

School Committee Update

Following the meetings of October 23, 2012, and October 30, 2012.

CCHS Building Project

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) completed the review of the requested submittals and determined that the District has brought the project back into compliance with the terms of the Project Funding Agreement (PFA). Design Development documents submitted to the MSBA on August 23, 2012, show a project that is in compliance with project scope, total project budget and project schedule. Letters from the Concord and Carlisle Boards of Selectmen expressed the Selectmen's continued support for the project and for the building design. The review by the MSBA is presented in detail in the October 25, 2012 letter (www.cchsbuilding.org/pb/documents/docs/MSBA_102512.pdf).

Funding will be reinstated after the completion of several action items:

- Clarification of the Lighthouse and Pathways student support programs
- Consideration of interchanging the physics and biology lab space
- Submittal of a signed space summary

The District must submit a revised total project budget based on the Design Development documents for the MSBA to review and to be incorporated into an amendment to the PFA. Moving forward, the MSBA will require that the District submit and post a monthly report of project schedule, design and construction milestones, changes to the design, and budget variances or revisions. The MSBA noted that the agency continues to receive numerous communications from Concord citizens and encouraged the District to re-evaluate its communications plan and take whatever steps are necessary to alleviate local concerns.

In response to specific questions from the community and with the goal of clarifying information, the Building Committee has developed a list of frequently asked questions and answers (cchsbuilding.org/pb/wp_8e437b7c/wp_8e437b7c.html). The Building Committee encourages citizens to ask questions by emailing outreach@cchsbuilding.org. The FAQs will be updated regularly. In addition, the MSBA has posted information about the CCHS Building Project in response to specific inquiries from citizens (www.massschoolbuildings.org/news_events/Concord-Carlisle_information).

The Concord-Carlisle School Committee (CCSC) voted to approve a new position for a part-time Building Project Communications Manager. The Communications Manager's responsibilities will include communicating progress to the public, responding to requests for information, submitting articles to local newspapers, and maintaining the building project web site. The Communications Manager will report to the Chair of the Building Committee.

The CCHS Building Committee voted unanimously to proceed with the development of Construction Documents. The committee discussed the cost impacts and the risks of delaying progression of the project into the Construction Document phase. The goal is to maintain the schedule as originally proposed and to begin construction in March 2013. This schedule is the most efficient and cost effective as relates to materials (especially steel and concrete), construction personnel, and seasonal constraints.

More information is available at www.cchsbuilding.org. The joint School Committee/Building Committee meeting on October 30, 2012, was recorded and can be viewed on CCTV (www.concordtv.org).

Report of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC, a subcommittee of the School Committee, presented its final report on student transportation options. The TAC was "responsible for researching all feasible methods of providing safe, economic, reliable transportation to students in CPS and CCRSD." The TAC collaborated extensively with existing Town Committees and Boards and with Town departments and staff; the TAC membership included

former and present members of the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Planning Board, Community Preservation Committee, Citizens Transportation Committee, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Safety.

The TAC investigated safety and level of service. The committee reviewed equipment, accidents, driver performance and training, and bus and depot security; the committee cited resources that include national and state transportation associations, interviews with the Transportation Managers from our district and from “peer” districts and public safety officers. With regard to safety, analysis of public versus private transportation demonstrated no inherent advantages or disadvantages between public and private systems. Current federal and state regulations mandate a high level of service for student transportation. An individual school district’s oversight, whether the bus operation is public or private, is the most important factor in maintaining a high level of service.

The TAC investigated more than 20 properties in Concord and surrounding communities for consideration as a bus depot location. The committee used an evaluation matrix for potential locations that took into account: current owner, location, size, existing use, cost, and contiguity and zoning issues (neighbors, wetlands, environmental issues, agricultural use, traffic flow). The properties were given a ranking of 1-5. The three top-ranked properties were the Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP), the Concord former landfill site (755 Walden Street), and the state-owned parcel between CMLP and the Route 2 rotary. The committee consulted with the Town Manager, Natural Resources Commission, Planning Board, and Concord Public Works to evaluate these properties further and presented issues to consider with each piece of property. The Concord former landfill site emerged as the most likely location to support a bus depot.

The TAC developed a framework to assess comparative costs and benefits between owner-operated transportation services and contracted transportation services. The committee developed estimates for expenses associated with owner-operated transportation: cost of land acquisition, construction expenses, permitting fees, bus fleet acquisition, maintenance expenses, and personnel expenses. The TAC used this information to investigate 5 different scenarios:

		Startup Cost	Year 1 Operations	5 Year Operations	Startup + 5 Yr Operations
Option 1	Rebuild bus depot; CPS and CCRSD In-House (current model)	\$1,100,915	\$2,609,838	\$13,741,291	\$14,842,206
Option 2	Rebuild bus depot; CPS In-House; Outsource CCRSD	\$1,100,915	\$2,703,125	\$14,631,073	\$15,732,073
Option 3	Rebuild bus depot; Outsource all operations	\$1,100,915	\$2,222,265	\$11,351,385	\$12,452,300
Option 4	No depot; Retain fleet; Outsource all operations	\$0	\$2,206,726	\$11,265,522	\$11,265,522
Option 5	No depot; No fleet; Outsource all operations	\$0	\$1,914,631	\$10,938,631	\$10,938,631

The TAC identified potential revenue sources: Town of Concord and CCRSD debt exclusion, CPS and CCRSD operating budgets, CPS and CCRSD Capital Construction Stabilization Funds, sale of CPS property (Strawberry Hill Road or Burke land), usage fees, CCRSD MA regional transportation reimbursement, and CCRSD MA METCO transportation grant.

The full TAC report is at www.concordpublicschools.net/schoolcommittee/transportation/2012-10-22-report.pdf and all TAC documents are available at www.concordpublicschools.net/transportation-advisory-committee.

Report of the Citizen's Transportation Committee (CTC)

The CTC presented their report to the School Committee. The CTC's charge was "to search diligently for ways to maintain the existing bus transportation department." The CTC presented information on the composition of transportation department, level of service, safety factors, cost analysis, and social factors and intangibles. The CTC recommended that the Districts: commit to keeping transportation in-house for at least 5 years, keep transportation in its current location, maintain the current level of service, and encourage bus ridership. The full CTC report is at www.concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_BComm/CitizenTransMaterials/CTC%20Final%20Report10.19.12B.pdf and CTC documents are available at www.concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_BComm/CitizenTransMaterials/

Planning for Long-term Student Transportation

At the October 30, 2012 Joint School Committee Meeting, the Committees discussed the issue of long-term student transportation. The discussion touched upon issues that included concern about financing a bus depot, the desire to work collaboratively with the Town of Concord to share resources, and how to obtain updated information about the cost for outsourcing. The Committees unanimously approved a Feasibility Study of the Concord former landfill site in order to further investigate the possibility of using that location for a bus depot. The study will cost approximately \$50,000 and the expense will be split between CPS and CCRSD in a 60:40 ratio.

School Budgets

The goal of the School Committees and the school administration is to develop budgets that preserve the strong programs at CPS and CCRSD but are respectful of the taxpayers of Concord and Carlisle. The CPS budget contains an increase of 4.9% for a total of \$31,223,381. Main factors driving the increase are: salaries, transportation costs, special education tuitions, and enrollment-driven staffing increases. The CCRSD operating budget increase is 2.64% for a total of 24,271,987. Major factors driving the increase are: salaries, OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits), technology, transportation costs, retirement, legal fees, and other escalations. The enrollment ratio at CCHS has also shifted toward Concord. Superintendent Diana Rigby and Deputy Superintendent of Finance and Operations John Flaherty presented the preliminary school budgets for 2013-2014 (FY14) to the Concord and Carlisle Finance Committees and responded to specific requests from the Committees. Information is available in the Budget Information section of the district web site at www.concordpublicschools.net/budget-information.

Other Business/Reports

The Committees voted to approve 12 district policies to comply with the Gender Identity Anti-Discrimination Statute, Michael's Law (emergency response), and changes to Executive Sessions. The Regional Committee accepted a gift from the Ruettgers Family Charitable Foundation to fund the Ruettgers Seminars and Lecture Series, an enrichment program at CCHS. The Regional Committee also voted to approve planning for a World Challenge Trip to Bolivia in the summer of 2013.

For more information, please go to the School Committee page on the district web site, www.concordpublicschools.net/school-committee. All School Committee meetings are recorded and rebroadcast on CCTV live or as video-on-demand (www.concordtv.org).