

Present: Andrew Herchek, Chair
Carrie Rankin, Vice-Chair
Tracey Marano via Zoom
Sandeep Pisharody
Michael Williams
Michele MacDougall, CPS METCO Representative on Zoom

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools
Robert Conry, Assistant Superintendent
Shelly Chin, Assistant Superintendent

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. RECOGNITIONS

A. Principal Matt Lucey

Principal Matt Lucey, retiring at the end of the school year, was honored for his years of dedicated leadership at Willard Elementary. Mr. Herchek thanked him for his steady guidance and community focus during and after the pandemic. Principal Lucey was commended for creating an inclusive atmosphere that supports both families and staff, particularly those working within the shelter program.

Willard PTG Vice President Lauren Judge thanked Principal Lucey for creating a school culture rooted in warmth and goodness. Reflecting on her family's journey, Ms. Judge noted that Mr. Lucey's leadership, from his high-energy morning announcements to his deep personal connections, fostered a sense of belonging so profound that her children consider the Willard staff to be family. She also emphasized his role as a vital mentor and positive male role model during difficult periods. Though saddened by his retirement, Ms. Judge pledged to uphold the legacy of unity and joy he cultivated during his time at the school.

Trey Prebil, Willard student, shared how Principal Lucey created a safe, special environment, even as Trey began kindergarten during the pandemic. He highlighted Mr. Lucey's impressive gift for remembering every student's name and his penchant for high-fives and smiles, which made the school feel like home. Reflecting on his six years at Willard, Trey emphasized that Mr. Lucey's personal connection with students is what makes the school so beloved.

Tony Fiandaca, a first-grade teacher, highlighted Principal Lucey's supportive leadership through his signature 'Mattisms,' such as the phrase, "How lucky are we?" Mr. Fiandaca commended the Principal's ability to foster authentic partnerships with staff and parents, as well as his commitment to seeing the best in every individual. He remarked the palpable happiness of the students, particularly during daily dismissal, serves as a testament to Mr. Lucey's success and he concluded by attributing the thriving school culture to his consistent and visible leadership.

Vivian Ring, former Willard student now attending CMS, expressed her gratitude for

Principal Lucey's years of service and his role in fostering student growth. Recounting her experience as "Principal for the Day," she noted his ability to manage the school's demands with ease and dedication. She characterized Mr. Lucey as a teacher and role model who prioritized a safe, engaging environment. Ms. Ring noted that while his departure is the end of an era for the school, it marks a significant new milestone in his own life.

Ashley Healy, Willard parent and SEPAC President, spoke to Principal Lucey's impact on school culture, specifically his emphasis on compassion in leadership. She commended his ability to create an inclusive environment where all students are afforded dignity. Ms. Healy shared a personal reflection on how the Principal's office acted as a supportive haven for her children during challenging times. She concluded by highlighting her son's successful transition to middle school, attributing his strong sense of self-worth to the supportive atmosphere Mr. Lucey cultivated.

Patrick Kevane, reading specialist at Willard, expressed gratitude for Principal Lucey's years of leadership. He noted the principal's role in implementing the Wilson Reading System and his advocacy for students with special needs. Mr. Kevane remarked that while Mr. Lucey's pandemic leadership was exemplary, his greatest impact was his visible, hands-on presence. He highlighted the principal's commitment to both high-level literacy advocacy and the daily logistics of student safety. Mr. Kevane concluded by characterizing Principal Lucey as the "secret sauce" of the Willard community.

Jessica Bragdon, a Willard parent, thanked Principal Lucey for the profound security and dedicated service he provided during his tenure. Representing students who see him as a father figure, she praised his gift for making every child feel like a member of the family. Ms. Bragdon concluded by noting that even in retirement, the community Mr. Lucey fostered remains a permanent legacy within her own family's story.

Ms. Marano thanked Principal Lucey for his energy and signature laugh that defined his presence in Concord. She highlighted his inclusive leadership and his specific dedication to honoring newcomers and expressed profound appreciation for his distinguished service to both Willard Elementary and the broader community.

B. Outgoing School Committee Member Carrie Rankin

Mr. Herchek thanked Ms. Rankin for her four years of commitment, praising her tireless efforts across multiple committees. He noted she brought a vital sense of steadiness and professionalism to their work, uniquely balancing the needs of the community with a constant drive for progress. Mr. Herchek specifically lauded her deep involvement in policy work and her creative leadership on projects like the Thoreau playground.

Ms. Marano commended Ms. Rankin for her commitment to public education and her skill in fostering collaboration while keeping students at the center of the district's work. She thanked Ms. Rankin for her diligent leadership on the policy subcommittee and her key contributions to "The Story of the Schools" project.

Mr. Pisharody lauded Ms. Rankin for her gift of asking the right questions at the right time, steering discussions without dominating them. He noted that her approach is one others strive to follow. Mr. Pisharody shared his deep appreciation for the mentorship she offered during his onboarding and for her unwavering support over the past year.

Mr. Williams thanked Ms. Rankin for being an engaging colleague and remarked that working with her provided a constant opportunity to learn and to view issues from a different perspective.

Ms. MacDougall expressed appreciation for Ms. Rankin's dedication, noting the personal impact of her guidance during the onboarding process. She praised Ms. Rankin's ability to dissect complex topics and identify the critical points for discussion while maintaining a respectful and professional demeanor toward her colleagues. Ms. MacDougall concluded by thanking Ms. Rankin for her years of hard work and energy.

Avani, friend and fellow parent of Ms. Rankin, thanked her for her committee service and personal friendship. She remarked on Ms. Rankin's decade of dedication, observing she consistently volunteered for essential tasks long before her tenure in leadership. She recognized Ms. Rankin for her integrity and steady hand during significant challenges, such as the pandemic and the middle school construction project.

Dr. Hunter extended a personal thank you to Ms. Rankin, acknowledging the critical partnership they shared through difficult times and major milestones like the opening of the new building.

Mr. Herchek presented Ms. Rankin with flowers and a thank you for the time she sacrificed away from her family to serve, celebrating the lasting impact she has made as a neighbor, leader, and advocate for the Concord schools.

III. SUPERINTENDENT AND CHAIR UPDATE

Ms. MacDougall provided an update on METCO initiatives, noting that the recent advocacy day was highly successful. She reported METCO PTG representatives have officially joined the Alcott PTG, and the current focus remains on establishing streamlined communication channels to enhance engagement and outreach with METCO families. The state budget line for METCO funding has reached the \$35 million target; this increase is expected to benefit the METCO organization directly, with a positive impact on local district programming.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Brittany Horton, 69 Pilgrim Road, a Concord parent and Google professional, advocated for the formation of a technology advisory committee to help the district navigate the rapid evolution of digital tools and artificial intelligence. Drawing on her expertise at the forefront of the tech industry, she emphasized technology is deeply woven into students' lives, presenting complex challenges in areas such as data privacy and digital ethics. She proposed a committee of local experts in engineering, cybersecurity, and ethics could provide essential "futureproofing," vet high-cost investments, and support the development of responsible-use policies. Ms. Horton framed this initiative not as a debate over screen time, but as a strategic necessity to ensure the district remains a leader in safe, thoughtful, and innovative education.

Beth Neitzel, 100 Barretts Mill Road, spoke in favor of the Technology Advisory Committee, specifically regarding the prevention of online child exploitation. Drawing on her leadership in government efforts against digital abuse, she reported an exponential increase in the severity of online threats over the past five years. She disputed the idea that personal devices in schools act as safety tools, asserting that platforms with chat capabilities present risks to students. Ms. Neitzel recommended that the committee

prioritize cybersecurity education and expertise to better equip district stakeholders against pervasive digital threats.

Meryl Dolan, 29 Old Bridge Road, commented on the impact of digital technology on the cognitive and social development of students. While noting the advantages of educational technology, she cited concerns regarding student focus and off-task behavior associated with school-issued devices. Furthermore, she raised questions about data privacy and the transparency of platform implementation. Ms. Dolan advocated for a collaborative advisory committee composed of experts and stakeholders to ensure that technology implementation remains age-appropriate, intentional, and rigorously vetted to protect the learning environment.

Ashley Healy, 77 Adin Drive, spoke in favor of establishing a technology advisory committee to leverage local professional expertise. She expressed particular concern regarding the impact of digital distractions on students with IEPs or specialized learning requirements, observing that off-task behavior poses a risk to their academic progress. Ms. Healy concluded that the implementation of formal safeguards is a necessary step for the district to ensure equitable support for all learners.

V. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Bruce Freeman Trail Donation.

A brief discussion was held regarding the acceptance of a \$50,000 donation for the Bruce Freeman Trail design phase. This allocation allows the project to proceed to the formal RFQ process. Completing the design is a necessary step to secure future funding, specifically for a potential CPC application to address the total estimated project cost of \$400,000 to \$500,000. School management of the project was clarified. The project will be revisited when a preliminary design is available.

Ms. Marano moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to accept the \$50,000 donation for the Bruce Freeman Trail. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Marano, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

VI. DISCUSSION

A. Concord Integrated Preschool Update

Angel Charles, Director of Student Services and Special Education, and Kate Jesman, Preschool Director, presented an update on the Concord Integrated Preschool. The program supports approximately 70 students, fulfilling state special education mandates through an inclusive model. Recent activities noted included the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness program implementation and various community engagement events. The committee requested a wish list for a future site, specifically citing the requirement for non-toxic, high-quality outdoor play areas. The program's strength is evidenced by the fact that no students have required out-of-district placement for several years.

B. CPS Facilities and Capital Projects Update

Mr. Conry updated the committee on various facilities projects, including playground improvements and electric vehicle infrastructure. Key school projects include Alcott's drainage-focused playground redesign and phase two of Thoreau's campus plan, which adds a nature space and repairs the parking lot. At Willard, crews are managing a refrigerant leak in an HVAC chiller. Thoreau's new athletic fields and baseball diamond are currently stabilizing and will open to the public in the Fall of 2026. The district is installing

bi-directional chargers at the Knox Trail bus depot through a state grant and pursuing a federal grant for five additional electric buses. This expansion would bring the electric fleet to seven vehicles, though diesel backups will be retained for operational reliability.

C. FY26 Quarterly Transfers

Mr. Conry presented the FY26 Quarterly budget transfers and adjustments for the Concord Public Schools, noting the overall financial position remains tight. Key adjustments included the addition of transportation reimbursements for homeless services and an increase in out-of-district tuition costs, the latter resulting from a lower-than-anticipated state circuit breaker reimbursement. Notable drivers of these budget shifts included a 41% increase in property and liability insurance rates and higher-than-expected sick leave buyouts due to eligible retirements. CMS electricity usage has remained reasonable and under budget despite the addition of air conditioning.

Ms. Rankin moved and Mr. Williams seconded the motion to accept the FY26 Quarterly Transfers as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

D. Willard Sign

The Willard PTG is coordinating a surprise tribute to honor Principal Matt Lucey upon his retirement by naming a neighborhood path Lucey Lane. The proposed site is a paved path behind Willard School that leads to a cul-de-sac on Raymond Road, a route frequently used by families and for bike to school days. To maintain branding consistency with the school's main entrance, the permanent wooden sign will feature the same font and colors as existing signage but in a traditional street-sign shape. Funded entirely by the PTG and crafted by local designer Billy Crosby, the project also includes a smaller framed version of the sign as a personal keepsake for Mr. Lucey.

Ms. Rankin moved and Mr. Pisharody seconded the motion to accept the Willard Sign as presented. Roll was taken: Herchek, aye; Pisharody, aye; Rankin, aye; and Williams, aye.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Rankin moved that the Concord School Committee enter into Executive session pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Concord Teachers Association Education Support Professionals if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, and not return to Open Session.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Gilmore

Approved: May 6, 2026

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