

The School Committees Report: Joint Meeting with Concord Finance Committee, Public Safety Improvements for CCHS, Applying for Electric Bus Grants

Joint Meeting With Concord Finance Committee

The School Committees held a special meeting with the Concord Finance Committee (CFC) following the Joint School Committee meeting held on July 20th. The meeting was the latest of many efforts by the School Committees and the CFC to deepen the understanding of both how the school operating, and capital budgets are developed as well as how the CFC establishes its annual budget guidelines for town departments including CPS and CCRSD.

District leaders and members of the School Committees outlined how they develop their budgets including statutorily required elements and contractual cost drivers such as staff salary increases. This presentation demonstrated that there is minimal discretionary spending by the school districts outside of legal and contractual obligations. For CPS, 85 percent of the operating budget is spent on staff, and, for CCRSD, 65 percent of the operating budget is staff. The superintendent also outlined the uncertainty in budgets for both Districts created by the transportation costs for the families being housed at the Best Western site. CPS is obligated to provide transportation to all school aged children living at the site to either Concord or their previous home district. While the state will reimburse for some of those costs, the current timing of the reimbursements occurs at least one year after the expenditure which creates a cash flow issue. District leaders are in discussions with both Town of Concord leaders and members of the state legislative delegation regarding manners to address the issue.

The Districts' Capital budgets were discussed; these are built based on needs of each school site as identified by the facilities team and principals. Both districts will be undertaking a full survey of the school sites in the coming school year to help refine the process to identify needs that will be addressed via the capital budget

School Committee members and District leaders also articulated that one of their goals during annual budget development is to craft budget recommendations that are sensitive to the impacts on Concord residents. The School Committees have adopted that stance as one of the annual goals for the past several years.

Finance Committee members outlined their process to develop their guideline recommendations using a three-pronged approach. The first is to develop a range of sustainable tax growth for the town looking at the levy limit and variety of economic indicators such as inflation. Second, they work to understand the budgetary needs of the Town and the Schools. And finally, they engage with the community.

Interested individuals can review the tape of the meeting on the YouTube channel on the Minuteman Media Network; the combined meeting followed the July 20th Joint School Committee meeting.

CPS School Committee Seeks to Participate in Regional Application to Secure Grant Funding for Electric Buses

The Concord School Committee voted to participate in a regional effort that hopes to secure grant funding to pay for a portion of up to four electric buses. Several Massachusetts based school districts seeking to electrify their bus fleets are working together with the hope of submitting a grant application for a combined 25 buses amongst the districts. While it was not certain that the districts would be able to compile and file the grant application, if it was filed, the districts would be notified after the first of the new year if they were successful. Even if the grant was secured, there would be a

delta between what the grant would pay and the cost of the buses which would be incurred by CPS.

Members stated that this was an opportunity that they could not let pass as it would allow the District to expedite one of their sustainability goals of addressing the bus fleet.

In addition to the grant to offset costs for purchasing electric buses, Committee members and District leaders will be exploring a grant to help offset the costs of upgrading the infrastructure associated with managing an electric bus fleet including quicker charging batteries and charging stations.

Public Safety Improvements at CCHS

School Committee members worked with District leaders to fund and install safety improvements on the CCHS campus that include wi-fi upgrades to expand coverage outside of the school building, and to install so-called blue light phones. The wi-fi will be expanded to areas outside both main doors to the building as well as at the nurses, and main offices. The blue light phones are designed with a bright blue light on the station that will be seen from most points on the campus and the stations contain communication equipment that will connect callers directly to the Concord Police and Fire Departments. Both the wi-fi and blue light phones are scheduled to be installed for when students return to school for the 2023-24 school year in August.

Upcoming School Committee Meetings:

August 15, 6pm	Joint School Committee Meeting, Ripley Conference Room 4
August 22, 6pm	Joint School Committee Meeting, Ripley Conference Room 4

Zoom links are available on the District website, www.concordps.org. Minuteman Media Network videos all meetings which are available for viewing at either <https://concordma.gov/2335/Minuteman-Media-Network-MMN>, or at www.concordps.org/schoolcommittee/.

Sign up for School Committee News Individuals who are interested in knowing more about the role of the School Committees as well as receiving the latest updates on school budgets and informational events are encouraged to enroll in the "School Committee News" Subscriber List. These updates will include timely information such as meeting dates and agendas, minutes, event announcements, and the School Committee Report. Individuals can sign up at www.concordps.org/school_committee_subscriber_list. Individuals interested in the Concord Middle School Building Committee (a Town of Concord Committee) can find updates and all relevant materials at <https://www.concordps.org/cms-building-project/cms-building-committee-updates/>

The School Committees Contact Information

Concord School Committee Alexa Anderson (Chair of CSC), Court Booth, Tracey Marano (Chair, Regional School Committee), Cynthia Rainey, and Carrie Rankin (Vice-Chair of CSC)

Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee is comprised of the five Concord School Committee members as well as two Carlisle representatives, Carrie Patel, and Sharon Whitt (Vice-Chair, Regional School Committee)

METCO Representatives Domingos DaRosa, and Ayesha Lawton

Individuals 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@concordps.org and the Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee at concordcarliseschoolcommittee@concordps.org. Interested individuals are encouraged to sign up for the School Committees subscriber's list which is also on the District's web page.