

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
April 30, 2025**

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

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 6:00 PM.
Ms. Rankin called the Concord School Committee (CSC) to order at 6:00 PM.

Ms. Viola stated that due to the recent events, the Public Comments and Student Updates have been removed from the CCSC Agenda.

II. MOMENT OF SILENCE

Ms. Viola asked for a Moment of Silence for Maisey O'Donnell, Hannah Wasserman and Jimmy McIntosh.

Dr. Hunter expressed profound gratitude for the community's response following the tragic loss of three CCHS seniors and the ongoing recovery of a fourth student. She commended the leadership of the CCHS co-principals, and the crucial support provided by the guidance department, faculty, and staff in maintaining a sense of normalcy. Dr. Hunter recognized the outpouring of support from within and outside the community, specifically thanking Carlisle Public Schools Superintendent Jim O'Shea; the Carlisle and Concord police departments; the Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council STAR crisis team; Riverside Trauma; the Elliott Center; retired counselors; and counselors from neighboring school districts. She also acknowledged the presence of numerous comfort dogs. The focus now will be navigating the rest of the school year, senior events, and upcoming services, while continuing to prioritize the well-being of students and staff.

III. RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Justin Sparks, Principal of Thoreau Elementary School, recognized the many volunteers and students who have worked together on "Thoreau's Backyard" a playground project, which aims to create a fun, nature-inspired, and inclusive play space. He highlighted the involvement of the fourth-grade student leadership group who surveyed their peers on what

makes play fun and what they enjoy on playgrounds. The students then analyzed the data to determine which playground features to advocate for including more swings, a zip line, and musical instruments. Students participated in fundraising including a coin challenge, individual donor pages, spreading awareness at school events, and a popsicle party.

Mr. Sparks thanked the dedicated adult playground group, the PTG presidents, Joe McMahon from Alta Play, Superintendent Hunter, Bob Conry, and Angel Charles for their support over the past year and a half.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT, CHAIRS AND LIAISONS UPDATE

Ms. Viola reported the finance committee recommendations for all school warrant articles, including both budgets, were recommended for passage. She expressed gratitude for the collaborative work with the Finance Committee, particularly on the out-of-district tuition guidelines. She also noted the thoughtful, community-focused discussions around inclusivity, special education, and ADA accessibility at the Amenities Building. She also recognized the upcoming Teacher Appreciation week, organized by the PTGs across all schools, and expressed her deep appreciation for the teachers and the PTG presidents' efforts, especially recognizing the challenges faced by teachers at CCHS.

Mr. Waterson provided an update on the Amenities Building project including a podcast he and Ms. Viola recorded as part of the Carlisle podcast series, which will be available on Apple, Spotify, YouTube, and on the Town of Carlisle Instagram. He is also working on a district webpage using previously approved materials, and a poster session is scheduled an hour before the Carlisle town meeting to vet questions beforehand.

V. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

There was no student update.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Surplus CCHS Science Department Materials

B. Warrants

1. CPS A/P		
1117	4/24/25	\$488,555.20
2. CCRSD A/P		
1228	3/14/25	\$131.35
1230	3/28/25	\$140,586.03
1235	4/10/25	\$450,971.28
1236	4/9/25	\$187.75
1237	4/24/25	\$313,078.74
3. CPS Payroll		
Pay date	4/10/25	\$223,855.40
Pay date	4/10/25	\$2,452.90
Pay date	4/10/25	\$367,506.64
Pay date	4/24/25	\$226,586.61

Pay date	4/24/25	\$2,682.51
Pay date	4/24/25	\$376,378.96
4. CCRSD Payroll		
Pay date	4/10/25	\$620,150.78
Pay date	4/10/25	\$76,133.24
Pay date	4/10/25	\$177,389.48
Pay date	4/10/25	\$44,725.89
Pay date	4/24/25	\$64,357.12
Pay date	4/24/25	\$4,290.99
Pay date	4/24/25	\$15,653.40
Pay date	4/24/25	\$3,719.95
Pay date	4/24/25	\$15,706.52
Pay date	4/24/25	\$624,882.01
Pay date	4/24/25	\$75,899.66
Pay date	4/24/25	\$178,970.58
Pay date	4/24/25	\$45,073.95

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

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

Concord-Carlisle received wonderful words of support from the community.

IX. DISCUSSION

A. SEPAC

Ms. Rankin introduced members from the Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Ashley Healey, President and Adrienna Query-Fiss, Vice President gave an update on their annual goals. SEPAC is a volunteer group of parents that advises the school committee and administration on matters pertaining to the education and safety of children with disabilities; serves to support parents and caregivers through social events and informative presentations; and they help connect and educate parents, and caregivers.

The presentation included a list of their activities throughout the year including coffee gatherings; parent partner events with the district; IEP form training; speaker series on topics such as food, mood, and outdoor learning; film screenings; literacy events; and their upcoming 8th annual SEPAC Teacher/Staff Appreciation Awards. They also highlighted their co-hosting of the Candidates Forum at CCHS, which increased their visibility within the broader school community.

Their contact information was provided, and they welcomed questions. A question was raised about outreach to METCO and while SEPAC previously had a METCO liaison, it is currently an open board position.

B. Special Education Update

Angel Charles, Director of Student Services for Concord and Concord-Carlisle, presented updates on special education services and programs across both districts. She highlighted

the effort to create a consistent naming protocol for programs to improve clarity for families and the community; presented a graphic outlining the continuum of services; and provided enrollment numbers for each program level. A high-level overview document was created for use on the website, providing descriptions of each program and related services to enhance understanding for parents. She explained detailed information, including entrance and exit criteria, is discussed with parents when program advice is made, and that programs are designed to offer varying levels of inclusion based on student needs.

C. Review of Goals

Ms. Viola reviewed the status of the eight 2024-2025 CCRSD committee goals and smart goals. The only goal in red is the cell phone policy which will be discussed tonight.

D. CCHS Cell Phone Policy Timeline

Ms. Viola addressed the high school discussions regarding a cell phone policy. Some students' concerns are they go off campus during lunchtime; they are 18 years old and considered adults; they are licensed drivers; and they need social interaction. Based on this input, the committee decided to hold forums at the schools to discuss the topic in detail and are developing a timeline and the number of forums required. The committee tabled both the discussion and the policy until the fall, ensuring that the student government and student body are involved in the forums.

X. ACTION ITEMS

E. CCHS Travel

Greg Pavlik of the science department proposed a hiking trip to the Dolomites in Italy in June 2026. This is the initial request for approval to allow for planning and student recruitment in the fall and the committee was presented with the proposed dates and cost information.

Ms. Marano moved, and Ms. Rainey seconded the motion to approve the CCHS Hiking Trip to the Dolomites to Italy as presented. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

XI. CCRSD ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Anderson moved, and Ms. Rankin seconded the motion to adjourn the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District at 7:33 PM. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye; Viola, aye; Waterson, aye.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dave Nicholson, 1128 Old Marlborough Road, Concord MA. acknowledged the time and effort invested in the Thoreau's Backyard playground design but expressed concern regarding its accessibility. As a parent of a child with a disability, he feels the current design fails to reflect the goal of inclusivity. The design features aerial and rope-based elements that are inaccessible to many children with disabilities, thus offering no meaningful opportunities for equitable play. He is also troubled by the addition of only one inclusive play element and the removal of proposed accessible features, such as ramps. He questioned how wheelchair users would access the cone spinner and highlighted the segregating effect of having one dynamic spinner and another that becomes the "disabled kid spinner." He stated that the current design 'represents' a compromise, but he feels no compromises were made

regarding the number of play elements. He feels the design discriminates against children with physical disabilities, who have access to far fewer elements, and he questioned why ramps were not considered for the 12-foot slide to ensure it could be enjoyed by all children.

Mary Little, 24 Brown Street, Concord MA acknowledged the incredible effort that went into creating the playground design, including the students' involvement. She believes that the committee members genuinely considered everyone's needs and aimed to create a space for all. While acknowledging the previous speaker's concerns, she urged consideration of the diverse needs of the entire community to make it a great play space for everyone. She feels that a significant amount of work has been done, and it would be a shame not to see the project come to fruition.

XII. DISCUSSION

A. Thoreau Playground

Justin Sparks presentation earlier in the meeting highlighted "Thoreau's Backyard" is more than just a playground; it's a place for exploration, building independence and friendships, and promoting mental, emotional, physical, and social health. The project connects to Henry David Thoreau's love of nature, and he encouraged the audience to review the provided materials, including information on the musical equipment, a blog post, images, a thank you note sample, and Thoreau's Backyard pins, and offered to answer any questions.

Ms. Rankin showed a PowerPoint presentation with a drone flyover of the playground that showed the pathway, swings, and different elements to be installed, including the ADA elements. The elements are inclusive at different levels, and each element increases the challenges for students using different textures, and sizes to create levels of challenges.

Ms. Anderson moved, and Ms. Marano seconded the motion to approve the Thoreau Playground design as presented. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye.

Ms. Anderson moved, and Ms. Marano seconded the motion to approve the donation from the Thoreau PTG in the amount of \$383,357.54, and any other additional funds raised. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye.

B. K-8 Cell Phone Policy

Ms. Rankin opened the K-8 cell phone policy discussion stating the current handbook policy states students are prohibited from having cell phones. Ms. Anderson discussed using the attorney general handbook to help create a starting point for a draft policy. The AG handbook proposes a statewide ban on cell phone use during school hours, advocating for a "bell-to-bell" restriction on personal electronic devices. The K-8 students should not have cell phones during class hours but can at school events. Ms. Rankin stated we should move forward with a K-8 bell-to-bell policy during school hours, at events, and exceptions for medical and other IEP. Ms. Rankin will bring the first read of the policy to the next meeting.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Rainey moved, and Ms. Marano seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 pm. Roll was taken: Anderson, aye; Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Rainey, aye; Rankin, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: May 13, 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
SEPAC Special Education Parent Advisory Council
WRAP Writing, Reading, and Academic Processes
YRBS Youth Risk Behavior Survey