

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
October 22, 2024

Present: Julie Viola, Chair; CCSC
Brian Waterson, CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Chair CSC; CCSC
Alexa Anderson, Vice Chair CCSC; CSC
Andrew Herchek, CSC; CCSC
Tracey Marano, CSC; CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC; CCSC
Domingos DeRosa, CCRSD METCO Rep

Absent: Ayesha Lawson, CPS METCO Rep

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of School, CPS & CCRSD
Robert Conry, Asst. Supt. of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD
Shelly Chin, Interim Assistant Superintendent, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER – CONCORD SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Ms. Rankin called the Concord School Committee (CSC) to order at 6:00 PM. Roll call attendance was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Thoreau Playground a.k.a. Thoreau's Backyard

Justin Sparks presented the fundraising and improvement plan for the Thoreau playground, which will be reimagined as "Thoreau's Backyard." This project is part of a broader campus improvement plan that includes greenspace development, recreational areas, erosion control measures, and enhanced parking facilities. Student input was crucial in shaping the initial design and they expressed a desire for space to run, swings, and rope climbing structures. There are additional plans include a zip line and additional climbing structures. Dr. Hunter provided valuable suggestions for fundraising efforts. Mr. Sparks announced that a generous \$200,000 estate gift has been secured, which will significantly contribute to the project's funding. Online fundraising efforts have also begun, and donations are being accepted through <https://www.thoreausbackyard.com/donate>.

B. CPS Capital Plan

Mr. Conry presented the Concord Public Schools comprehensive capital plan to address critical infrastructure needs. The plan is based on a detailed facility study and aims to ensure the district's facilities are safe, efficient, and conducive to student learning. Key priorities include investing in green projects like energy-efficient lighting and HVAC systems; prioritizing roofing repairs and building envelope improvements, especially at Thoreau and Ripley Schools; funding technology upgrades, including copiers and network infrastructure; replacing aging maintenance and school buses; and conducting a study to determine the best course of action for Ripley School, including potential renovations or a complete rebuild.

To finance these substantial capital projects, the district will explore various funding options, including state grants such as the MSBA Accelerated Repairs Program, which provides funding for energy-efficient and cost-saving school facility upgrades. Additionally, green community grants can support energy-efficient projects and reduce long-term operating costs. Performance Management Contracts, which involve partnering with energy performance contractors, offer another financing option. These contracts allow for upfront investment in energy-efficient upgrades, with the generated savings over time offsetting the initial cost.

C. CPS FY26 Guidelines Letter Response

Moved to CCRSD later in the agenda.

I. CALL TO ORDER – CONCORD CARLISLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Ms. Viola called the Concord-Carlisle School Committee to order at 6:53 PM.

II. CCHS STUDENT UPDATES

Student committee members were committed elsewhere.

III. RECOGNITIONS - PARTNERS IN RHYME

Partners in Rhyme is a unique intergenerational program that brings together high school students and senior citizens to read, discuss, and write poetry. This experience fosters positive connections, improves students' perception of poetry, reduces social isolation, and enhances social-emotional and academic skills. Seniors enjoy sharing their life experiences and witnessing the hope students have in the world, while students appreciate the experience and opportunity to connect with the older generation, breaking down stereotypes. Initiated 14 years ago by Patty Russo, Partners in Rhyme has been supported for 12 years by The Concord Carlisle Foundation.

IV. DISCUSSIONS AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Special Education Update

Angel Charles, Director of Student Services, discussed the significant strides made in improving the special education program of the Concord-Carlisle Public Schools. Key achievements include a significant reduction in out-of-district placements, with only 49 students currently placed outside the district, and the implementation of a new, IEP form which will streamline data collection and reporting processes. Ms. Charles noted that fostering partnerships between general and special education staff, families, and community partners the program has been essential to its success. While challenges remain, including increasing complex needs, staffing shortages, and funding constraints, the district remains dedicated to providing high-quality special education services and ensuring every student reaches their full potential. This will be achieved by expanding and refining its programs, such as the integrated preschool program and the Launch program, which provides valuable opportunities for students with disabilities.

B. FY26 Guidelines Letter Response CCRSD

Mr. Conry shared the key guidelines, responses, and considerations being presented to the Concord Finance Committee meeting. The committee requested a 5-year projection but Mr.

Conry noted that long-term forecasting is limited by factors such as enrollment fluctuations, contract negotiations, unforeseen circumstances, and costs increases in future years influenced by inflation and vendor increases. The committee held a brief discussion about requesting the town approve the creation of a capital stabilization fund for small projects.

The CPS response included the Concord Public Schools' Key Strategic Plan initiatives; additional funding sources, such as grants and revolving fund items; and notes a reduction in the state reimbursement of Circuit Breaker Funding down to 44% in FY25.

The CCSD response included revolving fund items, with additional funding received for adult education and physical education; and a 5-year projection of the increase in the general fund 3.4% in FY26%; 2.9% in FY27; 3.1% in FY28; 2.2% in FY29; and 2.9% in FY30.

C. CCRSD Capital Plan Items

Gale Associates will present four options for the renovation of the amenities building at the November 19th committee meeting, but estimated costs are potentially under \$2 million because of building codes changes for athletic facilities.

The committee will collaborate with the Finance Committee to ensure transparency and effective communication; to discuss capital needs and explore potential partnerships; develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for future investments and resource allocation; and to make informed decisions, to maintain high-quality education while balancing fiscal responsibility. A timeline is being developed that prioritizes projects based on their impact and potential funding sources.

D. School Committee Goals Tracking

The School Committee is actively working to improve the district's facilities and programs and are exploring grant opportunities to fund projects related to recreation and accessibility. The committee is also working to revive the CC at Play program to enhance extra-curricular activities and are currently identifying potential leaders and reaching out to past organizers to gather input and expertise.

E. MASC Conference Representative

The School Committee discussed the upcoming MASC conference, which will be held on Cape Cod from November 6th to 9th. While the conference offers a variety of educational sessions and networking opportunities, the committee members weighed the benefits of attending against the time commitment. No committee members were interested in going to the Conference and no virtual option is available.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mike Williams, 1284 Sudbury Road, Concord, MA asked the committee to address the concerns of the METCO families; to not focus solely on the risk factors of transgender, non-binary, and non-heterosexual students, while omitting data on other marginalized groups; and to acknowledge and address issues of racial bias and inequality to work towards a more equitable and inclusive community.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Surplus CCHS Science Department Printer

B. Warrants

1. CPS A/P

1033	10/2/24	\$115,997.95
1034	10/3/24	\$126,688.46
1035	9/30/24	\$ 7,077.00

2. CCRSD A/P

1074	9/30/24	\$7,077.00
1080	10/8/24	\$190,231.06
1081	10/8/24	\$115,527.84

3. CPS Payroll

Pay date	10/10/24	\$387,850.86
Pay date	10/10/24	\$220,784.29

4. CCRSD Payroll

Pay date	10/10/24	\$65,084.83
Pay date	10/10/24	\$5,462.01
Pay date	10/10/24	\$16,867.21
Pay date	10/10/24	\$2,908.78
Pay date	10/10/24	\$627,400.30
Pay date	10/10/24	\$74,746.06
Pay date	10/10/24	\$175,691.88
Pay date	10/10/24	\$43,992.65

Ms. Rankin moved, and Ms. Anderson seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

The only significant correspondence received this week was a response from the METCO PTG regarding their public comment. The superintendent also addressed a previous concern about lanyards for visiting students.

VIII. SUPERINTENDENT, CHAIRS, AND LIAISONS UPDATE

Ms. Marano updated the committee on the DEI Commission meeting held on Thursday, where they elected their chairs. The Select Board's deadline for capital requests is October 26th, with recommendations going to the Select Board on November 18th. A joint meeting with the Select Board, FinCom, and School Committee is scheduled for December 16th. The Select Board has requested feedback on the liaison roles.

Mr. Herchek and the student middle school committee attended the CMSBC meeting which was followed by a walk-through of the new building.

Mr. Waterson reported the Carlisle Select Board meeting will be setting their FY 26 goals.

Dr. Hunter attended the METCO Leadership Conference and shared the district's successful implementation of derogatory language policy and a bias reporting system. She reported that the district continues to support the growing shelter population and is working closely with the community to provide essential resources and support to the families. Dr. Hunter announced several exciting initiatives including a new student-led parent conference model being piloted for 8th graders, empowering students to take the lead in discussing their academic progress with their parents; and she met with the Parent Teacher Group (PTG) to discuss shared goals and priorities, fostering a strong partnership between the school and the community.

Ms. Viola attended the METCO PTG meeting and the Chairs breakfast and shared the committee needs and goals, while learning the same from each group. She also noted the importance of having school committee goals and reviewing the goals, to stay on track to school committee goals.

Ms. Rankin had a productive meeting with FINCOMM where they discussed the guideline and process of understanding the cost of special education. The next joint school committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6th because of Election Day.

A brief discussion was held by the committee on the format change of the meeting and moving the Student Update, Superintendents Update, and the Public Comments to earlier in the meeting to respect the students, parents, public, and guests' time.

IX. Adjournment

Ms. Rainey moved, and Ms. Marano seconded the motion to adjourn the joint committee meeting at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: 12.10.24

Abbreviations:

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
CPC Community Preservation Committee

CPS Concord Public Schools
CSC Concord School Committee
CTA Concord Teachers Association
DEIB Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
DHCB Department of Housing and Community Development
ESSER Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
FINCOM Finance Committee
LEAP Learning Executive and Academic Processes
MTSS Multi-Tiered System of Supports
PD Professional Development
SC School Committee
SEPAC Special Education Parent Advisory Council
WRAP Writing, Reading, and Academic Processes
YRBS Youth Risk Behavior Survey