

Concord School Committee
October 22, 2025

Present: Andrew Herchek, Chair CSC; CCSC
Tracey Marano, Chair CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Vice-Chair CSC; CCSC
Sandeep Pisharody, CSC; CCSC
Ayesha Lawton, CSC METCO Representative on Zoom

Not Present: Michelle MacDougall, CSC METCO Representative
Michael Williams, CSC; CCSC

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

Mr. Herchek called the Concord Public School Committee to order at 6:00 PM. Roll Call: Herchek, present; Marano, present; Pisharody, present; and Rankin, present.

Mr. Herchek read a public statement addressing an incident directed at Dr. Hunter. This past weekend, a second scarecrow-like object bearing a message with demeaning language toward Dr. Hunter was placed at the end of a street of an elected school committee official. This anonymous act of intimidation is deeply disturbing and unacceptable, and it appears to be escalating, as this time the message included a reference to violence. The Concord Police Department has been notified, and we trust that the department will take these escalating threats seriously. We call upon the Concord community to speak out against this blatant and cowardly attempt to intimidate a public figure. Concord is better than this. We will not allow fear and violence to dictate the administration of our schools.

II. RECOGNITION - CMS STUDENT BUILDING COMMITTEE

The CMS Student Building Committee was recognized for their input on the design of the Ellen Garrison Building. Their involvement spanned three years, allowing them to collaborate on features for the playground, library, and small, quiet spaces. Favorite features of the new building include the high gym ceilings, the cafeteria seating, the library, and the common areas. The students enjoyed helping design their school, seeing it before the rest of the students, and they will lead a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new recess area on Friday.

III. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIR UPDATE

Dr. Hunter provided updates on several key initiatives, including the implementation of the EL literacy program. The program increased student rigor and enhanced equity by providing a built-in structure that ensures all students can access the content, regardless of their independent reading level. Other initiatives included expanding community outreach with Community Reader Days at elementary schools before Thanksgiving; faculty training is on critical social issues, including training on antisemitism; and upcoming training with the North Shore Alliance of LGBTQ Youth. The district is preparing for its ALICE safety and security training in partnership with the Concord Police and we continue to fully include the Boston student population within school-based PTGs, given the absence of a standalone METCO-PTG.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Abby Flanagan, 398 Main Street, praised the Concord Integrated Preschool (CIP) program which serves developing community peers and students with IEPs/504s. Ms. Flanagan commended the program's racial, ethnic, and ability diversity and the teachers, aides, and therapists. She noted students are thriving with strong pre-academic skills and they demonstrate how a diverse group of children can communicate together. Ms. Flanagan concluded by expressing gratitude for the program and urged the community to show the level of joy, caring, and expertise to the students that the dedicated CIP staff displays daily.

Jamie Cohane, 80 Riverdale Road, Concord, offered her support to Dr. Hunter and expressed being disheartened by the disconnect between a small group of citizens and the great things happening in Concord schools. She praised the work done under the administration because it instills a sense of community service in students, citing her own experience organizing supply drives and chaperoning volunteer outings. She emphasized the importance of students engaging with local and global communities through initiatives like the Willard School Super Bowl drive and service days.

Yumi Suarez, 45 Oxbow Road, expressed gratitude for the CMS Ellen Garrison Building and the significant improvements over previous facilities. Ms. Suarez thanked Dr. Hunter, Principal Cameron, and School Committee members for their commitment to the project and concluded the success of the project exemplifies the deep trust many in the community have in school leadership, and the building is a wonderful way to celebrate Ellen Garrison's legacy.

Mark Martines, 66 Alford Circle, addressed three issues from local. The first was cowardice, he condemned the anonymous, harassing acts directed at Dr. Hunter and the School Committee. The second was negativity and balance, he criticized a small group for voicing complaints without constructive ideas for improvement. The third was hearsay, he asserted the views of a small group should carry little weight because opinions are based on second-hand information rather than firsthand knowledge.

Melissa Karczewski, 262 Monsen Road, shared during her two years as Alcott PTG President she attended monthly meetings with Dr. Hunter, Committee members, and PTG leaders. She only witnessed professionalism, compassion, and steady leadership. Dr. Hunter approached every issue with transparency and respect, acting in a thoughtful, inclusive, and student-focused manner. Ms. Karczewski was shocked by the slanderous signs in town, which show a lack of human decency and respect, and she urged critics to speak with families who support Dr. Hunter because they have the story wrong. Ms. Karczewski concluded that the community must reject divisiveness and unite in support of educators, giving Dr. Hunter the trust and gratitude she deserves.

Elizabeth Gibbs, 12 Elm Street, moved to Concord for its quality public schools. Having worked as a PTG president, she saw Dr. Hunter's leadership firsthand, describing her as thoughtful, transparent, and considerate of all perspectives. Ms. Gibbs noted that Dr. Hunter is deeply connected to students, regularly attending multicultural events, field games, and performances. Her concern is the current divisive and spiteful discourse in town, which is fueled by hearsay. She condemned the behavior as bullying, disgraceful, and menacing, adding adults must set a better example and urged the community to stop the. Ms. Gibbs concluded by calling on all who support Dr. Hunter, the educators, and the School Committee to speak up for the community that fosters kindness and inclusion.

Niranjana Nagarajan of 17 Derby Street, moved to the district four years ago and is new to the American school system. Her previous district was chaotic and she feels CCRSD is a well-run district and is grateful for the current administration and School Committee, noting the ability to have robust community dialogue reflects the Committee's responsiveness. Ms. Nagarajan stressed that violence and threats against public servants are unacceptable and she urged the community to treat representatives with respect.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Warrants

1. CPS Payroll

Pay date	10/9/25	\$225,186.19
Pay date	10/9/25	\$2,476.62
Pay date	10/9/25	\$405,820.00

2. CPS A/P

1037	10/23/25	\$520,774.16
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Ms. Marano moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to Approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Roll Call: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; and Rankin, aye.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Marano reported the district received several emails on the committee statement policy, four emails on the recent incident against Dr. Hunter, and one email about the rail trail.

VII. DISCUSSION

A. The Ellen Garrison Building at Concord Middle School Project Closeout

The School Committee invited members of the CMS project team, including Building Committee Co-Chair Dawn Gaurriello, Town Representative Gail Dowd, and Project Managers Vin Miller and Hunter Aptaker of Liro Hill Consulting Group to celebrate the completion of the Ellen Garrison Building at Concord Middle School. The project managers presented milestones from the groundbreaking, through the student move-in February 2025. The non-MSBA funded project came in under budget, with an estimated final value under \$105 million, a savings of \$6.5 million to \$6.8 million from the original estimate. The project managers noted this savings is rare in school construction but was achieved through due diligence, cost discipline, and the decision to proceed despite COVID-era escalations.

The School Committee members thanked the entire team including the architect SMMA, contractor CTA Construction, and Dr. Hunter for her day-to-day, hands-on, and unparalleled leadership which was critical to the project's success. Final gratitude was extended to the middle school staff, including Principal Justin Cameron and custodian Ted Noak, for their vital roles in the move and acclimation of students.

B. Update on Ellen Garrison Recognitions at CMS

Dr. Hunter and Principal Justin Cameron presented an update on the efforts to honor Ellen Garrison and educate the community about the building's namesake. The short-term plan involves several initiatives including collaborating with the Robbins House for a community event featuring a brief film on Ellen Garrison's impact; obtaining a short biography and quotes from Ms. Garrison to be displayed prominently; and middle school students will learn about Ms. Garrison's history in an upcoming advisory/home base session. Dr. Hunter

noted that Ms. Garrison, as an upstander, and a perfect fit for the school's Playbook Initiative, suggesting her example will quickly become part of the school's culture and language.

C. CTE Policy Second Reading

Shelly Chin presented the CTE Policy Second Reading, noting previously submitted comments were incorporated. After a brief discussion and no further questions, a motion was made to approve the policy.

Ms. Rankin moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to approve the CTE Policy as presented. Roll Call: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; and Rankin, aye.

D. Thoreau Playground Donor Acknowledgements

Mitch Brooks and Ms. Rankin updated the committee on the Thoreau Playground and donations received for Phase Two, which begins in the spring. Phase One is open and being enjoyed by students and the community. The district has received donations for Phase Two including fence pickets, musical equipment, and benches. The pickets will be engraved donors names and acknowledgement plaques will be for larger donations.

Mr. Pisharody moved and Ms. Marano seconded the motion to Approve the Thoreau Playground Donations as presented. Roll Call: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; and Rankin, aye.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Herchek adjourned the CPS committee meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Gilmore

Approved: November 5, 2025

Abbreviations:

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