

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Concord – Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
Ripley Building
January 24, 2017

Present: Wallace Johnston, Chair, CSC; CCSC
Heather Bout, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
William Fink, Chair, CCSC
Dan Conti, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
Johanna Boynton, CCSC: CSC
Bob Grom, CSC; CCSC
Mary Storrs, CCSC

Present from Administration: Diana Rigby, Superintendent of Schools, CPS & CCRSD
John Flaherty, Deputy Superintendent of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER

The session was called to order by Mr. Johnston, for CSC, and Mr. Fink, for CCSC, at 6:00PM. Mr. Fink noted that the meeting is being recorded. A motion was made by Ms. Bout, seconded by Ms. Storrs, that the CCSC would enter into Executive Session under Purpose 3 of the Open Meeting Law: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining as the open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and return to Open Session at approximately 6:30 PM. The motion passed by roll call for CSC: Bout, aye; Johnston, aye; Conti, aye; Boynton, aye; Grom, aye; Fink, aye.

The session was called back to order by Mr. Johnston, for CSC, and by Mr. Fink, for CCSC, at 6:44PM. Mr. Johnston noted that the meeting is being recorded.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Kathleen Snook, 471 Old Rd to 9 Acre Corner, Concord, MA. Ms. Snook stated that she and Ms. Johnson were representing the 2015 Joint Calendar Advisory Committee and that her comments would address the background and process of the Calendar Committee. Ms. Snook reviewed the background and process of the Calendar Committee, noting that the topics of start and end dates, religious holidays and school vacations were included in the Committee's charge. She stated that the Committee did significant research and conducted a district wide survey. She stated that the members of the Committee continue to support the recommendations and ask that their work be honored and not unilaterally be dismissed.

2. Kristin Johnson, 61 Lang Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Johnson stated that at the inception of the Calendar Committee, the unifying goal was to improve traction in teaching and learning. She stated that the Committee conducted extensive research on school calendars, both nationally and locally, and also conducted an electronic survey of the community. She noted that declaring a holiday specifically because of a religious significance is prohibited by the Constitution and the legal system. She stated that they compassionately examined data on absentee rates, public policy, educational goals, public input and national trends and determined that the best decision was to eliminate all religious holidays from the school calendar, while providing a clear absence policy to accommodate all students who choose to observe. She stated that although they sympathize with those questioning their decision, there are voices being left out of the equation – members of different religions who don't feel comfortable talking about religion in this situation. She stated that the only equitable solution is not recognizing any religious holidays, but to provide an expansive and accommodating absence policy.

3. Linda Skolnick, 376 Caterina Heights, Concord, MA. Ms. Skolnick stated that she is a concerned resident and parent of a MS student. She stated that she has made an effort to return the religious holidays to the school calendar and noted how not having the religious holidays off created much stress for her family. She noted how she needed to speak up about work being assigned over the Jewish holiday to the MS principal. She urged the SC to return the

accommodation to the students observing Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah and Good Friday back to the school calendar on a permanent basis.

4. Kathleen Ogdenfasser, 46 Arrowhead Road, Concord, MA. Ms. Ogdenfasser stated that she was happy to hear the reasoning for why the religious holidays were removed, because there was no reason given other than being due to survey analysis. She noted that the topic of the survey was only "Holiday Observances" and did not note anything about religious holidays, which she stated was a flaw in the survey. She also stated that the survey only allowed participants the options of either removing or keeping all 3 religious holidays. She stated that there was an unnecessary burden put on the families regarding no homework nights around religious holidays. Ms. Ogdenfasser stated that it was very insulting to be seen as not honoring the calendar if they chose to have their children miss school for religious holidays. She stated that in light of the current issues in the MS and HS, she urged the SC to promote respect for individual beliefs and use this occasion as a learning and teaching moment.

5. Rabbi Darby Leigh, Kerem Shalom, 659 Elm Street, Concord, MA. Rabbi Leigh thanked the SC for providing an American Sign Language interpreter for him. He stated that he is the Rabbi at Temple Kerem Shalom and that he urges the SC to add the 3 religious holidays back to the calendar. He noted that this conversation feels very different today than it did a year ago due to the increased sense of fear from hate crimes, bomb threats and hate vandalism. He stated that this is a wonderful opportunity to teach the children with respect, curiosity and appreciation of differences. He stated that adding these holidays back in is a small way of expressing that Jewish citizens of Concord are full members of the community. He urged the SC to not miss the opportunity that they have before them.

6. Fatima Mesdad, 155 Powder Mill Road, Concord, MA. Ms. Mesdad stated that she is speaking from a Muslim perspective and she is very grateful to see this conversation happening. She noted that she could offer the experiences of her own children to help in the process. She stated that her children would come home from school and feel that their religion should be kept secret. She stated that she was glad to see the religious holidays taken out of the calendar last year and that she does not like to have religious holidays imposed on people who don't feel comfortable with them. She stated that she encourages the position of keeping the holidays off of the calendar, but noted that the schools are not keeping the observance of religious holidays out of the schools. She noted that December is a long month for her children and that religious symbols should be removed from the schools. She stated that she is available to contribute to the process.

7. Susan Deysher, 1861 Main Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Deysher stated that she respects and appreciates the work of the Joint Advisory Committee on the calendar. She questioned 2012-2013, in which a pilot of no religious holidays on the calendar was done and stated that information collected during this time was not represented in the Calendar Committee's findings. She stated that this data, which includes data on student and educator absences, is critical for looking at traction in the first few weeks of school. She noted that she thinks the District has not done a good job with articulating the policies of student absences. She stated that Jewish people are required to be in the synagogue on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.

8. Jane Huber, 38 Williams Road, Concord, MA. Ms. Huber stated that she is concerned with the community's public message on diversity and the process for reaching a decision on inclusion and exclusion of certain holidays. She asked the SC to restore the Jewish holidays, but that they not restore Good Friday due to religious observances. She stated that many people come to Concord for opportunity and the broad-minded community. She asked that the SC send a message of inclusion.

9. Gerald Kiwanuka, 38 Williams Road, Concord, MA. Mr. Kiwanuka stated that excluding the holidays sends a strong signal, which is very important when you are a minority. He encouraged the SC to share how they came to the decision of removing the holidays.

10. Yuval Erlich, 4 South Meadow Road, Concord, MA. Mr. Erlich stated that he has 2 boys in the MS and that he was representing Orthodox Atheists. He stated that he completed the survey choosing no holidays, but now feels it was a mistake. He urged the SC to drop the idea of respecting the process and that they were voted in to make decisions according to the time and the moment in what they believe is right for the community. He stated that he doesn't want them to respect processes. He stated that the process is a practicality and that the message is about

bigger things. He urged the SC to look at it as a bigger picture and how the District in the future is going to bring diversity into a non-diverse society.

11. Rosa Hallowell, 19 Sudbury Road, Concord, MA. Ms. Hallowell stated that she is a retired litigator and an Episcopalian mom of Jewish children. She stated that the SC reports to a higher authority, the Constitution. She noted that the legal conclusion that the SC used is flawed and spoke about the least restrictive means. She stated that the SC cannot equally offend all religions and it's not a separation of church and state.

12. Merrie Najimy, 243 Boylston Street, Watertown, MA. Ms. Najimy stated that she is the President of the CTA and a Kindergarten teacher at Willard. She stated that the CTA's members are feeling that everyone should be comfortable in the schools to practice religion and culture. She stated that at the top of the list hitting the teachers hard is the contradiction that they all get Christmas off. She noted that this is a scarier time now for all of the students in any of the racial, ethnic or religious minorities to identify publicly and say that they need time off to practice religious holidays. She noted that the current policy is unclear and there is confusion around Ramadan and teachers were confused at what it was and what tests could be given. She also noted the increase in diverse faiths at Willard and stated that if the Jewish holidays were given off, that these religions would be viewed as more important than others. She stated that they need to articulate a clear homework policy around when all the holidays fall that reflect the population. She also stated that they need clear religious accommodations and that they need to create an anti-biased curriculum systemically. She stated that they need to create a broader task force to create a very clear policy.

13. Arnie Epstein, 104 Hubbard Street, Concord, MA. Mr. Epstein stated that he feels it important that they not get to a place where religion is not spoken about at all and that this would rob the kids of diversity. He stated that this is an opportunity to learn about different religions, noting it would not be forcing the religions on anybody. He noted that having religious days off and taking the homework burden away should be honored, as each religion requires. He recommended that the SC reinstate the Jewish holidays.

14. Meredith Glassman, 54 Adin Drive, Concord, MA. Ms. Glassman stated that the SC should reinstate the holidays. She noted that they go to temple on Yom Kippur and Rash Hashanah and that her 4th grader's class was having turtles come to the class on one of those days. She stated that she had to reach out to the teacher, who changed the day. She noted that this made her realize that they are missing the opportunity, given the current climate, to reinforce diversity and inclusion. She noted that she would like to hear more about whether the ½ day decision and the 2 Jewish holidays were contrasted at all.

15. Ruthy Bennett, 114 Deer Grass Lane, Concord, MA. Ms. Bennett stated that she requested the SC reinstate the religious holidays back into the calendar. She noted that the calendar committee focused on continuity of learning, family time, sports camps and getting out of school earlier in June/starting earlier in September. She stated that the outcome may have been different, if the survey focused on the religious holidays. She noted that the data showed between 8-12% of students are absent the Friday before February and April vacation weeks. She noted that between 53-80% of educators were out over the religious holidays during the pilot study. She stated that the average number of educators out is between 20-30%. She stated that 47% and 51% of students were absent on Good Friday. She stated that removing the religious holidays from the calendar presents the same problem with continuity as the Friday before vacations. She noted that the committee reached out to the faith based community, but no one reached out to the Rabbi in Concord. She stated that when all religions are removed, they all get nothing, and that doesn't equal respect. She questioned what if Concord adopted radical inclusion and urged the SC to add the 3 religious holidays back into the calendar.

16. Nancy Cowan, 36 Russell Street, Carlisle, MA. Ms. Cowan stated she has 2 children at CCHS. She stated that school is government organized and doesn't think it's appropriate for school being closed due to somebody's faith. She noted that she believes the school should accommodate those needing to observe religious holidays. She noted that Christmas is a federal holiday. She noted also that she was a member of the Calendar Committee and that the thought process behind religious holidays was an issue of the nature of the schools.

17. Kathleen Snook, Concord, MA. Ms. Snook stated that the phrase "honoring the calendar" was meant for families taking their students out before or after a school vacation and not for observing religious holidays. She also stated that the pilot study was not really a pilot study, it was done unilaterally to try it out. She noted that the data

from that is not accurate and a lot of emphasis was not placed on that data. She also noted, regarding the legal issues, they are not asking for any restrictions on practicing religions and that there is no religious indifference. She stated that she approached Father Fleming because she knew him and heard about the Faith Based Leadership group in town. She stated that when she approached him regarding this group, it didn't exist anymore. Ms. Snook stated that its not a good idea to have qualitative comparisons made with other religions.

18. Kristen Johnson. Ms. Johnson stated that, as an attorney, the legal premise was taken out of context and misconstrued with respect to the Committee's decision. She noted that things that were cited were not relied on by the committee and that the articles were in the last few months. She stated that this is a learning opportunity for teachers to become better acquainted with the holidays and their significances. She noted her frustration with how the Calendar Committee is being portrayed.

17. Ann Irza-leggat, 39 Cottage Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Irza-leggat stated she feels a lot of things in the school are not secular, like the Pledge of Allegiance. She noted that a lot of learning doesn't happen on days when students are out to observe holidays. She stated that she would like Concord to stand up and support religious freedoms.

III. READING OF THE MINUTES

A. Open Session – Jt. Meeting – 11/22, 12/1, 12/13, 12/21/16. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the meeting minutes for 11/22/16. Ms. Storrs abstained from the vote because she was not present at the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved by the other SC members.

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the meeting minutes for 12/1/16. Ms. Storrs abstained from the vote because she was not present at the meeting. The motion was approved by the other SC members.

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the meeting minutes for 12/13/16. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the meeting minutes for 12/21/16. The motion was unanimously approved.

IV. CHAIRS REPORT

Mr. Fink stated that he received 71 emails: 55 regarding the school calendar, with 80% opposed to the current calendar (excluding religious holidays) and 20% in support of the current calendar. He stated that there was an email regarding the recommendation to establish a school policy of restricting the use of school resources to support Warrant Articles at Town Meeting and several emails about a personal topic that have been addressed. He stated that there were 2 emails regarding the recommendation for a hate crime policy and 2 comments on the process of the Superintendent Search.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

A. Adult & Community Education January 2017 Director's Report. Ms. Rigby stated that there is a gap between revenue and expense due to the purchase of a new Driver's Education car as well as a new registration system. She noted that they don't expect the deficit to continue.

B. Congratulations CCHS – College Board's 7th Annual AP District Honor Roll. Ms. Rigby congratulated CCHS staff, faculty and students for being 1 of the 433 school districts in the US and Canada being honored by the College Board with placement on the 7th Annual AP District Honor Roll. She stated that in order to be included on this honor roll, you must have increased participation in AP as well as continuing to maintain the percentage of students earning an exam score of 3 or higher.

VI. RECOGNITIONS

A. CCHS: Ms. Rigby, on behalf of Principal Mike Mastrullo, recognized:

The CCHS Red Cross Club and teacher Andrew Gillis, for completing a gift-wrapping fundraiser at Sears. She stated that they donated the money raised, \$1,167.65, to the Red Cross, for those in need of food and shelter.

The CCHS hockey team, for participating in the 5th Annual Warriors for Warriors event to benefit the fallen soldier, Scott Milley.

The CCHS Bands & Orchestra for a fabulous winter concert.

Mr. Fink stated that out of respect for the community, he would like to move the action items before the Superintendent search.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnston, for both CCSC and CSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, for CCSC and Mr. Grom, for CSC, to move the Action Items portion of the meeting before the Reports & Issues for Discussion. The motion was unanimously approved. Ms. Rigby requested that the Committee also move the Old Business portion before the Reports & Issues for Discussion as well. The motion moved as amended unanimously for both committees.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to approve the 2017-2018 School Calendar. A motion was made by Ms. Storrs, seconded by Ms. Boynton, to approve the 2017-2018 School Calendar. Mr. Fink thanked everyone for attending and noted that this topic is of personal interest to many people. He noted that this calendar was voted on last year and that this calendar is not a change for this year. He stated that they are required to vote a calendar by February 1st and that there is a need to respect the process and more importantly, the people who committed their time and energy to the schools and community through the Advisory Committee. He noted that a theme heard in the emails was to respect all religions in the calendar, and he thought that was a great idea and should be considered. Mr. Johnston stated that he commended this committee as well and that he recognizes and appreciates the work they've done. He stated that he feels that they should reinstate the 3 religious holidays and that he heard things at this meeting that made him think. He noted that he doesn't know if they are ready to provide the inclusivity of including all of the religious interests that they want to provide. He noted that since approving last years calendar, they have learned that this is a bigger task than originally thought and also the amount of trouble it has made in the Jewish community. He questioned if they should take a step back and look at the larger picture.

Ms. Bout stated that she agreed that this was about bigger things and suggested that they create a group to look at the bigger picture, noting that it was a learning opportunity. She stated that this group could look at issues of diversity and inclusivity. She stated that she was uncomfortable with a large group of the community feeling alienated because the religious holidays were removed and also noted that other segments feel alienated as well. She also noted her unease with changing courses because of those with the loudest voices and was nervous to flip flop decisions. She noted that every comment sunk in deeply with her. She questioned if it was possible to vote in the calendar as recommended with space to revise it over the next few months.

Ms. Storrs noted that more than 1,000 families responded to the survey, with 80% supporting the current calendar. She questioned if the group present participated in the survey. She questioned if this has become a bigger issue due to the election and noted that she is struggling with the disconnect. Ms. Bout noted that it is a minority that is speaking up and they need to decide what's right. Mr. Johnston noted that until people experience something, it doesn't register. Ms. Boynton stated that conversations around the calendar have been going on for a long time and the advisory committee was formed to hear from all of the stakeholders for their input. She noted that out of respect for the process, she thinks it's important to follow the recommendation, but that they should re-visit again. She stated that they want to be inclusive and respectful, but that they need to accept the recommendation from the Calendar Committee, and then they could reconvene and look into it again. Mr. Grom stated that the educational achievement is most important, and looking at the effects that the holding the classes on these days nets a negative for the schools and families. He also noted that 90% of the neighboring Districts have these religious holidays off.

Mr. Conti stated that he would prefer that the schools don't sanction any religious or political observances. He stated that giving these 3 religious holidays off is a de-valuing of the other faiths, and does render them "less than". He noted, however, the recent flurry of hate speech and stated that he is sensitive to those fears. He stated that he doesn't feel this is a time to cease the longstanding practice of having the 2 Jewish holidays off. He suggested to: develop a clear no homework policy around the religious holidays, develop a clear list of religious holidays and observances and review the District policy on hate crimes.

Mr. Fink stated that he was hearing a clear message of revisiting the calendar on a broader scope. Mr. Johnston recommended voting the calendar and asking the Calendar Committee to reconvene to re-look at this issue regarding the Jewish holidays, with the possibility of reporting back to the SC in May regarding the religious holidays in question. Ms. Rigby noted that it would only be 2 days, Good Friday and Rosh Hashanah, since Yom Kippur falls on a weekend the following year.

Mr. Grom tried to clarify if they would have a chance to vote in the middle of May and Mr. Johnston stated that they would be voting today on the calendar and then possibly voting to amend in May. Ms. Bout noted her concern with ending up with different calendars for CPS and CCRSD.

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for CPS, seconded by Ms. Bout, to approve the 2017-2018 School Calendar. The motion was opposed by Mr. Conti, Mr. Johnston, Ms. Bout and Mr. Grom for both CSC and CCSC.

A motion was made by Mr. Grom for CPS, seconded by Ms. Bout, to approve a calendar for 2017-2018 that includes 9/21/17 and 3/30/18 off as religious holidays, with a targeted end date of 6/14/18. A motion was made by Mr. Grom, for CCSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, to approve a calendar for 2017-2018 that includes 9/21/17 and 3/30/18 off as religious holidays, with a targeted end date of 6/14/18. The motions were opposed by Ms. Storrs and Ms. Boynton, for CCSC and Ms. Boynton for CSC. The motions were approved.

B. Vote to replace February 14 CPS meeting with a joint meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, to replace the February 14 CPS meeting with a joint meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

C. Vote to approve gasoline and diesel fuel bid award. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, to award a contract for the supply of gasoline and diesel fuel to Dennis K. Burke, Inc., Chelsea, MA for a price of .2877 per gallon for ultra low sulfur diesel and a price of .3082 per gallon for gasoline. The motion was unanimously approved.

D. Vote to approve borrowing bid award. A motion was made by Mr. Johnston, seconded by Ms. Boynton, to award the contract for a \$1,900,000 BAN sale to Eastern Bank of Boston, MA at an interest rate of 1.10%. The motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Transportation. Mr. Flaherty stated that they received a bid for the METCO home to school routes and noted that the bid was \$600/day. He stated that this option, compared to the other option of lease acquisition and hiring, would add \$350,000 into the FY18 Operating Budget. He stated that this \$350,000 divided by 185 days per school year works out to \$378.38/day. He stated that this lease purchase option makes more financial sense than the METCO bid option. He stated that he does not recommend further consideration of awarding a contract for METCO home to school and that he recommends that the CSC and CCSC vote to not award a contract of Concord METCO home - school routes.

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for CSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, to not award a contract for Concord METCO home - school student transportation services, as it's not in the public interest. The motion was unanimously approved. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for CCSC, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to not award a contract for Concord-Carlisle METCO home - school student transportation services, as it is not in the public interest. The motion was unanimously approved.

IX. REPORTS & ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A. Superintendent Search. Ms. Boynton welcomed Mr. Randy Collins, from HYA Associates. Mr. Conti stated that he had recused himself from the Superintendent Screening Committee, out of concern for a potential conflict of interest. He also stated that the potential for a conflict of interest remains, since the current Superintendent where he teaches is a finalist. He then recused himself from the interviews, deliberations and voting of the three finalists, but noted that he would speak regarding process if needed. Ms. Boynton reviewed the members of the Screening Committee and thanked them for all of the hard work and commitment they demonstrated. Ms. Boynton stated that the public interviews would occur each night at 6:30PM at Willard. Mr. Collins recommended keeping the SC/public

interviews at 6:30PM to an hour and a half. The SC members discussed interview topics, deciding which topics each would cover during the interviews.

Ms. Boynton named the candidates: Dr. Laurie Hunter, current Assistant Superintendent of Duxbury Public Schools; Dr. Laura Chesson, current Assistant Superintendent of Arlington Public Schools; and Bella Wong, current Superintendent/Principal of the Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School District. Ms. Boynton shared the sample schedules for each candidate, which included: welcomes, tours of CCHS, lunch, tours of CMS buildings, tours of elementary schools, dinner, interviews/ public forums and breakfast the following day. The SC discussed logistics for the interviews.

X. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. Bout, for both CCSC and CSC, seconded by Ms. Boynton, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 10:12 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Higgins

Approved: 2/14/17

Abbreviations:

CASE	Cooperative Association for Special Education
CSC	Concord School Committee
CCSC	Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
CPS	Concord Public Schools
CCRSO	Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCHS	Concord-Carlisle High School
CHPS	The Collaborative for High Performance Schools
CSEC	Comprehensive Sustainable Energy Committee
CPW	Concord Public Works
CTA	Concord Teachers Association
DESE	Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
FAAC	Financial Audit Advisory Committee
FINCOM	Finance Committee
MASC	Massachusetts Association of School Committees
MIAA	Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association
MSBA	Massachusetts School Building Authority
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
OPEB	Other Post-Employment Benefits
RTI	Response to Intervention
SEPAC	Special Education Advisory Council
YRBS	Youth Risk Behavior Survey