

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
October 8, 2025**

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair CCSC
Brian Waterson, Vice-Chair CCSC
Andrew Herchek, Chair CSC; CCSC on Zoom
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 Representative on Zoom

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 5:30 PM. Roll Call: Herchek, present; Marano, present; Pisharody, present; Rankin, present; and Williams, present.

A. CTE Policy First Reading

Ms. Chin presented the first reading of the CPS Career Technical Education (CTE) policy, designed to ensure middle school students are informed about post-middle school options, including high school and career paths. The CTE Policy will formalize the existing relationship and outreach efforts with the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School, the district's CTE partner; establish procedures to ensure equitable access and communication with families; provide direction on organizing school-day tours and assemblies at Minuteman; and organize guidance counselors to assist with the application process.

B. FY25 Year End CPS

Mr. Conry presented the FY25 Year-End CPS financial report noting the overall operating budget of \$46,592,022 had an unspent unencumbered balance of \$987 at the end of FY25. The base budget was \$46,515,713, and a supplemental appropriation of \$76,309 covered unbudgeted homeless transportation costs from the prior year. The school lunch revolving fund maintained a balance of \$179,987, while the Circuit Breaker special education fund grew to \$696,002, due to state funding the transportation component at 75% for the year. CPS received state and federal grant funding totaling \$1,887,863, with awards for METCO, IDEA, and Homeless Support.

Ms. Marano moved, and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to approve the FY25 Year End budget transfers, as presented in the FY25 Year End CPS year end summary report. Roll Call: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

C. CPS FY27 Finance Committee Memo

Mr. Conry reviewed the information requested in the Concord Finance Committee's Annual Guidelines Request Letter. The CPS budget employs a zero-based budget process, building the budget from scratch annually based on school needs and the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. The district continues to prioritize maintaining high-quality in-district special education programs to reduce the cost of OOD tuitions, which decreased in recent years and are offset by Circuit-breaker and IDEA funds. Enrollment projections remain a key focus, as a variable cost analysis estimates an increase of 50 students could require an additional \$182,000 for staffing and materials. The closure of the homeless shelter eliminated staff positions and grant funding, resulting in no net budget impact, though the district will be reimbursed for a remaining \$45,000 in student transportation costs. Finally, the district is developing its FY27 Capital Plan which will be presented in November and December, and is reviewing its curriculum, with the goal to reallocate existing ELA funding to future Math curriculum needs.

- **CPS FY27 Budget Guidelines Presentation**

Mr. Conry presented the CPS FY27 Budget Guidelines which focused on the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan priorities and the preliminary five-year budget projections for CPS. The initial budget forecast anticipates a 3.5% increase for the coming year based on current expense trends. Potential spending increases identified were dedicated math specialists; special education program costs; enrollment increases from housing developments; and creating a multi-year plan for curriculum review across all subject areas. Mr. Conry stated the financial impact of the recent shelter closure eliminated state grant-funded staff positions, resulting in no budget impact, but the district absorbed \$306,000 in transportation costs last year, which will be reimbursed and used to build up the Circuit Breaker fund.

D.	Warrants CPA A/P (vote)		
	1019	8/31/25	\$343,533.04
	1025	9/11/25	\$819,064.58
	1029	9/25/25	\$865,805.94

Mr. Williams moved to approve the Warrants 1019, 1025, and 1029 as presented. Ms. Marano requested all those in favor to say aye. The motion was carried unanimously.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Marano called the Concord Carlisle Regional School Committee to order at 6:20 PM. Roll Call: Herchek, present; Kelleher, present; Marano, present; Pisharody, present; Rankin, present; Waterson, present; and Williams, present.

II. RECOGNITIONS - CCHS BLACK STUDENT UNION

The CCHS Black Student Union was recognized for its focus on inclusivity and actionable solutions in the community. Mark Johnson, CCHS BSU president, introduced his leadership team Zion Atkinson, Xarri Fairbairn, and Janiyah Oneal Monteiro. The CCHS BSU mission is to evolve into an inclusive and solution-oriented space to move beyond identifying problems to foster community and common ground. The students shared upcoming events including the popular Pollux event which brings together BSU members from Bedford and Wakefield high schools; Cradles to Crayons, a community service event; a book referral table in the library; and fundraising efforts continue with bake sales and the sale of BSU sweatshirts.

III. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIRS UPDATE

Dr. Hunter provided an update on the district-wide implementation of an antisemitism action plan. The plan includes the launch of staff trainings; the roll-out of the Playbook Initiative at

the middle school; and the development of action plans and training on LGBTQ+ and Inclusivity. The NEASC accreditation will include an introductory site visit and a final review. The core component of the accreditation is the 'Vision of a Graduate' an inclusive effort to define the non-academic skills students should possess upon graduation. Dr. Hunter shared other updates including CCHS is offering a Grade 12 AP English course; the launch of an executive skills program 'Root 9' to teach study habits; the revival of the community-engaged "Credit for Life" financial literacy fair; CCHS established an internship fair to boost exposure to diverse career paths; and the Sharon Young subsidy scholarship fund awarded \$1,500 to three students to help offset the cost of educational trips.

Ms. Marano shared her recent attendance at the PA PTG meeting; the announcement of the next week's Chairs breakfast; and the Select Board is addressing the issues caused by the special town election this summer.

IV. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

Mark Johnson and Evelyn Munch highlighted recent events at CCHS including the traditional Senior Sunrise; Kicks for Cancer, Mighty Moose, and Spooky Movie Night fundraisers; 'Fun Friday' with pink-themed treats; and a revamped 'Kicks Ball' fundraiser that raised over \$5,000. The high school started a weekly email promoting school events and requested student perspectives on the 'Vision of the Graduate' initiative. Students are engaging in activities including the Government Pickleball Tournament and the Senate received a queue of 14 new club proposals. The current clubs are in full swing and include the BSU, the Finance and Investment Club, the Jewish Student Union, Model UN, and the Far East Association.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tooey Rogers, North Street, Concord, congratulated the CCHS Black Student Caucus for their success. Mr. Rogers feels a broken trust exists between the Superintendent, School Committee, and the Town. He felt not naming the middle school after Ellen Garrison was a slap in the face. Other items noted as disappointing include the Amenities Building being voted down; the dissolution of the METCO PTG; and the ADL complaint. Mr. Rogers emphasized his critique was not personal but necessary to rebuild trust and to ensure student safety. He asked for more action and communication regarding bullying and anti-Semitic incidents.

Andrew Fall, a science teacher and President of the CCTA, spoke in strong support of Dr. Hunter, denouncing the recent act of intimidation directed at the Superintendent. Mr. Fall stated under Dr. Hunter's guidance, teachers and administrators have worked tirelessly to create a secure and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of their background or identity. He addressed the impacted families, affirming the faculty hears them and is committed to making CCHS an inclusive place. Mr. Fall concluded that the CCTA and faculty stand ready to collaborate with Dr. Hunter, the School Committee, and the community.

Margaret Schumacher read a letter published in the Concord Bridge that asserted as taxpayers, the community has a democratic right to question its paid leaders and seek transparency. Citing Leonardo da Vinci, 'Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence,' Ms. Schumacher feels there were failures the past few years by the administration, including the "no confidence vote" by METCO; the handling of the hate graffiti; the failure to name the school Ellen Garrison; and the federal civil rights complaint. She concluded when criticism is backed by clear, ongoing evidence of poor performance, the leader and their representatives should take notice rather than dismiss it as bullying or by spending taxpayer money on a PR firm.

Matt Kilmartin, parent of a CCHS sophomore, expressed satisfaction with the administration's work, especially the change in AP course work and the sensitivity training implemented in response to recent incidents. Mr. Kilmartin commended the committee for prioritizing the "whole student" and recognizing the importance of physical activity. He thanked them for advocating to get the Doug White fields and upper turf redone over the summer. Mr. Kilmartin concluded by thanking the committee for prioritizing students' mental health and maintaining the school system's status as one of the best in the state.

Suzanne Kelliher, 244 Lindsay Pond Road, Concord expressed concern about the MIAA chemical health policy. Ms. Kelleher noted the policy allows for bystanders to imbibe alcohol with students present, but she feels the policy is not clearly detailed in the student handbook. An example given was proving bystander status requires a student to submit to a breathalyzer test to prove innocence, a requirement undocumented in the handbook and not covered in athletic training. She finds it confusing, legally questionable, and condemned the district for acting before a police report is issued and requested the topic be a future agenda item.

Wendy Holt, 30 Dover Street, Concord expressed concern about the response to the Office of Civil Rights complaint. Ms. Holt feels to avoid reputational damage to the schools, the committee should publicly discuss what happened, what went wrong, what strategies are in place, and why the request for a restorative justice is not fulfilled. She acknowledged Dr. Hunter's anti-Semitism plan but felt it insufficiently focused on intervention, noting education alone is not enough. Ms. Holt asked if students and parents don't trust the complaint process to lead to effective action, new initiatives won't matter. She urged the committee to openly and publicly engage with these issues to rebuild a foundation of trust with the community.

Court Booth 144 Wright Road, Concord commended Dr. Hunter and the School Committee efforts to reduce costs and increase access to school trips, advocating these opportunities should unite, not divide, students. Mr. Booth addressed the upcoming budget season and challenged the administration's claim that spending on equity and inclusion could not be quantified because it is embedded everywhere. He called for greater budget visibility and urged the committee to demand to see all of the initial budget requests from educators before the administration applies reductions, ensuring the committee can witness and deliberate on the administration's proposed cuts.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. League of Women Voters Donation of \$10,000
- B. August 27, 2025, Joint Minutes
- C. August 27, 2025, Executive Session Minutes
- D. August 25, 2025, CCSC Minutes
- E. August 25, 2025, Communications Working Group Minutes
- F. August 20, 2025, Joint Minutes
- G. September 9, 2025, Communication Working Group Minutes
- H. September 10, 2025, CCSC Minutes
- I. September 25, 2025, CSC Minutes
- J. Accept Annual Distribution from the High School Donations Trust Fund
- K. Second Approval CCHS Travel 25-26
 - Japan Performance Tour
 - Denmark Exchange
 - England and France
 - Montreal and Quebec

- White Mountains
- US National Parks
- Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, Grand Tetons
- Hiking in the Dolomites
- Cheerleading to Rhode Island

L. Warrants

Mr. Williams requested Items B, E, G, and H be removed from the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Herchek moved, and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented with Consent Agenda items B, E, G, and H removed. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

The District received ten pieces of correspondence from the public.

VIII. DISCUSSION

A. Budget Workshop

Mr. Conry began the budget workshop by clarifying the impact of enrollment shifts on the budget assessment, emphasizing that changes in assessment are driven by student distribution, not solely operational increases. He illustrated the high sensitivity of assessments, showing that a small change of one student between Concord and Carlisle could noticeably shift the assessment percentage for both towns. Mr. Conry showed a simple model used for enrollment projection, which, unlike contracted services, does not factor in housing growth or student transfers. He explained that resident students are the only ones factored into the assessment calculation, excluding METCO and staff's children. The workshop concluded with a group exercise where members had to prioritize unfunded budget requests within a limit, a challenging activity that demonstrated the difficult trade-offs involved in the budget process.

B. CCRSD FY27 Finance Committee Memo

Mr. Conry reviewed the CCRSD FY 27 Finance Committee Memo, which outlines the district's budget priorities for the Town Finance Committee. The memo requires the CCRSD to affirm its use of a zero-based budget process and confirm that priority needs are based on the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

CCRSD FY27 Budget Guidelines Presentation

Mr. Conry reviewed the CCRSD FY 27 Budget Guidelines Presentation to be presented at the October 16, 2025, Concord Finance Committee meeting. All budget priorities are driven by the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan and include four main objectives: expand the multiple support to students including tiered literacy, math, and social-emotional services; enhance the mental wellness curriculum; build cultural competency; and create innovative environments like outdoor learning spaces. CPS expenditures growth is driven by salaries and OOD tuitions, while CCRSD expenditures are projected to increase, subject to enrollment shifts that alter the cost-share between Concord and Carlisle.

C. October 1 Enrollment

There were no questions on the October 1 Enrollment report.

D. Story of the Schools

Ms. Rankin opened the discussion on the "Story of the Schools" by noting the goal for the

evening was to vote on the document after incorporating content feedback. The document is intended to be a high-level showcase of the district's programs, featuring data, budget overviews, academic information, the Strategic Plan, key initiatives, and capital projects. The committee held a brief discussion and agreed that a work group would handle the final proofing and graphic edits; a QR code will be added to the digital document on the back page; the use of local channels "Concord Currents" and "City in the Woods" to share the link; and the final page should display a visual graphic of the committee's high-level goals.

Mr. Williams moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to approve the Story of the Schools as presented for distribution, delegating final edits to the communications subcommittee. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

E. Representative to Town Bias Reporting Working Group

Volunteers were requested to serve as a representative to the Town Bias Reporting Working Group. Mr. Williams and Mr. Pisharody made statements in favor of their appointment. Mr. Pisharody was selected as the School Committee's voting representative. With two excellent candidates, the Chair will ask the Select Board if the School Committee could appoint Mr. Williams as a second, non-voting member to broaden the committee's representation.

F. Statements from School Committee and School Committee chairs

Mr. Herchek initiated a discussion regarding the protocol for statements issued by the School Committee and its Chairs. Under the current protocol, the principal of the affected school addresses all school-based incidents, supplemented by the Superintendent for district-wide issues. The Chairs issue statements on certain district matters and all involving the Superintendent. Two primary concerns discussed: whether the committee should formally comment on matters outside the school's jurisdiction, such as incidents off school property, and that the requirement for a discussion and vote in an open meeting can delay a timely response. The School Committee did not change the current protocol; however, they will address a specific incident in a public meeting if multiple requests are received from its members or the public.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Waterson moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:21 pm. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, 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