

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
November 5, 2025**

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair CCSC
Brian Waterson, Vice-Chair CCSC
Andrew Herchek, Chair CSC; CCSC
Lynette Kelleher, CCSC
Sandeep Pisharody, CSC; CCSC
Michael Williams, CSC; CCSC

Not Present: Carrie Rankin, Vice-Chair 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

Ms. Marano called the Concord Carlisle Regional School District to order at 6:00 PM. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

II. RECOGNITIONS – JEWISH STUDENT UNION

Kelly Christy, advisor to the Jewish Student Union, introduced student Addy Wanczak, who shared the JSU is a thriving, highly motivated group of 20-25 students who meet weekly to provide a community for Jewish students who previously felt isolated. The JSU offers many benefits, including the opportunity to explore the Jewish religion and culture, the creation of a leadership opening to speak at a state panel, and helping develop proactive efforts to address antisemitism. The group is inclusive, welcoming students of all religions, and seeks collaboration with other school groups, such as the Black Student Union, to share Jewish culture with the student body through special events, including a Rosh Hashanah bake sale and a Shabbat dinner.

III. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

Student Representatives Mark Johnson and Evelyn Mudge shared highlights and upcoming events at CCHS. Mark Johnson reported that the first quarter ended with extra credit opportunities; CCHS faculty participated in a Halloween-themed costume event and the Math department dressed up as 'six-seven'; and all sports teams celebrated their senior nights. Evelyn Mudge added several highlights, noting the cheerleading team won their DCL divisions and the school play, 'Picasso at the Lapin Agile,' was a huge success. Individual student achievements included CCHS junior Emmy O'Donnell's selection for the U.S. national team and Pathways student Payton Gagnon being named a captain for Harvard soccer. Three seniors won the John Drury High School Radio Awards for their WIQH shows. Ms. Mudge noted community and service events including the school hosting a sushi lunch for the Japanese exchange students from Nanae, Japan, the student group the Green Team launched new sustainability initiatives, and the Red Cross Club hosted a card-making event.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIRS UPDATE

A. Concord Carlisle Against Antisemitism

Concord Carlisle Against Antisemitism representatives Tal Rotman and Brian Farber provided an update on the volunteer, community-led initiative, which was formed in response to antisemitic incidents. The CCAA's goal is to promote accountability, education, visibility, and allyship for Jewish families in Concord and Carlisle. Mr. Rotman praised the JSU students for their courage in building community and bridges. Mr. Farber detailed CCAA's recent success in securing a \$20,000 grant from Combined Jewish Philanthropies to fund their "Love Thy Neighbor" initiative. The program will focus on building Jewish visibility through campaigns and cultural events, hosting speaker series for dialogue, and creating student-led programming in collaboration with existing programs and faith leaders. The CCAA is committed to supporting initiatives and sharing strategies, including grant application knowledge to foster an inclusive community across both towns.

Dr. Hunter began the Superintendent's update by covering the oral language department's initiatives on antisemitism, which included hosting a foreign French film on the Holocaust, followed by open discussions. The district also consulted with another Weston district to share its action plan regarding these efforts. Furthermore, the district successfully launched its first LGBTQ training this week, with plans for ongoing sessions. Other highlights included the Japanese exchange students from Nanae, Japan, who were actively engaged with the school and its students, CMS celebrated Ellen Garrison Night, and the district is currently working to implement community reading opportunities through the elementary schools.

Ms. Marano shared the Chair breakfast is next week, and she participated in the vision of a graduate where insightful discussions were held by a group that included parents, students, and community members.

Mr. Herchek shared the finance committee had the preliminary budget hearing and discussed budget needs that increased 3.5% for the district and -.9% for the region. The district is striving to be between 2.5 and 3.5%.

Mr. Waterson reported the Carlisle Board met Monday and issued guidelines to departments and informed them to be aware of a 1% budget cut.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Leslie Fisher, 15 Edmonds Road, Concord, is appalled by the hateful effigies in town and dismayed such acts tarnish efforts to discuss ongoing concerns. Ms. Fisher feels disagreement is not hate speech and the School Committee must independently represent citizens' concerns, not always deferring to the administration. She voiced frustration that concerns from stakeholders sometimes go unaddressed to their satisfaction and urged the committee to condemn hate speech unequivocally and include the vilification of older Concord citizens.

Serena Crosina, a parent with children at Alcott and CMS, apologized on behalf of district parents for their absence from meetings. Ms. Crosina stated their non-attendance is not due to a lack of support, but rather because they are happy with the committee's leadership, direction, and dedication. She concluded by expressing trust regarding her children's education and development and she asked parents to try to show their support.

Katherine Taunton-Rigby of 67 Finigan Way, Concord, and a parent of four, emphasized how the entire CCRSD community, including the administration, Dr. Hunter, PTGs, PAs, and

students, collaborate to foster unity and support. This partnership was apparent during Kicks Week, when high school athletes wore jerseys honoring loved ones affected by cancer and community volunteers helped make the large-scale event possible. The event included various teams hosting fundraising events, directly connecting student contributions to a real-world impact and established an annual tradition that instills purpose, connection, and hope in the fight against cancer.

Paige Taunton-Rigby, a CCHS freshman, spoke highly of her experience in the Concord-Carlisle schools, noting she has loved all her teachers across Thoreau Elementary, CMS, and CCHS. She consistently felt supported by staff and classmates. Paige highlighted the welcoming environment of the women's soccer program, despite joining mid-season, and praised her experience in the Playbook leadership program for providing scenarios for critical thinking.

Jenny Garafalo of 51 Coolidge Road thanked Dr. Hunter and the committee for their tireless efforts, stating she chose Concord primarily for its strong school system, which has delivered on expectations of academic excellence, rigor, leadership, fostering accountability, and empathy for her children. Ms. Garafalo highlighted a recent unified basketball game as an example of the school's commitment to inclusivity and celebrating joy. But she was very disappointed in the community because of the barrage of letters calling for leadership change from those without firsthand school experience.

Ellen Quackenbush, 206 Perry Street, expressed pleasure that Committee Chair Andrew Herchek responded to her email personally. Ms. Quackenbush added that school culture matters, highlighting student feedback that prioritized empathy and teamwork, qualities she believes are essential for future success. She refuted the idea that older, retired residents are irrelevant, asserting her adult children are proof of CCHS's success, which she attributes not just to academics, but to extracurricular activities that foster belonging and self-worth. Ms. Quackenbush concluded by urging the committee and administration to engage with all community members, stressing everyone is ultimately pulling for student success.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Anonymous Donation Acceptance of \$1,760 for CCHS Student Citizenship Programming
- B. Anonymous Donation Acceptance of \$60.00 through the Blackbaud Giving Fund
- C. August 27, 2025, Workshop Minutes
- D. September 10, 2025, CCSC Minutes
- E. October 8, 2025, Joint Minutes
- F. October 22, 2025, CSC Minutes
- G. September 8, 2025, Communications Working Group Minutes
- H. September 25, 2025, Communications Working Group Minutes
- I. September 17, 2025, Campus Completion Subcommittee Minutes
- J. Warrants

Mr. Williams moved, and Mr. Waterson seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Marano reported the district received a few pieces of correspondence with questions and a media request.

VIII. DISCUSSION

A. First Reading Competency Determination Policy

Ms. Chin presented the first reading of the proposed Competency Determination Policy, a state mandate designed to replace the MCAS as the requirement for demonstrating proficiency in ELA, Math, and Science for graduation. Ms. Chin explained the policy is essentially a formula where the district specifies which courses satisfy these competencies, addresses scenarios for transfer students or those with IEPs, and outlines an appeals process. Developed collaboratively by the high school leadership team, including department chairs and guidance counselors, Ms. Chin concluded this mandated coursework is minimal compared to the district's more robust graduation requirements.

B. CCRSD FY26 First Quarter Transfers

Mr. Conry presented the CCRSD FY26 Budget Status Report, showing a total adjusted budget of \$40,384,952, with a current estimated available balance of \$2,502,103. The largest adjusted budget lines are for Instructional Leadership at \$21.4 million, and Fixed Charges at \$4.5 million. Key adjustments include an increase in District Leadership and Administration due to technology specialist replacement costs, and a significant amount in Other School Services driven by SPED and homeless transportation. The figures for OOD Tuitions reflect large potential offsets from circuit breaker and grant funding that will be applied later in the year.

Mr. Waterson moved, and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to approve the CCRSD FY26 First Quarter Transfers as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Kelleher, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

C. Data Presentation

Ms. Chin celebrated CCHS's academic success, highlighting its ranking in the 98th percentile compared to similar high schools statewide. Tenth-grade MCAS scores in Math, Science, and ELA rank around the 80th to 84th percentile, and CCHS also ranked #1 in 2023-24 in SAT Reading and Writing, #4 in SAT Math, and #5 in AP Performance. Out of the 733 AP exams taken in 2025, 85% scored a 4 or 5, and the average SAT score was 651 in English, and 648 in Math. Principals Brian Miller and Katie Stahl discussed the ongoing equity focus on getting historically marginalized subgroups into higher-level courses. While progress is evident, achievement gaps still exist and require deliberate attention through methods like Universal Design for Learning. Ms. Chin affirmed the administration continues to focus on individual student needs and data analysis using tools like Open Architects. Mr. Waterson added Carlisle's ELA, Math, and Science scored #1 in Massachusetts.

D. CCRSD Capital

Mr. Conry presented the CCRSD Proposed Capital Plan for FY27–FY31, which included key capital projects such as the replacement of the football field turf; replacement of touch screen boards; painting of classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and parking lots; lighting control upgrades; and the replacement of a maintenance plow truck. A significant anticipated expense is the replacement of HVAC rooftop unit compressors, necessitating a plan to budget for replacements through FY31. The largest single expense is the Memorial Field turf replacement in FY28, and the administration proposed a funding strategy using existing Capital Stabilization Funds and repurposing OPEB contributions to cover the costs. The presentation noted an existing building conditions assessment is recommended for FY29, and the scheduled replacement of older district vehicles. The Capital Stabilization Fund is projected to begin with a balance of \$220,000 in FY27, and by repurposing OPEB in the short

term, it can cover the \$206,000 expenditure in FY27 and the \$764,000 needed in FY28.

E. Superintendent and School Committee Goals Update

Dr. Hunter reviewed the Superintendent Goals for the first quarter, and stated the evaluation rubric updates, the budget discussions for elementary interventions, and the strategic plan initiatives are delayed to the Spring. Progress is evident in the launch of the Panorama surveys that now includes religion and initiating culture work at the high school. Dr. Hunter highlighted other goals achieved including securing new grant opportunities, continuing work on the amenities building, and building a communication strategy, including the "Story of a School" project and website traffic. The Committee requested measures of success for communication goals, such as website clicks.

Ms. Marano reviewed the school committee goals that the committee will review three times during the school year: in November, February, and June. Goal one, the Budget Goal, is on track for hosting budget workshops and presenting clear budgets, despite still working on an agreed-upon FY27 budget guideline with finance committees by November. Goal two, the Community Engagement Goal, the first objective is to amplify and promote district-wide communications with measurable engagement by midyear, but it requires a finalized measurable tracking system. The second objective of Goal two is to pilot new two-way communication channels to gauge more diverse voices, this goal has been stalled, although members have engaged in one-on-one conversations. Goal three, the Policy Oversight Goal, is on track with state-required policy updates, but policies, such as the high school cell phone policy, are still in process. Finally, Goal four, the Superintendent Evaluation Goal, the objectives for approving goals and conducting quarterly reviews were on track, except the objective to monitor student achievement and equity-related data is still in process because the committee would like the percentages of the crucial subgroup sample sizes.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Waterson moved and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to enter Executive Session under Purpose 4: To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto and not return to Open Session. Roll was taken: Herchek, for both; Kelleher, for the region; Marano, for the region; Pisharody, for both; Waterson, for the region; and Williams, for both.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Gilmore

Abbreviations:

CCHS Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSD Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
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

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