

School Committee Update

Following the Joint School Committee Meeting on April 10, 2012

Retiring School Committee members, Jerry Wedge and Peter Fischelis, were recognized for their contributions to the Concord Public Schools (CPS) and Concord-Carlisle Regional School Districts (CCRSB). Jerry Wedge will continue his service as Co-Chair of the CCHS Building Committee, and Peter Fischelis will continue his service on the negotiating team for the Concord Teachers' Association contract.

Special Education

Special Education Director, Jessica Murphy, gave an informative presentation on special education services in CPS and CCRSD. In order to comply with federal and state laws, the school districts are mandated to provide special education services for qualified students from ages 3-22. Our district is seeing an increase in medically fragile and developmentally delayed students of preschool age, along with an increase in students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Ms. Murphy discussed national trends in special education, including the results of a recent study from the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

School Budgets

The Concord School Committee and the Concord Finance Committee (FinCom) reached an agreement about school budgets for fiscal year 2013 (FY13). On March 22, the Concord FinCom voted to adjust the Guideline for the Concord Public School (CPS) budget, closing the \$332,328 gap between the budget approved by the School Committee and the previous FinCom Guideline. Anticipated level-funding in Chapter 70 state aid, instead of a projected decrease, allowed the CCRSD budget to meet the Concord FinCom Guideline. The Regional School Committee voted to reapprove the CCRSD FY13 budget with revised revenue sources.

For the sixth year in a row, the CPS and CCRSD proposed budgets are within the levy limit and will not require a Proposition 2½ override. The budgets will be presented in Article 7 and Article 10 on the first evening of Concord Town Meeting, Monday, April 23. The CCRSD budget will also be presented at Carlisle Town Meeting on April 30. We encourage all citizens to attend Town Meeting and support the School Committee budgets.

Transportation Services

The goal of the School Committees is to obtain factual information in order to make thorough and thoughtful decisions regarding student transportation services. The Committees recently reviewed the RFP results for the leasing of a maintenance facility. A facility has been identified and can be secured if necessary for the 2012-13 school year. The Committees will discuss the leasing a facility during our next Joint Committee meeting when more information will be available.

The Committees will review:

- Responses to the Request For Proposals (RFP) for the lease of a facility to house bus maintenance services
- Responses to the Invitation For Bid (IFB) for private transportation services
- Responses to the Invitation For Bid (IFB) for the purchase of the bus fleet
- Results of the Parent Bus Fee Survey, including comments

This information will help to inform our decisions going forward.

Concord Special Town Meeting

Articles 3 and 4 on the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting request that the School Committees take particular actions with regard to student transportation services. According to state law, school transportation services and decisions concerning those services, are the responsibility of local and regional school committees. For the past several months, the School Committees have been assessing the options for providing student transportation for the 2012-13 school year and beyond. This has been a complicated, evolving process with new information being requested and discussed in open meetings. The transportation issue has passionate advocates on both sides. It is important to note that no definite decisions have been made at this time, and the School Committees are carefully listening to the Concord and Carlisle communities as we work to reach a decision.

Article 5 requests that the School Committees produce comprehensive budget books, similar to the “rainbow budget books” distributed in the 1990s. The School Administration plans to publish a comprehensive school budget report that compiles all the information that is currently available online. This budget book will be revised annually and copies will be available online and at the Town House, the Main Library, the Fowler Library, at each school site, and upon request from the Superintendent’s office. Copies of the budget book will be distributed to the School Committees, and the Concord and Carlisle Finance Committees and Boards of Selectmen.

The Concord Special Town Meeting is scheduled for the evening of Tuesday, April 24, and we encourage all citizens to attend.

Other Business/Correspondence

The School Committees voted not to participate in School Choice for 2012-13. Massachusetts General Laws require that any school district choosing not to participate in Interdistrict School Choice must take an annual vote to withdraw from the obligation. Given our increasing enrollment and the potential for additional students from the 350-unit Concord Mews development, the school administration did not recommend opening enrollment to additional students from other towns. Historically, CPS and CCRSD have not participated in School Choice.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) postponed the formal evaluation of CCHS until 2015. CCHS will remain on Warning status until the new school is built and the review is completed.

The School Committees received an update on the progress of the CCHS building project. The architect and the construction manager will have cost estimates for the project in May. The Building Committee and the design team held a Neighborhood Forum on Thursday, April 12, to keep CCHS neighbors informed about the project. More information on the CCHS building project is available at www.cchsbuilding.org.

For previous School Committee Updates and reports, please go to the School Committee page on the district web site, www.concordpublicschools.net.