

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Concord – Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
Ripley Building
November 14, 2017

Present: Heather Bout, Chair, CSC; CCSC
Johanna Boynton, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
Dan Conti, Chair, CCSC; CSC
Robert Grom, Vice Chair, CCSC; CSC
Wallace Johnston, CSC; CCSC
Melissa McMorrow, CCSC

Absent: Mary Storrs, CCSC

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, CPS & CCRSD
John Flaherty, Deputy Superintendent of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER – CSC

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Bout at 6:31 PM. She thanked everyone for coming and noted that the meeting was being recorded.

II. RECOGNITIONS

A. CMS Robotics. Sharon Moss introduced the captains and co-captains of the 3 CMS FLL (First Lego League) team. She noted that FLL has grown since its inception over 8 years ago. She stated that there were 2 components to the competition this year: a robot game mission and a creating a solution to a problem. She noted that the theme was water and that the students read *A Long Walk to Water*, which inspired their ideas of creating greater access to water and improved decontamination methods. The 3 teams presented their projects, including: creating a steamboat design that uses solar energy to desalinate water, a water-purifying bicycle and a tank that would filter water. The students spoke in depth about how their designs and ideas would work to improve water conditions for countries in need. Ms. Moss recognized all of the 8th graders who would be moving on. The SC noted how impressed they were with the presentations and thanked Ms. Moss and the students for coming.

Ariel Waldmen, CCHS representative, updated the SC on current happenings at CCHS. She stated that they are preparing for Spirit Week, Powder Puff and a corn hole tournament for students and faculty. She noted that the CC Weather Balloon launch happened the previous week, but would be re-launched the following week due to technical problems. She also stated that the boys soccer program has qualified for the state tournament 32 years in a row and noted that they won the previous night's game, 5-4, advancing them to the State Finals. Ms. Waldmen stated that Girls Cross Country team won the D2 Eastern Mass title for the 1st time since 2001 and Boys Cross Country came in 2nd place, noting that both teams will advance to the All States next week. She stated that \$62,592.30 was raised from Kicks for Cancer, noting that this was a new record. She stated that there is an Orchestra performance on December 3rd and the Prism concert will be December 16th. She also noted that they wrote cards to soldiers in Advisory in recognition of Veterans Day.

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Claire Hoey, 217 Central Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Hoey stated that she and those with her were there to talk about the issue of band room availability for practicing percussion. She noted that they do not have the instruments at home, so they really rely on the band room for practicing after school and on weekends. She stated that the band room hasn't been available this year like it was last year and gave examples of times/days. She noted that they aren't allowed to practice in a classroom without teacher supervision, which is proving to be an issue with practicing on the weekends. She stated that it was important to have the band room accessible for practicing on the weekends and over breaks because they have Honors requirements for concert band as well as several auditions coming up.

2. Elana Alevy, 329 Heald Road, Carlisle, MA. Ms. Alevy stated that many of the students have had experiences where they have gone to practice in the band room and were told that it couldn't be unlocked due to the fact that there wasn't a teacher there to practice with them.

3. Minjae Song, 36 Hawthorne Hill, Concord, MA. Ms. Song stated that the maintenance staff recently told her that she couldn't use the practice room because there was no instructor present, even though there was a teacher in the band room.

4. Amy Hoey, 217 Central Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Hoey stated that she has gone through the correct channels and still feels as if no one is working with her. She noted that there are policies being cited, but questioned where they were. She stated that she has brought her daughter to practice and been told that she needs to pay to use the room. She noted that the students are just trying to meet class requirements and have to practice. She questioned why the students couldn't practice and stated that if there are policies in place that are preventing the students from practicing, that they need to be changed.

5. Deborah Alevy, 329 Heald Road, Carlisle, MA. Ms. Alevy stated that the Program of Studies states that the students will actively be preparing, noting how imperative it is that the students have access to the practice rooms. She requested a clarification of the policies in regards to access and liability. She questioned the difference between using the band room after school unsupervised and on the weekends. She proposed creating a permission slip/waiver similar to those used on field trips that would free the schools for liability should anything happen.

Ms. Bout stated that she could not provide an answer immediately, but would research the issue with Dr. Hunter and follow up with them.

6. Sarah Wiener, 20 Bow Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Wiener questioned the amount of information that has been gathered related to absenteeism and the calendar discussion. She noted that it seemed very limited in scope and recommended it be looked at on a month-to-month basis. She stated that she is concerned that they are only pulling out days of high absences and noted that there was no mention of paying substitute teachers on high absence days. She questioned if they were looking at the details as well as they could.

Ms. Bout stated that the goal was to look at all of the data and she hears Ms. Wiener's concerns. Ms. Bout noted that there was a public forum to collect public input the following night at 7:00 PM at the CCHS Learning Commons.

Ms. Wiener stated that having the holidays off this year for her elementary and middle school children was a huge relief and made a very big difference.

IV. READING OF THE MINUTES

A. Open Session – CPS Meeting 9/12/17. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Grom, to approve the CPS Meeting minutes from 9/12/17. The motion was unanimously approved.

V. REPORT FOR DISCUSSION

A. FY19 Budget Memo to School Committee – CPS/FY19 Line Item Budget – CPS. Dr. Hunter stated that she would be presenting on the Pre-K – 8 Budget, noting that it was a 1st draft. She stated that they have been doing historical work, current spending, trends/patterns and projections, noting that the entire administrative team has been involved in the process. Dr. Hunter stressed many of the educational highlights at CPS, including: class size, RTI, curriculum alignment work, K-5 Spanish, middle school Latin elective and the STEAM project. She reviewed the current enrollments and staff numbers at each school as well as future projections. She noted that a lot of the budget increases are not additions, but are maintaining the increases being absorbed this year. Dr. Hunter reviewed the budget drivers, including: contractual teacher increases, special education costs, non-teacher salary adjustments, custodial/maintenance increases, early childhood special education, assistant facilities manager position and additional increases. She stated that the total increases account for \$2.7 million, or 7.44%.

Dr. Hunter stated that they analyzed their efficiencies and needs to identify areas where changes could be made without impact to the high quality to the educational programming. She stated that the areas identified for reductions were: instructional supplies and materials, computer instructional hardware, K-8 library assistants and support staff,

teacher and tutor enrollment staff, maintenance contracted services and additional reductions. Dr. Hunter stated that the total reductions would be \$910,924, dropping the overall increase to \$1,826,769, or 4.96%. She noted that if it were necessary to make further reductions, there was another small layer of possibilities, but that they would be close to cutting core educational services at that point.

Dr. Hunter stated that FINCOM has proposed a tentative 2.25% budget increase, which would result in a \$910,000 gap with the proposed 4.96% increase they are bringing forward.

Mr. Johnston questioned if the special education staff reductions would be reinstated in the future and Dr. Hunter stated that it would depend on the needs of the students. He also questioned the library assistant positions and Dr. Hunter stated that the discussions have been that they believe they can get to a volunteer system. Ms. Boynton questioned the early childhood special education programming increases. Dr. Hunter stated that the special education out of district costs are substantial and that they needed a cohort of students to cluster together with similar needs, which they feel they have in Pre-K and K. She stated that it felt like a smart, sensible starting point for the program, noting that they were proactive costs savings.

Mr. Johnston noted that it's important to remember that they made a conscience effort 2 years ago to bring CPS teachers length of service in line with the CCHS teachers as well as needing to maintain new buildings. He also noted that increases in special education costs were unseen. He noted that they would have money built into the budget going forward. He acknowledged all of Dr. Hunter's hard work on the budget.

Dr. Hunter encouraged everyone to read through the budget information available online, asking for comments and feedback. Ms. Bout thanked Dr. Hunter for her thoughtfulness and time with the budget preparation. Dr. Hunter noted that they don't take the staff reductions lightly. Ms. Boynton thanked Mr. Flaherty as well for all of his work on the budget.

VI. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to approve CMS trip to Washington, D.C. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the CMS trip to Washington, D.C. The motion was unanimously approved.

B. Vote to accept \$250 from Dunkin Donuts to Concord Public Schools. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to accept \$250 donation from Dunkin Donuts to the Concord Public Schools. The motion was unanimously approved, with thanks.

VII. CALL TO ORDER – CCSC

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Conti at 7:59 PM and he noted that the meeting was being recorded. Ms. Bout stated that the CSC meeting remained in session.

VIII. READING OF THE MINUTES

A. Open Session – Jt. Meeting 9/26/17. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the Joint Meeting minutes from 9/26/17. The motion was unanimously approved.

IX. CHAIRS & LIASONS REPORT

Ms. Bout stated that she had the honor of joining the delegation of 20 people from Concord to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the sister city relationship with the town of Nanae, Japan. She stated that it was an incredible trip and the schools in Nanae expressed interest in having more connections with us. Ms. Bout stated that they named a street in Nanae "Concord Street" of which she attended a ribbon cutting ceremony for while she was there. She also noted that a group of students would be going over to Nanae from Concord in the spring.

Mr. Johnston recognized Tom Curtin, long time employee of CCHS, noting how critical he was to the exchange programs. He stated that these types of programs are a lot of work and noted that Concord is one of the few communities who maintain exchange relationships.

Mr. Grom stated that the Campus Advisory Committee held its 2nd meeting, noting that Kathy Campbell from CDW attended the meeting and went over big picture questions. Mr. Grom stated that the next meeting was a week from today, noting that the agenda was full.

Ms. Bout stated that they are still waiting to hear from MSBA regarding the CMS building project. Dr. Hunter noted that she updated MSBA with some of the visioning work that's happening and also resent the work to them that occurred last year.

X. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Hunter stated that she's been very engaged in the Superintendent induction program, noting that she expects to have her report prepared in December. She stated that the consultant has outlined 4 sessions with a large scale planning team and 5-6 sessions with the administrators. She noted that the month of March has been designated for forums for gathering input from the community at large and parents. Dr. Hunter stated that the next step was to decide on the constitution of the planning team of 35 members and then to recruit in the month of December. Dr. Hunter noted that she joined the CCHS student and staff chorus at the fall concert and had a lot of fun. She also noted that she joined a group of Thoreau students and their teacher for their presentation at a project-based learning conference, noting how articulate the students were. She stated that they are bringing in a consultant at the middle school to work on RTI. Dr. Hunter stated that they are looking at designs with the structural engineer for the Innovation Lab. She stated that the high school MCAS progression is starting, so they might be asked to pilot a field test in the spring in grade 10.

XI. CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Conti stated that he received 2 emails in regards to the Memorandum of Agreement of the Friends of Fields and the Region. Ms. Bout noted that they received an email regarding access to the band room and an email regarding the school calendar.

XII. REPORTS & ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A. Report of the Calendar Working Group. Ms. Bout stated that they've asked the Calendar Working Group to give the SC an update of the work they have collected and put together so far. Ms. Boynton stated that she is very proud of the work that the group did, noting how thoughtful and professional it was and always kept the students at the center of the discussions. She also stated that they are not alone and that this conversation is very typical at many school districts. She stated that the 4 areas that the group researched were: accommodations, legal reading, absentee rates and community input.

Dr. Hunter stated that the goal was to create a policy that would frame how to accommodate students who may have religious/cultural holiday practices that would have impact on the school calendar, homework or any other frame. She stated that they reviewed policies from surrounding districts, noting that they modeled the draft policy off of Bedford's. Dr. Hunter stated that they met with Karen Thomsen, from the EDCO Collaborative IDEAS Initiative, noting how invaluable her input was to the process. She stated that the policy was then brought to the Policy Subcommittee, brought to the union leadership and back to the Policy Subcommittee. Dr. Hunter stated that the policy was only the beginning of the conversation. Ms. Boynton noted that they attended a cultural proficiency workshop.

Ms. Boynton stated that, in terms of legal reading, that they looked in public school being closed for religious reasons and how the law reads regarding acknowledgement of one's religion or culture that results from being absent. She stated that the law reads that the basis for closing school has to be an operational impact on the education of students. She stated that high absenteeism of students or educators would be operational impact. She noted that if students are unable to attend school due to cultural practices, the law reads that they must be excused from work and provided an opportunity to make up the missed work and that no adverse effects are imposed to the students because they are exercising their rights to be absent.

Ms. Boynton shared the absenteeism data for students and educators from the last 2 years, noting that 17% was the highest rate. She stated that they started with all of the days that were higher than a 10% absenteeism rate. Dr. Hunter noted that they spent 2 full meetings looking into the attendance data and felt that this was the best way to summarize the data.

Mr. Johnston stated that there was a forum for community input the following evening at the CCHS Learning Commons at 7:00 PM. He noted that the SC would not be in session during the forum.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnston, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Mr. Conti, to move the agenda item on the discussion of File IMDA – Accommodations for Religious and Cultural Holidays to this portion of the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

E. First Reading – School Committee Policies

- File IMDA – Accommodations for Religious and Cultural Holidays

Dr. Hunter read the Accommodations for Religious and Cultural Holidays policy draft (File: IMDA), noting why certain wording was chosen. The SC discussed the draft, agreeing upon changing the wording from “no more than five days” to “5 days” for completing makeup work, activities, and/or assessments. Mr. Johnston stated that the policy needs to have more guidance in it for faculty. Ms. Bout noted that the policy addresses what happens after a student misses school and Mr. Johnston’s concept is whether or not teachers change their plan based on upcoming days of expected high absenteeism. Mr. Conti questioned if the policy places an undue burden on students by virtue of being out. Ms. Bout suggested having a practice of preparing teachers for days when high absenteeism may occur so the workload could be lessened, therefore decreasing the burden of makeup for those students affected. Mr. Grom noted that teachers play a key role in this and they all go about it differently. Dr. Hunter stated that she envisioned discussing an implementation plan with the teachers after an umbrella policy is approved. Mr. Johnston stated an ideal practice would be that the parents provide the school with a list of days that students may be out for religious reasons ahead of time. He noted that stress is a major factor in this and his fear is that students practicing non-majority religions end up under more stress than students practicing majority religions. Ms. Bout, in summary, stated that there were a few things they need to discuss more and that the SC would like to share the importance of supporting students who will be out for any religious/cultural observance. She noted that they also need to collect input and information from the forum.

Public Comment: Sarah Wiener, 20 Bow Street, Concord, MA. Ms. Wiener stated that she appreciates how the discussion has evolved and noted the Lexington homework policy, which lists holidays and days that homework will not be assigned. She stated that missing a day in the fall is very different from missing a day before a vacation, noting that Jewish holidays occur in the fall. She stated that she is very uncomfortable with the absence of data regarding absenteeism and would like to see more provided. She urged the SC to thoroughly look at all of the data, noting that the data given in this presentation was inadequate.

Ms. Bout stated that the committee looked at a lot of data and Ms. Boynton noted that the Jewish holidays fell below the 10%, which is why they weren’t included in the data. Dr. Hunter stated that she’s happy to bring more data and that it’s a matter of what’s helpful and what should be factored in. Mr. Conti urged everyone to come to the forum the following night.

B. FY19 Budget Memo to School Committees – CCRSD/FY19 Line Item Budget – CCRSD. Dr. Hunter shared several educational highlights, including: rigorous core courses, broad set of electives, strong technology integration, later start time and Q5. She reviewed the assessment history and the shift that has taken place, which has shifted the assessment percentage up 2% to Concord and down 2% to Carlisle, noting the impact moving forward to the budget numbers. Dr. Hunter stated the major cost escalators reflect: teacher salaries, special education, other non-teacher salary adjustments and increases, other increases, OPEB, leasing of 2 buses, maintenance costs, Assistant Facilities Manager position and additional increases, for a total budget increase would total \$2,243,385, or 8%. Dr. Hunter stated that they reviewed areas for possible reductions, including: contingencies, staffing to include - one professional staff, two support position, central office staff and admin support, special education transportation, supplies, materials and professional development, for a total reduction of \$778,503. She stated that the reductions would bring the budget increase to 5.22%.

Dr. Hunter stated that with a 5.22% budget increase, it would equal a \$1.7 million increase to Concord due to the operational increase and assessment change. She stated that Carlisle would probably have a decrease in cost to the high school next year. She stated that FINCOM’s guideline number is 4.71%, noting that all of the moving pieces make this process very complex this year. She noted that they did use some E&D money to come to some of the numbers and

that they have a delta of \$952,000 from the FINCOM guideline on the Concord side. She stated that Carlisle's delta is \$309,000 from the FINCOM guideline. Mr. Flaherty stated that the delta on the Concord side was actually \$1.262 million because there needs to be a match between the 2 communities. He stated that the FINCOM assessment guideline of 4.71% translates into a .72% increase in the operating budget and the 5.22% that they are recommending translates into a \$1,262,000 gap. Mr. Conti questioned what accounts for the difference between the 4.71% and the 5.22%. Mr. Flaherty stated that roughly \$550,000 is due to the assessment shift. He also noted that the E&D numbers have been dropping and OPEB has been putting pressure on available monies to use for current year operations. He noted that this displaces monies available and puts pressure on the E&D account.

C. Alternative Budget Resolution Ideas: Early Retirement/Voluntary Separation. Dr. Hunter stated that there is a corporate mindset evolving around the country in school systems to look at where their salary schedules are. She shared an overview of a possible incentive plan for an early retirement or separation. She noted that a similar incentive was offered in 1991, but was not taken by anyone. She reviewed different variables of a possible program and potential salary savings long-term. Dr. Hunter stated that this by no means was meant as a wanting of a transition of teachers. She noted that she and Ms. McCausland spoke with the union leadership and they were open to keeping the conversation going. Mr. Johnston noted his concern for the sick leave buy back cost and Dr. Hunter stated that it was a 4 year payout. Mr. Flaherty noted that there were 3 tiers to the program and is an existing benefit for the teachers. Ms. Bout thanked Dr. Hunter and Mr. Flaherty for coming up with a creative idea towards budget resolution. Ms. Boynton stated that she thinks they need to have more clarity regarding FINCOM before exploring this idea.

D. Verizon request for Cell Phone Tower. Mr. Flaherty stated that Verizon is interested in putting 4 cell phone towers at CCHS, with a revenue stream as high as \$120,000-\$140,000 per year. He noted that the towers could provide the lighting for the high school road as well. He stated that he could create an RFP, noting that it would not obligate them to anything but would allow them to gather more information. The SC agreed to have Mr. Flaherty move forward with an RFP, purely for the purpose of gathering information.

XIII. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Vote to approve School Committee Policies
- File HB – Negotiations Legal Status
 - File HF – School Committee Negotiating Agents

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Ms. Bout, to approve School Committee Policies, File HB and File HF. The motion was unanimously approved.

B. Vote to accept \$5,000 Virtual High School Donation. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to accept a \$5,000 Virtual High School donation. The motion was unanimously approved, with gratitude.

C. Vote to approve Adult & Community Ed Advisory Committee Nominations. A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to approve the Adult & Community Ed Advisory Committee Nominations as stated in the letter to Dr. Hunter dated 10/20/17. Mr. Johnston noted that one of the new members was contingent upon updating the Community Education by-laws. The motion was unanimously approved.

XIV. OLD BUSINESS

None.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Ms. Boynton, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Mr. Johnston, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting adjourned at 10:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Higgins

Approved: 12/12/17

Abbreviations:

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
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
CCRS	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
ELA	English Language Arts
FAAC	Financial Audit Advisory Committee
FINCOM	Finance Committee
FCCPF	Friends of Concord Carlisle Playing Fields
MASC	Massachusetts Association of School Committees
MIAA	Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
OPEB	Other Post-Employment Benefits
RTI	Response to Intervention
SEPAC	Special Education Advisory Council
SOI	Statement of Interest
SPED	Special Education
SWOT	Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats
YRBS	Youth Risk Behavior Survey