries 4-0.

REPORTS

1. Liaison Reports

Ms. Santos attended the Center School PTO meeting, and they are currently sponsoring "A Taste of Chelmsford" which is going well. They will be holding an "International Cultural Day". Fundraising continues to do well, enabling them to provide many activities free of charge to their families. She also attended the Wellness Committee meeting which will sponsor the Wellness Fair on March 6th.

Ms. Mackinnon went to the meeting of The Chelmsford Friends of Music and they are planning a music trivia night and a "Battle of the Bands". They will also hold an instrument raffle for the 4th Grade Instrument Night. The Middle Schools will be holding a *Show Boat* talent show on May 16th.

They continue with the “Bottle and Can Drives”. Graduating seniors who participate in music may apply for scholarships through the Friends. They also offer band camp scholarships.

Ms. Lebeaux attended the South Row PTO meeting last night where the second-grade staff presented. Each month a different grade level shares. At their school they have “Try it Tuesdays” where student can sample different fruits and vegetables. Students also fill out sheets describing each act of kindness they perform. The South Row Science Fair will take place on February 25th. She also attended a “District 10” luncheon session on “using data to support equity” sharing what school committees can do by diving into data. She invites her colleagues to join the next session on February 27th.

The Chair added that The Alumni Association will meet tomorrow. The Building Committee will meet during February Break on the 19th.

ACTION/NEW ITEMS

Per a parent’s request a discussion took place this evening on “indoor recess” which has taken place often due to the extremely cold temperatures and ice. Dr. Lang has already contacted this parent as has the teacher and school principal.

“Day on the Hill” in Boston at The State House will be held on March 30th.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT at 7:41 p.m.

Ms. Santos delegated this motion to CHS student representative Richard (Richie) Freije.

Richie moved to adjourn. Ms. Mackinnon seconded. Motion carries 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Giglio, Recording Secretary