

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
December 17, 2025**

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

Not Present: Lynette Kelleher, CCSC
Shelly Chin, Interim Assistant Superintendent, CPS & CCRSD

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of School, CPS & CCRSD
Robert Conry, Asst. Supt. of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. RECOGNITION

The South Asian Student Society was recognized for creating a space for students to connect, share, and learn more about their respective heritages and increase representation for South Asians in the Concord Carlisle community. CCHS seniors Laiya Pavlov and Celeste Pinto shared that the club hosted the first Diwali celebration that featured multilingual outreach, guest speakers, traditional dance and music, and a community potluck. The students also noted the club's goal is to ensure continuity through leadership succession and to collaborate on events with other local schools.

III. CCHS STUDENT UPDATE

CCHS Student Representative Mark Johnson shared highlights of recent events at CCHS including Spirit Week that featured an assembly, a Power Bowl game, a Thanksgiving football game at Fenway Park, a luncheon for 70 local senior citizens, and a food drive benefiting Open Table. Winter sports are in full swing and the Girls' Swim and Dive has an undefeated 3-0 season start. He also shared varsity coach Jacqueline Turner announced her retirement; the French Department hosted its annual Bûche de Noël cake contest; and several members of the DECA business club have advanced to state-level competitions. Some events coming up include the student-led PRISM concert and a Multicultural Food Fest just before winter break.

IV. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIR UPDATE

Dr. Hunter presented updates on four key areas: strategic planning, student well-being, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. The Vision of a Graduate design team is gathering stakeholder feedback, including perspectives from ELL families and higher education, while expanding its scope to include the pre-K-8 community. To promote student wellness, the Challenge Success initiative distributed a guide to all schools encouraging a screen-free winter break centered on joy and service. The district held its first Anti-Semitism Coalition meeting where

students and community leaders emphasized the importance of the Jewish Student Union. The district also hosted its 5th annual community Hanukkah celebration at Harvey Wheeler. Finally, the Sustainability Committee is reconvening to pursue solar grant opportunities and transition to new leadership to continue the district's green initiatives.

Ms. Marano announced a METCO update would be presented by Ms. MacDougall or Ms. Lawton at future meetings under the current agenda item. Ms. MacDougall reported the impressive academic performance of METCO middle schoolers: 23 out of 26 METCO students earned a spot on the honor roll, with four of those students making the Principal's List. Ms. Lawton apprised a meeting is scheduled for January 10th to discuss creating a METCO parent group after she received positive feedback from interested parents.

Ms. Marano reported the Concord CPC voted to fund the new amenities building; the water and sewer commission approved the appeal; and the next step is for Carlisle CPC to finalize its support. She also shared that Concord was named permanent host for the School Committee Chairs' Roundtable because of its central location for the 20 participating districts; and a legal workshop will be held on January 21st at 5:00 PM with attorney Peter Sumners to review essential requirements regarding student privacy.

Mr. Pisharody shared that the Bias and Hate Incident Reporting Work Group is seeking community input through focus groups and the first meeting is scheduled for January 12th at the Harvey Wheeler community center.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jon Saphier, 100 Newbury Court, discussed the efficacy of all-school assemblies in responding to bullying and hateful incidents. Drawing on examples from other districts, he emphasized schools must remain safe havens and highlighted how collective messaging can transform a school's culture by establishing a counter-narrative of kindness, inclusivity, and empathy. He proposed the School Committee establish a policy requiring an all-school response to any hateful or discriminatory incident to ensure the community hears a unified message that reinforces the district's commitment to a safe, welcoming environment for all.

Ellen Quackenbush, 206 Prairie Street, commended the police for resolving the recent hateful incidents. She believes that residents without current students have a vested interest in the district's health and suggested future incidents be met with proactive, unifying statements, to discourage disparaging public acts and promote civil discourse. Ms. Quackenbush concluded by praising programs like DECA for preparing students for successful adulthood and expressed support for the newly announced focus groups to engage the broader community.

Pat Brewer, 132 Wright Road, expressed frustration over a response to her correspondence about the repeated dismissal of requests for open dialogue. Ms. Brewer noted during past meetings, both committee members and community representatives called for candid discussions regarding incidents of hate and bias, but the topics were removed from the agenda. She feels avoiding uncomfortable conversations signals a lack of merit and hinders the building of trust and effective problem-solving. She concluded despite no longer having children in the district, she is committed to advocate for all students and urged the committee to prioritize these issues on future agendas.

Kristen Hagerty, 95 Revolutionary Road expressed support for the pending restrictive cell phone policy and shared that her eighth grader successfully navigates school and travel without a device. She is concerned about the perceived dismissal of METCO representatives at the October and

November meeting but commended the decision to grant METCO leaders a permanent agenda slot. Ms. Hagerty feels that true inclusivity requires listeners to sit with the uncomfortable emotions of others rather than prioritizing meeting efficiency.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Gift Donation of \$25,000 from the Ruettgers Family Charitable Foundation to the Ruettgers Fund at CCHS.
- B. Joint School Committee Minutes November 5, 2025
- C. Executive Session Minutes November 5, 2025
- D. Concord School Committee Minutes November 19, 2025
- E. CPS Middle School Pathway Policy Revision
- F. Warrants
- G. CCHS Dartmouth Science Olympiad Invitational
- H. \$1,000 Grant MASS Energy

Ms. Marano moved and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to approve the CPS Middle School Pathway Policy Revision as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

Mr. Herchek moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, with the removal of Items #B, #C, and #D. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Waterson reported there were six emails for the region including questions about previous meetings, cell phones, and the scarecrow incident. Mr. Herchek reported CPS received two emails one about an absence and a question about METCO representatives.

VIII. DISCUSSION

A. CCRSD FY27 Budget

Mr. Conry presented a high-level overview of the CCRSD FY27 Budget, which achieved a level-service goal while staying within Concord's established guidelines. The budget reflects an overall operational increase of 1.63%, despite a 14% spike in healthcare. Key factors helping to offset increased costs include declining enrollment at the high school, approximately 1,150 students; the reduction of 4.5 staff positions; and \$157,000 in nonresident tuition revenue from the district's special education programs. Due to a rise in Carlisle students and a decrease in Concord students, Concord will have a 0.79% decrease in its assessment, while Carlisle faces a 9.37% increase. To mitigate and manage capital needs without requesting new funds, the administration proposes repurposing \$375,000 from the OPEB fund into a capital stabilization fund for projects such as the Memorial Field replacement. A formal public hearing on the budget is scheduled for January 7th.

B. Competency Determination Policy

Policy IKFE outlines the Concord-Carlisle Regional Public School District's policy for Competency Determination, one of the requirements for high school graduation in Massachusetts. To achieve a Competency Determination, a student must demonstrate mastery of skills and satisfactorily complete relevant coursework.

Mr. Waterson moved, and Mr. Herchek seconded the motion to approve the Competency Determination Plan as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; Waterson, aye; and Williams, aye.

C. Cell Phone Policy Process

Ms. Marano opened the cell phone policy discussion to consider implementing a district-wide standard. Under current guidelines, students must store phones in classroom caddies during instruction but may use them during lunch and passing periods. The committee reached a consensus to form a working group of students, teachers, and parents to study research regarding digital distraction and mental health, and understanding practical dependencies, such as apps used for campus logistics to ensure any restrictions remain workable. The committee agreed on a research-driven approach for the second half of the school year, with members gathering data on peer district policies and relevant literature for further discussion in January.

D. School Committee Appointment Sustainability Liaison

Ms. Marano requested a volunteer for the District Sustainability Committee, which is focused on school-based initiatives rather than general town governance. The committee includes a diverse mix of stakeholders and is scheduled to meet three times between January and the end of the school year, usually in a hybrid format around 3:45 or 4:00 PM.

Ms. Rankin volunteered to be the lead, and Mr. Williams volunteered as back-up to represent the school committee for the District Sustainability Committee.

E. Calendar 2026-2027 First Reading

Dr. Hunter conducted a first reading of the 2026-2027 district calendar, noting a late Labor Day pushed the 180th day to June 15th, allowing the district to celebrate Juneteenth for the first time. Staff returns on August 27th, and students follow on Monday, August 31st, a shift from the typical Wednesday return. A key highlight is the improved alignment of early release dates between Concord and Carlisle, facilitating better collaboration across the districts. Additionally, the middle school proposed moving conferences to January to better support student-led preparations, and graduation is tentatively set for June 5th to meet state requirements for instructional days.

IX. ADJOURNMENT CONCORD-CARLISLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Concord-Carlisle School Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

X. DISCUSSION

A. CPS FY27 Budget

Mr. Conry presented the CPS FY27 Preliminary \$44 million Budget that adhered to the Finance Committee's 2.75% increase guideline, by sizing staff to match declining enrollment and leveraging significant savings in special education. The district reduced out-of-district placements from over 100 students in 2017, to just 6 students for the upcoming year, but these gains are offset by a 21% spike in fixed charges and the need for more in-district support staff. To maintain this level of service, the administration postponed requests for new math specialists and proposed a Special Education Reserve Fund be established via a Town Meeting warrant article. This fund would allow the district to manage unanticipated high-cost placements in the future without the need for emergency Special Town Meetings, ensuring long-term fiscal stability as the district navigates potential layoffs and administrative restructuring in January.

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Rankin moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to enter Executive Session under Purpose 3 of the Open Meeting Law: To conduct strategy sessions with respect to collective bargaining with the CTA Support Staff and not return to Open Session.

The Concord Public School Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Gilmore

Approved: April 1, 2026

Abbreviations:

CCHS Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSB 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