

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
Conference Room 4 & Zoom
December 20, 2022

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair, CCSC; CSC
Alexa Anderson, Chair, CSC; CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
Courtland Booth, CSC; CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC, CCSC
Sharon Whitt, Vice Chair, CCSC
Sara Wilson, CCSC
Domingos DaRosa, CCRSD METCO Rep
Ayesha Lawton, CPS METCO Rep

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, CPS & CCRSD
Robert Conry, Asst. Superintendent of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD
Kristen Herbert, Asst. Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER – CSC

Ms. Anderson called the CSC meeting to order at 5:10 PM. She acknowledged the threat that was made the previous week to Dr. Hunter's personal safety, thanking her for her dedication and tireless public service to the community. Ms. Anderson also thanked the police officers in the community, noting the critical partnership between the schools and police.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Katie Chagnon, 81 Upland Road, Concord MA. Ms. Chagnon stated how upset she was at the events that occurred at the previous school committee meeting about banning books. She thanked the SC, teachers, staff and Dr. Hunter for their continued dedication.

III. DISCUSSION

A. CMSBC Warrant Article. Ms. Anderson stated that the CMSBC began a process of compiling a list of possible deductions from the scope of the CMS building project should the estimates and bids come in over the \$110. She stated that the items on the list included: the athletic fields (\$1.5 million), landscaping (\$300,000), "wood-look" on ceilings (\$190,000), bleachers (\$84,000) and outdoor classrooms (no associated costs). Ms. Anderson noted that the warrants are due on January 4th, 2023. Mr. Booth asked if there was an option of a special town meeting within the town meeting that would make the January 4th deadline not be as hard and fixed and provide time to see the 90% estimates and bids. He stated that the proposal is premature and noted that the SC had not mentioned this proposal at the two capital planning meetings with the Select Board. Ms. Anderson stated that it was not discussed with the Select Board because it did not meet the Tier 3 threshold of \$5 million. Mr. Booth stated that the Select Board's interpretation was if the sum total was in excess of \$5 million. He stated that the SC should not move forward on this warrant article proposal so as not to jeopardize the project.

Ms. Anderson noted her concern for the costs increasing and needing to ask for even more money in the future. Ms. Marano stated that they could always withdraw the article, noting that she feels having this as a backup plan was the wise thing to do so the school is finished correctly. Ms. Rainey stated that they are basically tagging on \$2 million to the taxpayers, noting that they should hold off and ask the Select Board to hold a special town meeting within town meeting. The SC discussed the optics of moving the article forward and the possibility of using the Concord Preservation Act. Ms. Rankin stated that the SC has an obligation to the community and district to do the project right, noting that it is not responsible of them to not have something on the table to do the things that are necessary.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to Approve CPS Capital Plan. Mr. Conry reviewed the CPS Capital Plan, noting that a couple of items may come in under budget. A motion was made by Ms. Rankin, seconded by Ms. Marano, to approve the FY24 capital budget in the amount of \$900,000, and to further approve the accompanying draft warrant article language for Town meeting approval. The motion unanimously passed.

PUBLIC HEARING CPS BUDGET FY24

Ms. Anderson opened the Public Hearing for the CPS FY24 budget at 6:04 PM. Mr. Conry noted that there have not been any changes to the budget since it was presented on December 6th. He then shared the CPS FY24 budget presentation, reviewing: the budget process overview, student enrollment trends FY18-FY22, and per pupil expenditure data. Dr. Hunter reviewed the strategic objectives and initiatives. Mr. Conry then reviewed: the budget by DESE 1000 function (5.08% increase), key drivers (teaching and instructional support, other school services, maintenance and operations, fixed charges, out of district tuitions including cost avoidance impacts, salaries/non-salary accounts breakout and key drivers, school summary, and an ESSER funding update including use of funds.

Mr. Booth asked questions regarding professional contingency, insurance and ESSER III Funds.

Public Comments/Questions:

1. Matt Johnson, 21 Winter Street, Concord MA. Concord Select Board member Matt Johnson asked if the presentation was available online and how the budget related to the FINCOM guidelines. Mr. Conry stated that the guideline was 3.3% and the difference between the guideline and the budget requested is @ \$ 776,000. Mr. Johnson noted the increase in FTE's and declining enrollment, asking if benchmarking is done. Dr. Hunter stated that most of the FTEs are attributable to the new special education programs, noting that sections have actually been cut over the last few years at the elementary schools due to declining enrollment. Mr. Conry noted that the agenda online has a link to the presentation.

Ms. Marano closed the CPS Budget Public Hearing at 6:35 PM.

V. CALL TO ORDER – CCSC

Ms. Marano called the CCSC meeting to order at 6:37 PM. She then acknowledged the threat to Dr. Hunter's personal safety the prior week, thanking Dr. Hunter for all the time she dedicates to the students, staff and families.

PUBLIC HEARING CCRSD BUDGET FY24

Ms. Marano opened the Public Hearing on the CCRSD Budget FY24 at 6:38 PM. Mr. Conry shared the CCRSD Budget FY24 presentation, reviewing: budget process overview, student enrollment trends FY18-FY22, and per pupil expenditure data. Dr. Hunter reviewed the strategic objectives and initiatives. Mr. Conry then reviewed: budget by DESE 1000 function (3.48% increase), key drivers (teaching and instructional support, other school services, maintenance and operations, fixed charges, and out of district tuitions), salaries and non-salary accounts breakout (including key drivers), ESSER funding update and use of funds, FY24 revenues, assessments to Concord (1.58% increase) and Carlisle (8.37% increase), and Excess and Deficiency.

Regarding additional FTE's, Ms. Anderson asked if the district thinks this trend is going to continue to escalate. Dr. Hunter stated that there was a combination of things happening between the pandemic impact and the special education piece, noting that the special education piece is the biggest driver of the FTE increase. Mr. Booth asked if the district is calibrating more properly what it means to bring in the in-district programming. Dr. Hunter stated that the district is saving money with the in-district programs, noting that they are trying to determine what the capacity is.

Public Comments/Questions:

1. Matt Johnson, 21 Winter Street, Concord MA. Concord Select Board member Matt Johnson stated that the most eye-opening thing in this budget was the health insurance increase, asking what rate of participation the district has in high deductible insurance plans. Mr. Conry stated that the district has a very small network, noting that there are very low participation rates combined with the 9% rate increase. Dr. Hunter noted that there has been an uptick in enrollment in the newly offered high deductible plan.

Ms. Marano closed the public hearing at 7:17 PM.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Pat Brewer, 132 Wright Road, Concord MA. Ms. Brewer stated that she heard of the recent questions brought up by some community members over whether or not the Ivy Aberdeen book should be part of the curriculum. She commended the administration, teachers and staff with presenting the students with high quality novels that broach topics pertinent to middle school students with respect and sensitivity.

2. Joyce DeGreeff, 1400 Lowell Road, Concord MA. Ms. DeGreeff stated that she was speaking as both a COAR representative and a parent of a mixed race family with kids currently and previously in the district. She commended the School Committee for its encouragement of the DEIB initiatives under Dr. Hunter and her administrative team's leadership. She noted that community members recently commented on how the DEIB work was harming the white students, stating that this was mind-boggling. She noted how crucial the DEIB work was for the education of the kids as students and human beings.

3. Mary Beth Stevenson, 271 Cross Street, Carlisle MA. Ms. Stevenson stated that she was the VP of the CTA, noting she was the representative to the health insurance group of union leaders for the town. She stated that the union leaders would like more options for members, suggesting that other options are looked at besides of Minuteman Health.

VII. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

CCHS reps Felicity Zhang and Zariah Alves provided an update from CCHS. They stated that students are excited for winter break, there is a chorus pop up concert on the half day Friday, there is increased stress due to increasing workloads, the Prism concert happened the previous Saturday, early decision college decisions have been coming out, the district planning session went very well, cookie fest is happening the following day, the spring musical *Into the Woods* was announced for May 11-13, there are many students and teachers out due to illness, the Green Team is doing composting in the cafeteria and class government is selling candy canes.

VIII. RECOGNITIONS – CCHS Art

CCHS Art teacher and Department Chair, Joe Pickman, shared some of the many exciting things happening in the art department - the architecture class recently visiting the Gropius House, a collaboration between John Lindner and Jamie Andrade with a raku firing, and a show coming up at CCHS that highlights all the disciplines and classes run at CCHS in art. He then shared a video of several students from various art classes at CCHS and thanked Ms. Andrade for putting the presentation together.

IX. CHAIR, LIASIONS AND SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Ms. Marano stated that they met with Verizon with the potential of putting a cell phone tower on the CCHS campus, they had the capital planning session, a chairs breakfast the following day and the DEIB meeting the following night.

Ms. Rankin stated that the recent Strategic Planning was great and Ms. Herbert did a great job facilitating it.

Mr. Booth stated that the Select Board and Town Manager recently spoke about Strategic Planning, noting that they praised the work being done by Ms. Herbert and the possibility of using the district's process as a model for the town. He stated that they also spoke about the budget, noting that perhaps \$500,000 would be allocated to solar at the new middle school building. He stated that the DEI Commission met and they spoke about the town survey and Dr. Hunter's social media efforts to promote the survey and how the Belmont School District could be used as a model for school reporting data. He stated that the SC has been invited to participate in the Patriot's Day parade on April 17th.

Ms. Whitt stated that the DEIB group held a very successful fundraiser in Carlisle.

Ms. Wilson stated that it would have been William Shaw's thirteen birthday this year, noting that his classmates have banded together to form a new club that focuses on childhood grief. She stated that the Carlisle SC recently had their budget meeting and CCACE has assumed the work of the Center for Parents and Teachers and has several speaker events coming up. She stated that SEPAC recently held a meeting that focused around accessing accommodations that was very interesting and informative.

Ms. Rainey stated that the DEI Commission has been working on compiling recommendations and noted how great the recent collaborative event that took place was.

Ms. Marano noted that there was a coffee on Thursday for Police Chief O'Connor's retirement.

Mr. DaRosa stated that the METCO families would be meeting after the holidays to discuss steps for increasing participation next year.

Dr. Hunter stated that she has made contact with the new state representatives and would be meeting with them in January, the CCHS band has been invited to be at the Patriots Day parade and 250th Day parade, the CMS playbook initiative students got an opportunity to be on the parquet floor at the Celtics game, each district has received @\$15,000 from the DEI grant process towards hiring, recurring and retention of diverse staff, and they have been middle school working on ensuring gender neutral bathrooms in the new middle school building. Dr. Hunter then thanked the Concord Police Department for its extraordinary reaction last week and noted the outpouring of support in the situation.

X. READING OF THE MINUTES

A motion was made by Mr. Booth, seconded by Ms. Rainey, to approve the minutes from 11.22.22. The motion was unanimously approved.

XI. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Anderson stated that CSC received 5 pieces of correspondence expressing their support for Dr. Hunter. Ms. Marano stated that CCSC received 6 pieces of correspondence: 2 about literature, 2 about the previous meetings public comments and 2 additional pieces.

XII. DISCUSSION

A. First Reading School Committee Policies: Policy KA, Policy KE, Policy KEB, Policy KEB-R, Policy KEC. Ms. Rankin stated that the recommendations coming out of the recent policy meeting were to update Policy KA around community relations based on MASC recommendations, strike KEC, KEB, and KEB-R and amend KE to include updated MASC language. She stated that policy KA sets the stage for all of the K policies, includes some additional language and is stronger than the current policy. She stated that KE would be a comprehensive policy on complaints to replace KE, KEB, KEB-R and KEC. Ms. Rankin stated that they would be brought to the next meeting for a second reading and a vote. Ms. Rainey asked if the proposed updated policies could be brought to the next meeting.

XIII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to Consider Recommendation of the Literature Review Committee. Dr. Hunter stated that the district received a formal complaint on the book *All Boys Aren't Blue* in the fall, noting that it went through the review process with the building administrators and Ms. Hebert and is now before the SC. She stated that, after healthy discussion, the unanimous recommendation from the committee was that the book remain in the CCHS library, noting that she is fully in support of this recommendation. A motion was made by Ms. Rankin, seconded by Ms. Rainey, to consider the recommendation of the Literature Review Committee and Dr. Hunter. The motion was unanimously approved.

B. Vote to Approve CCHS Nordic Team Trip. A motion was made by Ms. Rankin, seconded by Ms. Marano, to approve the CCHS Nordic Team Trip, as outlined, to Jackson, NH from January 21, 2023 to January 23, 2023, with the condition that a signed district liability waiver is received from all participants. The motion was unanimously approved.

C. Vote to Approve CCHS Performing Arts Trip Japan 2024. The SC discussed giving initial approval to this trip and having more information about equity and inclusion around the trip brought prior to a final approval. A motion was made by Mr. Booth, seconded by Ms. Rainey, to provide initial approval the CCHS Performing Arts Japan Trip from April 17, 2024 – April 25, 2024, with the condition that a signed district liability waiver is received from all participants. The motion was unanimously approved.

D. Vote to Approve CCRSD FY24 Budget. A motion was made by Mr. Booth, seconded by Ms. Rankin, to approve the CCRSD FY24 budget in the amount of \$37,811,098, and the resultant Concord assessment of \$25,357,846 and Carlisle assessment of \$7,893,984, and to further approve the accompanying draft warrant article language for Town meeting approval. Mr. Booth asked for more information on bus purchases or leases embedded in the budget and Mr. Conry

stated that there are 2 diesel bus lease assumptions per year in the budget for the CCRSD replacement cycle. He stated that they would need additional capital in order to finance electric buses. Dr. Hunter stated that they would need to have separate conversation about a fiscal way to electrify the fleet on a larger scale. Mr. Booth noted his concern for the district being the largest polluter in the town and asked when they would move forward on electric buses. Dr. Hunter stated that it needs to be a separate conversation because the fiscal needs cannot compete for the instructional needs of the kids and the basics of getting kids to school, noting that the district has applied for every grant available, currently runs 3 electric buses, and had the first electric bus in the state. She noted that the intent of Chapter 71 funds are for the rural districts trying to keep basics happening, recommending that this discussion be pulled from the budget discussion annually and brought to the FINCOMS and Select boards for broader discussion. Mr. DaRosa asked to be educated more on all of the costs surrounding electric bus operations. The motion was unanimously approved.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT CCSC

Ms. Marano adjourned the CCSC meeting at 8:57 PM.

XV. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to Approve CPS FY24 Budget. A motion was made by Mr. Booth, seconded by Ms. Marano, to approve the FY24 operating budget in the amount of \$45,197,176, and to further approve the accompanying draft warrant article language for Town meeting approval. Mr. Booth stated that they would be making a mistake coming in higher than the town, recommending that they continue to work on the budget. Ms. Anderson stated that the budget vote will kick off discussions and they still have work ahead of them. The motion was unanimously approved.

B. Vote to Approve CPS CMSBC Warrant Article. A motion was made by Ms. Rankin, seconded by Ms. Marano, to approve draft warrant article language appropriating \$1,802,271 for the purposes of installing new natural grass athletic fields and landscaping at 835 Old Marlboro Road. Ms. Anderson, Ms. Marano, and Ms. Rankin voted in favor of the motion. Mr. Booth and Ms. Rainey abstained from the vote.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT CSC

Ms. Anderson adjourned the CSC meeting at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Higgins

Approved: 2.7.23

Abbreviations:

CCACE	Concord Carlisle Adult and Community Education
CCHS	Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSD	Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC	Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA	Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
CEF	Concord Education Fund
CMS	Concord Middle School
CMSBC	Concord Middle School Building Committee
COAR	Communities Organizing Against Racism
CPS	Concord Public Schools
CSC	Concord School Committee
CTA	Concord Teachers Association
DEIB	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
ELA	English Language Arts
FINCOM	Finance Committee
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Supports
PD	Professional Development

SC
SEPAC

School Committee
Special Education Parent Advisory Council