

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Concord-Carlisle School Committee
Concord School Committee
Zoom Meeting
April 28, 2020

Present: Wallace Johnston, Chair, CCSC; CSC
David Model, Vice Chair, CCSC
Heather Bout, Chair, CSC; CCSC
Courtland Booth, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC, CCSC
Eva Mostoufi, CCSC

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, CPS & CCRSD
Jared Stanton, Director of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER – CSC

Ms. Bout called the CSC meeting to order on Zoom at 9:02 AM, noting that the meeting would be broadcast and posted via MMN.

She stated that she received an email with feedback on the Remote Learning Plan survey.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. FY20 and FY21 Budget Updates. Mr. Stanton stated that the Business Office is in close-out mode and should have closing numbers fairly soon. He stated that June 22nd is still the anticipated Town Meeting date. Mr. Stanton stated that he is still waiting on the Ways and Means, noting that until the Ways and Means Committee comes out with its numbers, there is nothing new to report on the budget. Ms. Rainey asked if there was any additional unanticipated spending due to remote learning and Mr. Stanton stated that there was some software purchased, but really not going into effect until FY21. He noted that preschool reimbursements will be out on the next warrant. Mr. Booth asked if there was an understanding on the range of possibilities by Ways and Means and Mr. Stanton stated that there are many assumptions based on previous crisis times. He stated that he is not concerned with Chapter 70, noting that he doesn't anticipate any drops lower than the FY20 circuit breaker amount. He stated that the Concord budget is mostly made up of property taxes and expects reductions from the state, but nothing catastrophic at this time. Ms. Bout noted that there is no additional feedback from the Concord Finance Committee because it hasn't been meeting. Ms. Rainey noted that the public hearing is planned for Monday, May 4th.

B. Concord Middle School Project. Ms. Bout stated that the CMSBC met on Thursday, April 23rd, to conduct a reconciliation of estimates for the various design concepts. She noted that the committee is meeting to keep the design team moving, noting that the committee is not making any major decisions that need community input. She stated that there are 4 cost estimates for 4 different design concepts, as well as additional pieces that could be added on. Ms. Bout stated that the committee members are doing some value engineering with the designers and trying to get more insight into the numbers. She stated that the CMSBC would be meeting again on Thursday, April 30th at 7:30 AM to follow up on the numbers. She stated that the CMSBC will be at a point in which community input is needed, and will not move forward at that point without input. Mr. Booth noted that that the original budget predication was \$80-100 million, and the amount over based on initial estimates was not small. He noted that the community should not presume the timetable to have a special Town Meeting in the fall is necessarily so because the chairs will see that this undergoes some debate. He noted that the committee is in the process of seeing how the square foot dimensions were reduced in order to reduce costs and protect the core educational function of the building. Ms. Bout noted that there was also a Sustainability Subcommittee meeting on April 29th at 12:00 PM, as well as one the prior week. Dr. Hunter stated that the benchmark that the Chairs are targeting is getting to where feasibility is closing out a bit to step back and look at the context the CMSBC is operating in. She stated that the CMSBC will need to determine the best method for adequate community input before any final decisions are made.

Mr. Booth questioned how the school buildings are holding up and being protected from use and Dr. Hunter stated that access to the buildings has been restricted through the driveways, police are checking in on the grounds and enforcing restrictions, building checks are occurring, and there is ongoing physical presence. She stated that access to the buildings themselves, outside of the daily building checks, is through the central office and principals. Dr. Hunter asked the community for respect of the school properties during this time while the buildings are vacant.

III. CALL TO ORDER – CCSC

Mr. Johnston called the CCSC meeting to order at 9:19 AM, noting it was being recorded.

IV. CHAIRS & LIASIONS REPORT

Ms. Bout shared a tentative SC joint meeting schedule, including: 5/12, 5/26, 6/9, and 6/23/20. Dr. Hunter noted that the originally planned 2nd meetings for May and June were on 5/19 and 6/16. After discussion, the SC agreed to keep the 6/16 meeting and use the 6/23 or 6/22 date for a meeting prior to Town Meeting. The SC agreed to hold the meetings at 9:00 AM, other than the meeting prior to Town Meeting, unless things change.

V. REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Remote Learning Overview. Dr. Hunter introduced Kristen Herbert, Director of Teaching and Learning, to provide an overview on remote learning. She noted that Ruth Grube, Director of Student Services, as well as all of the principals were also available to comment and/or answer any questions. Ms. Herbert stated that there are 4 phases of remote learning, noting that Phase 1 started on Monday, March 16th, Phase 2 on April 20th, Phase 3 on May 4th and Phase 4 of summer school and fall.

Ms. Herbert stated that remote learning during Phase 1 began after 1 day, making Concord unique from other towns, noting that parents were very appreciative of teachers' efforts. She noted that the District knew from the beginning that the number one priority was the social/emotional state of the students, noting the increased level of anxiety with any pandemic. She stated that the administrators learned that keeping familiar structures in place helps to decrease levels of anxiety. She stated that daily 2-way communication was also set up between teachers and students in all classes and learning activities were centered around enrichment and extension, noting that no new material was presented. She stated that, based on research from other districts and countries that had gone through this before Concord, the District began with the expectation of 20 minutes of work per subject per day, or about ½ day of school. Ms. Herbert noted the creativity of the teachers and enrichment opportunities available, noting that 75% of the students were participating. She stated that teachers, guidance counselors and administrators reached out to see what was preventing the other students from participating. She stated that the District did a laptop distribution for elementary kids and made sure students had connectivity and the emotional support they needed. Ms. Herbert noted that all of this work laid the groundwork for Phase 2.

Ms. Herbert stated that Phase 2 started on Monday, April 6th, noting that social/emotional state of the students and keeping them connected to the school environment are still top priority. She stated that the difference in Phase 2 is that work is mandatory, kids need to participate and new content is introduced. She stated that there is 97% participation rate, noting this is normal and that the schools have individual plans for those kids who aren't participating. She stated that the grading system is credit/no entry, meaning kids are getting noticed for participation but are held harmless if they cannot participate. Ms. Herbert stated that, given the Mass Dept of Education's guidance, the District feels it can cover 25% of what is usually explored in spring content. She noted all of the work being done by teams to determine what the 25% is and what the most important new content and skills were. She stated that the teams have captured everything they're hoping to accomplish, noting that the documents are helping them to plan for Phase 4 in the fall. She stated that Preschool to Grade 5 teachers are sending out emails to the parents and specialists send out their messages as well, all supported by special educators if applicable. For grades 6-12, Ms. Herbert stated that Google Classroom is used, which contains folders for each classroom with lessons, links, videos, etc. Ms. Herbert noted that the remote learning is like a flipped classroom, in which the students do the learning remotely and then ask questions during a session with their teachers.

Ms. Herbert stated that Phase 3 will start on May 4th, noting that Dr. Hunter has been working with union presidents, who in turn work with union membership to negotiate. She noted that this is an unprecedented partnership, noting how productive and constructive it has been. Ms. Herbert stated that, in Phase 3, the District is hoping for: increased

live opportunities with teachers, increased accountability, increased structure, and additional approaches to student engagement. She stated that the feedback from the survey indicated that parents wanted more increased live opportunities. Ms. Herbert recognized the Concord Education Fund, for its donation to fund Zoom. She stated that the goal is to provide 2 live learning sessions with their teachers each week via Zoom or Google Hangouts, noting that the preschool and elementary students' meetings would look like Open Circle. She stated that attendance will be taken at sessions and recorded in Aspen. Ms. Herbert stated that the teachers are coordinating all of the live sessions to ensure sessions are not occurring simultaneously. She stated that the teachers are trying to roll out a learning platform called Seesaw for elementary students like Google Classroom in the middle and high school. Ms. Herbert stated that the District is also trying to give kids virtual milestone events in curriculum and school, such as releasing the turtles into the wild in the 4th grade, book character parades, assemblies, and events for last year in kids' schooling.

Ms. Herbert stated that the philosophy for Phase 4 is inquiry based blended learning. She stated that the goals are to: 1) have a common electronic learning platform for all students to submit work and communicate with educators 2) have adaptive learning tools that mirror techniques from the classroom 3) explore new content and 4) sustain communities and cultures where each member feels safe and supported. Ms. Herbert stated that she feels very confident in the direction the District is going, noting that the principals, teachers and leadership have shifted the balance of their own lives to figure out what's best for students.

Mr. Model questioned why some high school teachers were not conducting virtual classrooms and Ms. Herbert stated that there is a lot of training that has to occur with a change like this, noting that all teachers will be teaching consistently during Phase 3. Mr. Model asked what the plan was to close gaps in curriculum in the fall and Ms. Herbert stated that the District has built in structures for this, by accomplishing what the state has mandated in curriculum and determining where kids are by completing assessments at the end of the school year. She noted that there will be some content reinforcement which does occur normally every fall, but it may be a little bit longer. Mr. Mastrullo noted that the District needs to identify essential concepts the students need going forward, noting that CCHS will be using all resources to support students in filling any gaps. Ms. Herbert stated that the focus will be around skills and ensuring that every student is at grade level or above with English Language Arts and Math skills, in particular. Ms. Mostoufi asked if there would be more face to face meetings with teachers going forward, about the platform being used at CCHS, and attendance tracking. Ms. Herbert stated that there will be more face to face moving forward, including student clubs, and that the District is looking at extending Google Classroom. Mr. Cameron spoke about the RTI support available to students, including face to face time with core teachers. Dr. Hunter stated that the District is very aware of the attendance piece, noting that parents can excuse absences. She stated that Aspen is still available for parents to view students' work to see if their child needs additional support.

Regarding equity and access, Mr. Booth stated that the District is at a 97% participation level, questioning technology access. Dr. Hunter stated that in grades 6-12, the District is 100% solid, and have provided about 40 laptops to families at the elementary level. The principals spoke on the support that the tech specialists have been providing and Ms. Herbert also noted the librarians, curriculum specialists, department chairs, secretaries, and finance staff.

Ms. Grube stated that the Special Education staff have been connecting with students and will be reviewing assessments, noting that the teachers are expecting some regression for all students in all areas. She reviewed tiered intervention, noting that intervention is happening all the time at every level, from general education and special education. She thanked the special education team: principals, vice principals, Ms. Herbert, Dr. Hunter, and the special education staff, giving special thanks to Sue Howard for working with each student on the Lexia reading program. The elementary principals spoke about RTI and the importance of assessments during this time.

Mr. Johnston thanked everyone for attending the meeting and all of their hard work. Dr. Hunter noted that the guiding principles of the Strategic Plan are still the same.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. FY20 and FY21 Budget Updates. Mr. Stanton stated that the Business Office is in close-out mode for FY20, noting that he should have updated numbers available by mid-May. He noted that the District is not paying for any services not rendered. He also noted that he doesn't expect any cuts for FY20, but does not know for certain. He stated that the SC should start to consider what it wants to give back to the towns, noting about a \$68,000 loss in the

food service revolving account and \$100,000 for paying spring coaches 100%. Dr. Hunter stated that the spring coaches were engaged with the kids as soon as school closed and have stayed engaged with kids doing a lot of virtual workouts and social/emotional work with them. She stated that like districts are paying anywhere from noting to full pay, noting that she will work with Mr. Joncas to collect some additional data in terms of what each coach has been doing. Mr. Stanton stated that there is about \$70,000 in athletic user fees that he hopes to reimburse by Friday. He stated that the District can prepay tuitions for FY21, that E&D is currently about 4%, and that he would like to carry over at least \$600,000 in circuit breaker over to FY21.

Mr. Model suggested prepaying what the District can, but preserving everything that's possible in order to keep FY21 secure. The other members agreed. Mr. Johnston asked how athletic fee reimbursements will be made to families and Mr. Stanton stated that families would be credited through PayPal or check. Mr. Stanton stated that if there is no town meeting in either town in July, there would be a 1/12 budget, meaning the District would not be allowed to spend more than 1/12 of its FY20 budget. Ms. Rainey asked if Mr. Stanton had concerns K-8 if the town's revenue is severely impacted and Mr. Stanton stated that it depends on what budget the town has.

B. Superintendent Evaluation. Ms. Bout stated that Ms. Rainey offered to help Ms. Mostoufi manage the superintendent evaluation process. She stated that the priority for the next few months has to be for Dr. Hunter to maintain focus on the planning around the pandemic and remote learning. She stated that the objectives in the evaluation process would be to provide a performance record for 2019-2020 and minimize the extra burden on Dr. Hunter. Ms. Bout stated that she and Ms. Mostoufi recommend that the SC focus on goals agreed upon at the beginning of the year, instead of following the DESE rubric standards. Ms. Bout recommended the following timeline: Dr. Hunter provide a summary of her accomplishments by May 8th, SC conduct personal meetings by May 22nd, SC provide personal evaluations by May 29th, Ms. Rainey and Ms. Mostoufi would summarize by June 5th and provide report to SC at June 9th SC meeting. Ms. Rainey stated that she would like to be a little more formal and would like to work with Ms. Mostoufi and Dr. Hunter with a slightly altered and structured approach to include some of the DESE rubric.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Committee Planning Relative to COVID 19 Adjusted Needs. Mr. Johnston stated that the SC needs to collectively identify how it needs to operate and be helpful in the foreseeable future. Ms. Bout noted that the SC needs to be helpful during this time, and not a hindrance. Mr. Booth recommended that the SC slow down to get more insights on data and perspectives driving decisions. He stated that the role and responsibility doesn't change, but the "how" of information exchange and dialogue can and should change. He noted this SC meeting that included many educators, recommending that this happen more at meetings going forward. Mr. Johnston stated that understanding what the educators are accomplishing and trying to accomplish is important in framing what the SC needs to do in terms of budget and policy. Dr. Hunter stated that this conversation is important in order to have clarity and determine flow and structures. Ms. Rainey stated that she is unable to decide the SC's role without going through all of the options. Mr. Model stated that the SC should be included in the strategic process on the range of options for the upcoming school year. Ms. Bout asked how often the SC would like to have administration be present at future SC meetings and Mr. Booth stated that it should be determined by the agenda. Mr. Johnston stated that decisions are being made more quickly during this period, recognizing that the SC needs Dr. Hunter to make decisions and adjustments, noting that the SC shouldn't do anything that slows down her work. Dr. Hunter stated that she hopes the pace is different now, knowing that school is closed through the end of the year, which will provide more opportunities to bring things in different ways to the SC. She noted that this feedback is very helpful, suggesting the SC revisit this again in 2 weeks. Ms. Rainey noted that there were no community questions anymore at SC meetings, recommending that the SC restore this somehow. *Mr. Model left the meeting.*

VII. ACTION ITEMS

A. Vote to Approve Staff Child Enrollment 2020-2021. A motion was made by Mr. Booth, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Ms. Rainey, for both CSC and CCSC, to approve the request of Ms. Jonson to enroll her daughter in CPS/CCRSD beginning August 2020 and that tuition be waived. The motion passed by roll call: Ms. Rainey, aye (for both); Ms. Mostoufi, aye; Bout, aye (for both); Booth, aye (for both); Johnston, aye (for both).

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Executive Session: A motion was made Mr. Booth, for both CCSC and CSC, seconded by Ms. Rainey, for CCSC and CSC, for The Concord School Committee and Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee to enter into Executive Session under Purpose 2 of the Open Meeting Law: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and Purpose 3 of the Open Meeting Law: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body, and not return to Open Session. The motion passed by roll call: Rainey, aye (for both); Bout, aye (for both); Booth, aye (for both); Mostoufi, aye; Johnston, aye (for both).

V. Adjournment

A motion was made by Ms. Rainey, for both CSC and CCSC, seconded by Mr. Booth, for both CSC and CCSC, to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the CCSC meeting adjourned at 12:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Higgins

Approved: 5.15.20

Abbreviations:

CCHS	Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRSD	Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC	Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA	Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
CMS	Concord Middle School
CMSBC	Concord Middle School Building Committee
CPS	Concord Public Schools
CSC	Concord School Committee
OPM	Owners Project Manager
SC	School Committee