

## **School Committee Update**

A summary of meetings in May and June 2013

### **Organization of the School Committees**

On May 14, Johanna Boynton and Kathi Snook were welcomed and seated along with returning Concord Public School (CPS) Committee members, Pam Gannon, Phil Benincasa and Jennifer Munn. Officers for the 2013 -2014 year were elected unanimously. Pam Gannon will serve as Chair and Kathi Snook will serve as Vice Chair.

On May 28, the 2013 -2014 Concord Carlisle School Committee (CCSC) was seated, including new members, Kathi Snook and Johanna Boynton and returning members, Louis Salemy, Melissa McMorro, Pam Gannon and Jennifer Munn. Louis Salemy was elected Chair and Jennifer Munn was elected Vice Chair. All votes were unanimous.

Student Senate Representatives to the CCSC will be Elizabeth Pacelle and Cecelia Spiers.

### **Email Protocol for Contacting School Committee Members**

In order to be certain that all School Committee members receive letters and messages sent by email, Pam Gannon asked that people go to the School Committee page ([www.concordpublicschools.net/school-committee](http://www.concordpublicschools.net/school-committee)) on the District web site and use the link at the bottom of that page to contact the CSC or the CCSC. School Committee members are not receiving communications consistently, when emails are sent to individual email addresses. It is the responsibility of the School Committee Chairs to respond to emails.

### **Public Comments at School Committee Meetings**

Due to a healthy increase in the number of people attending and commenting at School Committee meetings, we are introducing a new form to help us with our record keeping. A blue "comment form" is now available in ample supply at each meeting. We are asking citizens who wish to make a comment, to help us by jotting down their names, street addresses and a brief description of the nature of their remarks, prior to participating in the public comment period of the meeting. We truly appreciate your efforts to help us by adopting this new process.

### **Superintendent Evaluation**

Several School Committee members attended an Education Collaborative (EDCO) presentation on the new superintendent evaluation system that will be used this year. In addition to this session, a workshop and online training was provided earlier in the year. The new system involves a comprehensive process that uses rubrics to assess professional practices. These rubrics are supported by a specified set of standards, related indicators, elements and descriptors. The superintendent evaluation process is a component of the new Massachusetts Model Teacher and Administrator Evaluation that will be implemented in Concord and Concord Carlisle.

The MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) designed this system to bring consistency, specificity and integrity to the educator and administrator

evaluation process. Superintendents are rated on their performance against both professional practice goals and student learning goals. These goals are aligned with annual district goals. To read more about our District Goals (<http://www.concordpublicschools.net/pdfs/2014-district-goals.pdf>), visit the Superintendent's web page. To learn more about the evaluation system, visit the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/model/>) website. Additionally, the websites of both EDCO and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) offer materials on the new evaluation system.

School Committee members heard the summative superintendent evaluation on June 27. It included material from each member's individual evaluation. Pam Gannon managed the coordination of the evaluation process and drafted the summative report. The Summative Evaluation Report is posted on the Superintendent's website (<http://www.concordpublicschools.net/superintendent>).

### **A Parallel Track for Identifying Long Term Transportation**

In keeping with its vote on April 9, to proceed with planning for private services, if Article 13 failed at Town Meeting, the School Committee asked the administration to draft an RFP to hire a consulting firm to identify the best course for pursuing private transportation services. However, acknowledging the continued preference of many residents to retain an owner-operated system, Phil Benincasa and Johanna Boynton are taking the lead in researching any new, potential sites for a bus depot.

The overarching goal of the Committees is to provide safe, reliable transportation services. It is imperative that we determine a long-term solution before we enter the final year of our temporary leases and so that we can bring predictability to our transportation operations' budget.

### **Consultant Services**

The RFP will seek a consultant able to review the current 3 Tier operation, consider a 2 Tier operation that would allow for a later start time for CCHS, consider a hybrid solution that would retain a smaller, owner-operated fleet, for after school activities, athletics and field trips and recommend any potential other scenarios that would preserve the integrity of the current system and assure financial sustainability. Once approved, an RFP will be executed, a consultant will be selected and retained to work through the summer and present findings to the School Committee this fall.

After reviewing the RFP for consultant services at the May 28 meeting, the Committee voted unanimously to approve an RFP for consultant services at the June 4 meeting.

### **Additional Research on Local Facilities**

At recent meetings, Phil Benincasa provided updates on two state-owned properties that were considered and then determined ineligible. Additionally, there is one school-owned property and a commercial property in Acton that may be available. Phil Benincasa and Johanna Boynton will continue to research options and present their findings to the School Committees in the fall.

For more historical information on the efforts to retain in-town transportation services and the factors and decisions that led to our current course of action, please refer to the Transportation Advisory Committee and Reports and Presentations section on the School Committee website.

## **Reports & Presentations**

### **CPS Enrollment**

Pam Gannon presented the findings of the Enrollment Working Group. The Group examined historical enrollment, projected enrollment and then factored in information from the Concord planning department and real estate sales. Enrollment projections show increases across all schools but particularly at CMS. The administration monitors enrollment monthly and enrollment projections are adjusted annually. Based on their findings, the Group recommends continuing their work through next year. The School Committee agreed to this recommendation.

The Superintendent presented the fall enrollment projections, which she noted will continue to fluctuate throughout the summer. The district seeks to maintain an average class size and faculty student ratio of 19-20 students per teacher. Staff has been added to accommodate the increased enrollment at CMS and Alcott and this year and next support is available to classrooms with larger numbers of students. Additionally, there is a task force at CMS reviewing the schedule in order to manage increased enrollment.

### **TELL Mass Committee Report**

Kathy Codianne, Joyce Carter and Merri Nejimy gave a presentation highlighting the goals and results of the K-8 Tell Mass Committee. The Committee was formed to bring CPS teachers, administrators and School Committee members, together to determine best practices for ameliorating the issues revealed in the 2012 Tell Mass Survey results. The Committee met eight times and jointly produced its report. Additionally, each individual school examined the results of the survey and worked on plans to increase teacher voices in decision-making and improve morale among all members of the district.

Teachers and administrators at CCHS undertook separate efforts to improve the climate at the high school. Diana Rigby also began including two School Committee members in regular meetings with Peter Badalament and leadership from the CCTA.

In its monthly meetings, the Committee studied the key findings from the survey and then proposed actions, like reinstating the K5 Elementary Steering Committee and expanding the CMS Leadership team, to create more leadership opportunities for teachers and greater teacher input into the implementation of district and school-based activities related to curriculum, instruction, assessments and professional development.

The work was painstaking and there were many difficult conversations. However, none of the members shied away from grappling with the issues and each worked hard to

“assume the best intentions” of everyone at the table and assure that there was *voice equity* – the opportunity for all committee members to share their thoughts.

In a number of cases, additional information was necessary to develop long-term solutions. For instance, identifying ways to increase the time teachers have to implement new initiatives was an area in which additional research is required. At the end of the year, all members of the Committee agreed that the Committee should continue its work throughout the following year. A highlight to next year’s work will be a series of workshops, led by Donna Hicks, author of *Dignity* and world-renowned conflict resolution expert. Please visit the School Committee website for the Committee’s report (June 11 Agenda and Attachments) and other work related to improving teaching conditions contained in each principal’s *School Improvement Plan* (SIP) on the district website.

### **School Improvement Plans**

The principals’ annual review of the prior year’s School Improvement Plans and the proposed School Improvement Plans for the upcoming academic year are likely the most significant presentations given to the School Committee. These plans set the direction for the districts and guide budget development and resource allocation for the next fiscal year. Faculty and parent members of the School Advisory Councils review these plans and student experiences inform them. They follow regulations designed by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

This year, the principals began their presentations with reports on how each school addressed the results of the Tell Mass survey and each principal reviewed action steps for improving the environment for all members of her or his school communities.

Each of the three elementary schools had specific goals around how teachers would enable students to attain mastery of critical academic standards.

In addition to Math and English Language Arts goals, highlights from **Alcott** include:

- Teachers will set their own grade level agenda and run building based meetings, allowing for some meetings to cover the new Supervision and Evaluation procedures and to continue addressing adoption of the Common Core Standards.
- Every six weeks, grade level meetings will be held during the school day, to discuss student progress in math and English Language Arts (ELA).
- Discussions around shared vision and core values will be a regular part of faculty meetings.
- Sharon will provide more specific and timely communication around the new supervision and evaluation process.
- Postings will strongly encourage Teachers to apply for leadership opportunities, as available.

The full report is available on the School Committee website, within the attachments to the June 11 School Committee agenda.

In addition to Math and English Language Arts goals, highlights from **Willard** include:

- Routine communications from the administration will provide staff with more timely information.
- Grade level teams will meet for extended time, every six weeks, in order to monitor progress on initiatives and identify and remedy issues as they come up.
- Each grade level team will plan and lead one all school assembly to promote a sense of student/grade level pride and a strong sense of community.
- Staff will promote positive collaboration and collegiality through Grade Level Teams, Department Teams, Social Committee, community events and staff book discussions.
- Students in grades 1-5 will learn age-appropriate digital citizenship skills.

The full report is available on the School Committee website, within the attachments to the June 11 School Committee agenda.

In addition to Math and English Language Arts goals, highlights from **Thoreau** include:

- Administrators and teachers will work collectively to develop opportunities to rebuild social and emotional well-being within the school community, including informal “coffees” for staff, facilitated by staff.
- Faculty and building-based meetings will include time for more work to improve upon areas of weakness as revealed in the Tell Mass survey.
- Students and staff will participate in philanthropic activities together.
- The Instructional Technology Specialist will work with grade level teachers to determine projects for each grade level and will provide coaching as needed.

The full report is available on the School Committee website, within the attachments to the June 11 School Committee agenda. Please contact Nancy Peterson, the interim Thoreau School principal, to discuss these and other plans for this upcoming academic year.

In addition to mastery of critical academic standards at each grade level, highlights from **Concord Middle School (CMS)** include:

- Working in teams, teachers will use assessment data to adjust teaching practices and identify and implement appropriate differentiated interventions, as needed.
- Sixth and seventh graders will continue the one-to-one pilot that began last year and will increase use of digital tools to demonstrate mastery of the curriculum.
- Assessment information on effectiveness of the one-to-one pilot will be gathered and presented to all interested parties.
- During professional days, faculty meetings, department meetings and grade level meetings, the principal and assistant principal will facilitate learning the process of the new educator evaluation system.
- The school leadership teams will be expanded to include representation from a broader spectrum of subject areas.

The full report is available on the School Committee website, within the attachments to the June 11 School Committee agenda.

At the June 27 meeting, Diana Rigby provided her progress report on her FY13 Goals, which can be found on the Superintendent's web page. This report provided detailed information about the work completed to meet both her professional practice goals and her student learning goals. As a part of the new evaluation system for all educators, all district goals are closely aligned. The work that Diana reported on matches up with the work the principals and teachers performed at each school building site, to improve teacher and leadership conditions, achieve student mastery of critical standards, enhance student social and emotional well-being, secure operating budget approvals, oversee successful building project milestones and resolve long term transportation issue. The initiatives undertaken to meet these goals dovetail with those reported by the elementary and middle school principals. Peter Badalament provided his report and School Improvement plan for CCHS at this meeting, too. His report also aligned with the Superintendent's goals and progress.

In addition to mastery of critical academic standards at each grade level, highlights from CCHS include:

- Develop effective and collaborative systems for all members of the school community to contribute to decision-making on school-wide practices.
- Provide additional professional development for administrators, department chairs and teachers for analyzing and adjusting instructional practices.
- Maximize individual student learning
- Follow explicit process of allowing time for the school's leadership team (DCG) to bring ideas and initiatives back to their departments for input.
- Spend time talking about 1:1 computing as a faculty.

The full report is available on the School Committee website, within the attachments to the June 27 School Committee agenda.

### **CCHS Former Landfill Remediation**

Stan Durlacher, Chair of the Building Committee, presented on the site exploration of the former landfill located beneath the current faculty and student parking lot. Kathleen Campbell, an engineer from CDW, came to two meetings to present findings and remediation recommendations for the former landfill site.

Stan went through the entire project timeline, showing the process by which the contaminants were discovered. He noted that because the MSBA limits reimbursement for site work, the costs for landfill remediation would have to be borne by the district. These costs were never a part of the project funding; however, soil borings did lead to the discovery of subsurface contaminants and the cost of these initial studies was borne by the project. No evidence of contaminants near the new building location was found.

Once contaminants are discovered, it is the owner's responsibility to remediate. Kathleen Campbell presented maps of the hot spots, details on the nature of the contaminants, the regulatory process for achieving a "Permanent Solution," and a timeline. Her presentation

can be found on the School Committee website in the meeting attachments for the June 4 Joint School Committee meeting.

Kathleen Campbell returned to present at the June 27 Joint School Committees meeting. She reviewed her earlier findings and responded to questions raised by School Committee members and community members. This presentation can be found on the School Committee website in the meeting attachments for the June 27 Joint meeting.

Ms. Campbell's presentation explained the benefits of an impermeable cap, including the prevention of mobilization of contaminants through soil and groundwater. She also reviewed alternatives and their shortcomings. Soil Excavation and Off-site removal and Soil Treatment and Solid Stabilization would be significantly more costly.

The Engineered Barrier (impermeable cap) option creates a solution that is safer, less risky and is the most cost effective of the options.

The School Committee voted unanimously to proceed with the Permanent Engineered Barrier.

Next steps include:

- Meet with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Fall 2013
- Prepare Bid Documents, March 2014
- Seek review and Town Board approval, June – September 2014
- Implement Remediation and Submit Response Action Outcome State to DEP, 2015 -2016

### **Other Business Highlights**

The School Committees voted unanimously to approve eight faculty children for enrollment in CPS next year and one faculty student for enrollment at CCHS.

The School Committee unanimously voted to award the General Obligation School Bonds of the District, in the amount of \$32,500,000, to William Blair & Company of Chicago, at the price of \$33,969,582.35, in accordance with all relevant regulations. This action is a part of the planned financing for the building project, which continues on scope, budget and schedule. For more information on this bond award, please refer to the May 28 School Committee meeting minutes.

The School Committee voted unanimously to approve FY14 salary increases for non-bargaining employees, with a range between 2-4%.

The School Committee voted unanimously to approve the new CTA Supervision and Evaluation System.

The School Committee voted unanimously to approve a one year Successor Agreement with the Bus Drivers' Union.