

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
September 10, 2025**

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair CCSC
Brian Waterson, Vice-Chair CCSC
Andrew Herchek, Chair CSC; CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Vice-Chair CSC; CCSC
Lynette Kelleher, CCSC
Sandeep Pisharody, CSC; CCSC
Michael Williams, CSC; CCSC
Michelle MacDougall, CSC METCO Representative on Zoom

Not Present: Ayesha Lawton, CSC METCO

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. Marano called the Concord Carlisle School Committee to order at 6:00 PM.

II. RECOGNITION – GIRLS LACROSSE

The CCHS Girls Lacrosse team was recognized for their Division 1 State Championship. Players and Coach Erin Ash shared moments of the season and agreed the key to the team's success was its strong camaraderie, and knowing they were playing for each other. The team has a wealth of talent and is optimistic about the upcoming season.

III. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIRS UPDATE

Dr. Hunter shared highlights from the start of the school year. CCHS implemented a new process for its open campus, using a phone app called My Flex Learning that requires students to check in and out for security and accountability. As part of its accreditation, CCHS launched a community-inclusive "Vision of a Graduate" process to define the skills and character traits students should have upon graduation. A draft report from DESE is being finalized but preliminary findings validate existing work and highlight areas for growth.

Dr. Hunter discussed several new initiatives to address antisemitism including staff training and student programs, which will be partially funded by a recently awarded \$70,000 state grant; the middle school is exploring how to engage students through its annual DEIB panel; the elementary schools are focused on a new behavior matrix that uses common language to define intolerant behaviors; and the "Open Circles" program emphasizing empathy and kindness, will be used to facilitate discussions about antisemitism across the district.

Ms. Marano provided an update on the new member onboarding process, noting that Lynette Kelleher, Michael Williams, and Sandeep Pisharody toured the CCHS campus. Additionally, a new form is currently being tested for liaison update reports.

IV. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

CCHS student representatives Mark Johnson, Maddie Clancy, and Evelyn Mudge shared the school year kicked off with a successful orientation for freshmen. Students had their schedules

in advance and were guided through their classes for the first time. Other highlights included a welcoming breakfast provided by the CCHSPA; the first home game for the CCHS football team; and the CCHS debate team earned charter status from the National Speech and Debate Association. Upcoming student events include an Activities Fair to get students involved in clubs and extracurriculars; rehearsals for the fall play, "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" by Steve Martin; Picture Day; the first "Kids Ball," a homecoming-style fundraiser for pediatric cancer; and new clubs, such as the Blockchain Club, scheduled their first meetings.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Jessica Reed of 126 Alcott Road, Concord, voiced support for the superintendent and committee in the face of negative community feedback and believes the administration decisions are driven by what is best for students, teachers, and the community. Ms. Reed commended the handling of the loss of three high school students and felt the delayed reporting of an antisemitic incident was a mistake, but the administration stepped up to confront the issue. She referenced Rabbi Darby's positive remarks in a Concord Bridge opinion piece as a "testament to all the initiatives underway." Ms. Reed concluded by expressing her gratitude for their leadership, commitment, and dedication to prioritizing the students.

Adrienne Principe, 78 Nashoba Road Concord, president of the CMS PTG expressed her gratitude to the school committee and Dr. Hunter for listening to the community and adopting a stricter cell phone policy. Ms. Principe announced the PTG secured funding for a series of "Tech Talks" for families, that will launch in October.

Mattan Kamon of 189 Hawthorne Lane, Concord, expressed concern over the issues of antisemitism, hate, bias, and bullying. He acknowledged recent positive steps taken, but felt efforts will not be effective without understanding the root cause of the problems. Mr. Kamon requested an independent investigation because he believes while school administrators are well-meaning and hardworking, they cannot be expected to provide an unbiased self-assessment of their actions. Mr. Kamon concluded by urging the committee to have an independent investigation for an unbiased perspective in identifying solutions.

Claire Fonte, 115 Revolutionary Road, a parent of two children at CCHS, expressed her support for Dr. Hunter and the committee's leadership. She noted recent public comments and opinions in the local newspaper are out of sync with the feelings of CCHS parents. Ms. Fonte requested the committee consider a revote on the amenities building because decisions were based on incorrect financial information and the timing of the vote resulted in a low turnout.

Pat Nelson, 52 Cottage Lane, Concord, voiced support for the town and school administration. Mr. Nelson believes Superintendent Hunter is one of the best, and acknowledged that the current environment, marked by hate speech and social media, presents a difficult challenge. He expressed his full confidence that Dr. Hunter, her team, and the school committee will navigate this crisis and adapt as they have with past challenges.

Maureen Hoda of 83 Okinawa Road, Carlisle, voiced concern about the bullying in the ADL complaint. Ms. Hoda sees a double standard, citing an example where the ADL allegedly used "Islamophobic language" against college students protesting in Gaza while expressing outrage when similar language was allegedly used by high school students. Ms. Hoda concluded she disagrees with the ADL's proposals on defining antisemitism to include criticism of Israel.

David Schonbrun, Concord, feels antisemitism is ingrained in Jewish culture due to thousands of years of persecution. Mr. Schonbrun was heartened by the response from school leadership, citing the swift acknowledgment, apology, and action taken after a swastika was recently found. He asserted leaders are defined by how they respond to challenges, and he praised Dr. Hunter's leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, the recent period of community grief, and a contentious middle school debate. Mr. Schonbrun concluded it is misguided to blame the school for students' poor decisions or the existence of antisemitism.

VI. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Marano reported the district received emails about the new amenities building; antisemitism; an employee matter; questions on communicating with a school committee members; and a speech and language app.

Ms. Marano turned the meeting over to Brian Waterson, CCRSD Vice Chair and departed the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

VII. DISCUSSION

A. School Committee Protocols

The committee held a discussion on the School Committee Protocols. Protocol Number Seven, 'communication between committee members, representatives, and the superintendent,' was reviewed. The draft states questions and requests be channeled through the chairs and as deemed necessary, the superintendent. The phrase "as deemed necessary," might be ambiguous and allow members to communicate with the superintendent without the committee but the protocol relies on members' best judgment and mutual trust.

Ms. Rankin moved, and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to approve the school committee protocols as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, nay; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

B. School Committee Goals

A brief discussion was held on the School Committee Goals and the wording of several points including removing 'the committee would successfully secure a yes vote for both districts' from the budget goals; moving the communication & equity goal higher on the goal list; adding the committee's stance on hate, antisemitism, and inclusion; adding language under the superintendent evaluation to require the committee to evaluate and approve specific, measurable, actionable, result-oriented, and time-tracked goals each academic year; and all goals should have a quarterly review.

Mr. Williams moved, and Ms. Rankin seconded the motion to accept the School Committee Goals as amended. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

C. Superintendent's Goals

The Committee discussed the Superintendent's Goals for the 2025-2026 academic year including educational equity, inclusion and belonging, community communications, and supporting data driven measurable metrics. Dr. Hunter noted that the goals are concise, follow the SMART framework in being specific, measurable, actionable, result-oriented, and time-tracked. Future updates and reports will include data and measurable metrics.

Mr. Waterson asked if the committee was ready to vote on the Superintendent Goals as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, abstain.

D. FY27 Budget Calendar

Mr. Conry presented a draft of the FY27 Budget Timeline outlining key dates for capital planning and the operating budget, and other dates set by the town. The budget process begins with the distribution of budget packets to principals and department heads. The district's budget presentation will go to the School Committee on October 8th and the Finance Committee on October 16th. A preliminary budget presentation is tentatively scheduled for December 17th. The district will present budgets to the Concord and Carlisle Finance Committees in January and February. A public hearing is scheduled for March 5th. The goal is to have the final approved budget available by April 15th.

E. CCRSD FY25 Year End

Mr. Conry presented the CCRSD FY25 Year End summary budget for the regional school district, which concluded with a \$6,607 surplus that will roll into the E&D fund. Despite challenges faced during the year, particularly managing costs associated with out-of-district tuitions, the district found savings by deferring a vehicle bus replacement lease and reducing expenditures on instructional materials and salaries. Furthermore, the district received an additional \$130,000 in state funding for special education transportation, which helped keep the Circuit Breaker fund in a healthy state, ending the year with a strong balance of approximately \$1.2 million.

Mr. Pisharody moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion that Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee vote to approve the FY25 Year End budget transfers, as presented in the year end summary report. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

F. Substitute Per Diem Rates

Mr. Conry presented a proposal to change the pay structure for substitute teachers moving from a daily rate to an hourly rate of \$22 per hour. The proposal will streamline the pay process, and the recommended rate is competitive based on a benchmarking analysis against other local districts. The change is intended to help with the chronic shortage of daily substitute teachers by making the pay more attractive. The increase would apply to the high school, middle school, and elementary school.

Ms. Rankin moved, and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion that the School Committee approve the proposed increases to substitute teacher pay and substitute tutor and assistant pay rates as recommended by Administration. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

G. Tuition Rates FY27

Mr. Conry requested approval for proposed changes to tuition rates for FY27 including increasing the special education program non-resident student daily tuition rate from \$250 to \$270 per day, to keep pace with inflation; flexibility to adjust the summer program monthly fee of \$3,750, to adjust for specific services or part-time attendance; and a new tuition annual fee of \$58,000 for students who require one-on-one support.

Ms. Rankin moved, and Mr. Williams seconded the motion that the School Committee approve the proposed increases to Non-Resident Tuition Fees as recommended by Administration. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

H. School Lunch Rates FY27

Mr. Conry presented a proposal to increase the prices of school breakfast and lunches. The price increase is necessary for Federal Compliance and reflects the actual meal costs. The increase ensures the district can maintain the food service program if state-funded universal free lunch programs end. The committee agreed on the need to update prices but expressed concern about making changes mid-school year, which could impact families and teachers. The consensus reached is to postpone price increases until the start of the next school year.

Mr. Williams moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion that the School Committee approve the proposed increases to school lunch and breakfast price rates beginning July 1, 2026, as recommended by the Committee. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

I. Access Road Borrowing

Mr. Conry presented the final details of temporary borrowing for the access road paving project, which was completed two years ago. The district used a bond anticipation note to cover the cost, a short-term borrowing method cheaper than a full bond. Mr. Conry explained that the district must renew this borrowing annually and that the current outstanding principal is \$812,713. The lowest interest rate bid came from Oppenheimer at 3.872%.

Ms. Rankin moved, and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to approve the sale of the \$812,713 4.00 percent General Obligation Bond Anticipation Notes (the "Notes") of the District dated October 2, 2025, and payable October 2, 2026, to Oppenheimer at par and accrued interest, if any. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Williams moved, and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 pm. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gilmore

Approved: November 5, 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