

The School Committees Report

The School Committees are dedicated to supporting the school districts' educational goals for Concord, Carlisle and Boston students while maintaining a transparent public process related to policy decisions. This article is one in a series that is intended to update and inform the residents of Concord and Carlisle about the districts' on-going activities, initiatives and policies.

Concord Middle School Configuration Committee Recommendations

An element of this year's School Improvement Plan for the Concord Middle School was to study and make recommendations for schedule and space that will best serve the students and increase their potential for learning. The study of the use of space included examining the possibility of placing all the sixth grade students in the Peabody Building and all the seventh and eighth grades students together at the Sanborn Building.

This work was undertaken by the CMS Configuration Committee that was comprised of 22 members that included educators from each subject and grade level, three parents, three administrators and one consultant. To complete the work, the group divided into three subcommittees which were Best Practices Site Visits, Space Configuration and Schedule.

The Schedule Subcommittee is recommending a Master Schedule Framework that features a six day rotation with each day consisting of seven periods all of which are 48 minutes long. This represents a change from the current schedule which consists of six periods in the school day. Each subject will rotate in order though the six day rotation with the goal of improving the students' experience.

A benefit of the new schedule is that students meet with their teachers in core academic classes every day which include math, science, ELA, foreign language and social studies with two periods per day to accommodate the different opportunities for students including music, art, special education, reading, and other electives. The new schedule will allow more options for students in the area of arts and music with choices that include band, chorus, orchestra and general music. The plan keeps teaching positions similar in minutes per day to the current year so there will be no increase or decrease in the number of full time teachers as a result of the recommendation. While some work is still required to address every detail, the new schedule will be implemented in the fall of 2016.

The Space Configuration Subcommittee recommended that the current configuration be maintained for the next three years with a possible change at the end of that period to allow for a building feasibility study to happen and to continue studying how systems such as special education and guidance would work. In addition, there is one grade level that has a larger population than other grade levels in the system and waiting the three years would allow this population bump to move through the middle school level.

Update on School Bus Transportation and Maintenance Center

Town Manager Christopher Whelan along with Public Works Director Richard Reine, members of the Town of Concord Select Board and the School Bus Transportation and Maintenance Center project team attended the January 12 business meeting of the Concord School Committee

to provide members of the school committee and the public with an update on planning for the new facility to be built at Knox Trail.

Since the purchase of the property, the project team has conducted a comprehensive programming process to determine the space needs and studied existing site conditions to understand the opportunities and constraints.

As a result of this work, the project team has identified site requirements for the building, parking, fueling, storm water management and access to the solar array. It has also shaped the development concepts as it outlines site access, topography, the location of wetlands, the location of a gas easement that runs through the parcel, steep grade changes, and site circulation patterns.

The project team has developed a conceptual cost estimate based on the aforementioned information and a proposed building that will be a cost effective pre-engineered metal building with basic interior finishes and code required heating and ventilation systems. Combining the building cost (\$1,319,000), the fuel system (\$135,000), site development (\$1,196,000), contractor (\$397,000), and contingency (\$457,000) brings the estimate of the construction on the project to a total of \$3,504,000; in addition, there are design, project management and other soft costs (\$600,000) that bring the total cost to \$4.1 million.

The available budget for the project is less than the total cost with a variance of \$1,949,000. The question to fund the variance in the budget will be presented to residents at town meeting and at the ballot in April.

School Committee Coffee Scheduled for January 27th

The next School Committee Coffee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 27 at 7pm in the Thoreau cafeteria. These are public forums that allow for more dialogue between members of the School Committee and citizens than at a regularly scheduled business meeting of the School Committee. These meetings are one element in a plan to improve communication and public dialogue between the School Committee and citizens.

The School Committees Contact Information

You can link to the School Committees' emails on the Districts' home page at www.concordps.org. Or, you can email the Concord Public School Committee at concordschoolcommittee@colonial.net and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@colonial.net. You can reach out to the Superintendent and the School Committees through the Your Voice Matters link on the Districts' home page.

School Committee meetings are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend. The meetings are broadcast on CCTV and are available on demand at www.concordtv.org. The district web site (www.concordps.org) contains updated reports, presentations and information on meetings.