

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
January 7, 2025**

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

Not Present: None

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

Ms. Viola called the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee (CCSC) to order at 6:02 PM. Ms. Rankin called the Concord School Committee (CSC) to order at 6:02 PM. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

II. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

High school committee members Zariah Alves and Maddie Clancy presented updates on recent student events and activities at the high school. Before winter break, student chorus pop-up groups performed holiday carols around campus, creating a festive and engaging atmosphere. The end of the semester is nearing, and students are not only preparing for midterms, but they are excited about their new classes. The high school held a clap-out to honor and celebrate the retirement of Ms. Hammer after thirty-two years of service. This weekend is the MMEA Eastern Senior District Festival, a prestigious event that allows students from orchestra, band, and chorus the opportunity to perform and showcase their talents. Finally, the auditions for the CC Theater Spring Musical, Shrek, are being held in February.

III. CHAIRS UPDATE

Ms. Viola reflected on the past six months, emphasizing the crucial role of ongoing review and community engagement. A key objective is to 'lower the temperature' within community discussions. The upcoming January meeting will focus on reviewing and reaffirming committee goals, addressing key concerns such as the math curriculum, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and student achievement gaps. The YRBS data underscores the critical importance of community feedback, and the district is committed to addressing the needs of all students, particularly those from marginalized groups. The recent graffiti incident highlighted the urgent need to address underlying issues and foster a more inclusive environment and a goal of the committee is to address issues of hate and discrimination while building trust through our actions.

IV. SUPERINTENDENTS UPDATE

Dr. Hunter provided an update on key initiatives and upcoming events including the district is preparing for two visits from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The first is a non-evaluative visit by Commissioner Fernandez on March 18th and the second in April is a formal site visit. Several key initiatives are underway including the continuation of the fifth-grade Playbook Initiative; a focus on improving calculus placement rates; and the search for a new K-5 literacy program. Dr. Hunter also reported that Concord Middle School is nearing completion, with finishing touches being added to the building, and the district will celebrate the milestone with the entire community

Dr. Hunter will be participating in upcoming state-level committee meetings including the DESE racial and bias committee; the MACS DEI committee; and the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents. Dr. Hunter noted several upcoming community events including West Woodson, a diversity facilitator and Kareem Weaver, an equity and literacy expert, both of whom will speak at CCHS; the Lunar New Year celebration; on February 12th, the movie "Super 8" will be presented in honor of Black History Month; and Andrew Demici will speak on the DEI side, focusing on the importance of reading.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Michael Williams, 1284 Sudbury Road, Concord, MA addressed the committee's approval on December 10, 2024, of Policy BDCB – Concord Carlisle METCO Representative to the Concord and Concord Carlisle School Committees. Mr. Williams referred to paragraph III of the policy, which states that all Boston resident Concord or Concord Carlisle METCO parents or guardians, and alumni families are eligible for these positions. He stated that the policy states this eligibility, the meeting minutes do not explicitly state that all eligible METCO families would be notified. Mr. Williams requested the committee clarify this and formally stipulate that all eligible families be contacted and offered the opportunity to stand as candidates. He expressed appreciation for Ms. Viola's opening comments and her commitment to inclusivity.

2. Kirsten Dougherty, Concord MA, supported Mr. Williams’ comments and expressed her concern about the resignations of current and prior METCO representatives. These individuals were dedicated to Concord students but left the district due to burnout or job dissatisfaction. Ms. Dougherty requested that the committee dedicate time on a future agenda to examine the factors contributing to METCO turnover and explore potential solutions to improve staff retention and create a more supportive and sustainable work environment for METCO educators.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Joint Meeting Minutes 11/19/24
- B. Joint Meeting Minutes 12/10/24
- C. Surplus Science Textbooks CCHS
- D. Equipment Donation to CCHS Photo/Video/Art Classes
- E. Warrants
 - 1. CPS A/P
 - 1061 12/19/24 \$348,705.65
 - 1061 12/19/24 \$32,945.93

2.	CCRSB A/P		
	1154	12/19/24	\$480,946.52
	1155	12/19/24	\$46,063.75
3.	CPS		
	Payroll		
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$227,653.97
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$1,861.07
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$376,215.81
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$219,571.09
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$1,751.66
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$353,742.00
4.	CCRSB		
	Payroll		
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$58,863.78
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$2,883.33
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$15,078.38
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$4,527.27
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$15,822.27
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$623,846.73
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$76,071.21
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$174,145.63
	Pay date	12/19/24	\$44,545.49
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$654,210.12
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$76,085.70
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$168,584.27
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$43,368.91
	Pay date	1/2/25	\$3,928.66

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

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

The Concord School Committee had no correspondence since the last meeting.

Concord-Carlisle High School received notice that the band is performing in Connecticut during the Spring break and received a message in support of the Amenities Building.

VIII. LIAISONS UPDATE

Ayesha Lawton addressed concerns regarding METCO representatives, acknowledging that remote engagement with the school committee presents both challenges and rewards. She emphasized the critical importance of having a METCO representative at the table to ensure the safety and well-being of METCO children and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key issues impacting our schools. Ms. Lawton will announce the open position for a METCO representative at the upcoming METCO parents' meeting. She cautioned that securing an individual for this role may be challenging due to the significant time commitment and the importance of the position. However, METCO is actively working to ensure a representative is

present at the March meeting. She also noted that a Boston and Concord coffee with METCO is scheduled for March.

Ms. Marano provided highlights from the Select Board meeting including the announcement by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) of a new community training program, "Until Help Arrives"; the addition of two meetings to the calendar: 1) a discussion on land acquisition on February 3rd, 2) and the approval of next year's town calendar on May 5th. The Doug White Fields project cost estimate remains within budget. An amended scope of work was approved, and a Request for Proposals (RFP) has been issued. The review of proposals is expected to begin next week, with the new anticipated replacement date for the fields set for Summer 2025. Other important dates noted by Ms. Marano include the warrant opening on January 20th and closing on February 19th, the January 10th deadline for annual report submissions, and the capitol hearing scheduled for Thursday, January 9th.

Mr. Waterson reported that Carlisle is kicking off its marathon budget meetings tomorrow and Thursday. The review of the regional budget, originally scheduled for tomorrow night, has been postponed to January 23rd due to the Carlisle School Committee meeting.

IX. DISCUSSION

A. FY26 Superintendent's Recommended Budget

Dr. Hunter presented the FY26 Superintendent's Recommended Budget and thanked the committee, subcommittees, and staff for the preparation help. Every budget has a potential risk because of variables based on enrollment and uncontrollable factors. Both budgets provide solid programming to children and meet all the goals promised to the community. The objectives are to maintain existing programs; support strategic plan initiatives; meet the legal mandates for special education, homelessness, and other requirements; and budget school/student needs with fiscal capacity in the Towns of Concord and Carlisle.

Dr. Hunter deferred the draft budget presentation to Mr. Conry. The FY26 CCRSD budget has a 3.86% increase over the FY25 budget, most of the increase coming from the out-of-district tuition. The per pupil expenditure for Concord-Carlisle is \$26,663, and Concord is \$26,276, 3rd when compared to our peer districts. Reviewing the DESE categories, Mr. Conry stated District Administration costs increased 4.2%; Teaching and Instructional Support increased 2.5%; Other School Services increased 9.1%; Maintenance and Operations increased by 4.7%; Fixed Charges increased 2.3%; Fixed Assets decreased by 6.5%; Debt Service decreased 3.0%; and Out-of-District Tuitions increased 3.86%. The Revenue Budget increased 2.3% with increases in the state contributions to Chapters 70 and 71.

FINCOM established guidelines of 3.48% with a one-time exclusion of the impact of out of district tuition increases. The Carlisle assessment is under \$66,368 and the Concord assessment is over \$63,036. Excess and Deficiency balance is up 4.7%, which is limited to 5% of the Operating and Capital Budget.

B. FY26 CCHS Amenities Building

John Boynton, from the 501(c)(3) non-profit CC at Play, outlined a potential fundraising model for the Amenities Building, drawing on their successful 2013 campaign that raised \$5 million for high school athletic renovations. This campaign leveraged a successful public-private partnership, with $\frac{1}{3}$ of funding from CPC funds and $\frac{2}{3}$ from private donations. CC at

Play, which continues to support local recreational projects, offered the committee experienced guidance, project management, and fundraising expertise. This model could potentially reduce construction costs, streamline project management, and facilitate citizen engagement through private donations. The 2013 campaign utilized a lease agreement to enable a non-municipal entity, CC at Play, to undertake the project. CC at Play raised enough funds to rebuild the baseball fields, six tennis courts, and construct a new grass field at the high school.

CC at Play continues today and has funded small recreational projects, including the Concord-Carlisle playground and it could help the district as it moves forward with recreation-related projects. CC at Play requested a subcommittee be formed to manage items such as the potential benefits and challenges of partnering with CC at Play; develop fundraising strategies; identify project management and responsibility; create a project timeline; review legal considerations; recruit and engage potential volunteers; and create a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between CC at Play and the school district.

After a brief conversation, Ms. Anderson moved, and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion that the Concord-Carlisle School Committee establish a Campus Completion Subcommittee composed of Alexa Anderson, Tracey Marano and Brian Waterson. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; and Waterson, aye.

C. FY26 Warrants to Consider

1. Amenities Building

This agenda item was postponed until the January 21, 2025, meeting.

2. Capital Stabilization

Mr. Conry recommended establishing a well-funded capital stabilization fund. The fund would offer several key advantages including financing future capital projects internally; reducing borrowing needs and associated interest costs; enhancing financial flexibility; and effectively addressing unforeseen capital needs. He proposed funding options such as gradually reducing contributions to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) fund once fully funded; redirecting unexpected budget surpluses; and exploring alternative funding sources. Mr. Conry suggested initiating discussions with the Finance Committees in both towns to explore their potential contributions. The committee consensus is a robust capital stabilization fund would significantly benefit the district's long-term financial health.

D. School Committee Representative Bargaining: CCHS Tutors and Transportation K-12. The committee discussed the upcoming negotiations for two employee bargaining groups: the high school tutors and the K-12 bus drivers. Tracey Marano and Julie Viola volunteered to represent the committee with the CCHS tutors, and Carrie Rankin and Andrew Herchek volunteered to represent the committee with the Transportation K-12. The bargaining process will commence in the spring, with initial planning scheduled to begin in March.

XI. ADJOURNMENT CCSC

Mr. Waterson moved, and the motion was seconded by Ms. Anderson to adjourn the CCRSD meeting at 8:40 PM. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; and Waterson, aye.

The Concord School Committee remained in session.

XII. DISCUSSION

Dr. Hunter presented a slideshow of the Concord Middle School building's new construction. The presentation included a visual tour of the ongoing construction highlighting the key features and progress made since the last report. Many finishing construction touches are being installed on the project which is on schedule and under budget. The district plans to increase communication about the project through various channels, including Instagram, the district website, and community newsletters.

A. FY26 Superintendent's Recommended Budget

Mr. Conry presented the Concord Public School budget and highlighted the Per Pupil Expenditure at CPS was \$26,176; the Concord Middle school consolidation provided a savings of \$576,000; Peabody and Sanborn are removed from the budget; and homeless transportation costs are not budgeted because the town receives the funds and then reimburses the district. The FY26 CPS budget change is a 2.4% increase over the FY25 CPS budget. Reviewing the DESE budget categories, Mr. Conry noted the District Administration costs increased 7.8%; Teaching and Instructional Support increased 1.9%; Other School Services increased 3.7%; Maintenance and Operations increased by 2.7%; Fixed Charges increased 23%; Community Services increased 3.0%; Fixed Assets increased 4.7%; and Programs with other Districts decreased 8.9%.

The district continues to provide comprehensive support services for homeless students through the Homeless Grants received, including dedicated staff, summer programs, and trauma-informed support. The budget includes funding for these services, although the long-term sustainability of grant funding for homeless student support remains uncertain.

B. FY26 CPS Capital Plan

C. FY26 CPC Funding Update-Thoreau

Dr. Hunter noted she was requested to attend a CPC meeting on the campus improvements at Thoreau.

D. FY26 Warrants to Consider

1. Peabody Surplus
2. Facility Use Revolving Account
3. Non-Resident Tuition Fund
4. Extended Procurement of Leases and Subscriptions

Mr. Conry stated that the district is going to request for extended time on the warrant of Procurement of Leases and Subscriptions, specifically a request for 5-years for buses, and 6-years for Curriculum Subscriptions, which have a significant price break between 3-6 years.

XIII. Adjournment CSC

Ms. Rainey moved, and Ms. Anderson seconded the motion to adjourn the CSC meeting at 9:35PM. Roll call was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; and Rankin, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: February 4, 2025

Abbreviations:

CCHS Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSB 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
SEPA Special Education Parent Advisory Council
WRAP Writing, Reading, and Academic Processes
YRBS Youth Risk Behavior Survey