

Present: Tracey Marano, Chair, CCSC; CSC
Sharon Whitt, Vice Chair, CCSC
Alexa Anderson, Chair, CSC; CCSC
Carrie Rankin, Vice Chair, CSC; CCSC
Courtland Booth, CSC; CCSC
Cynthia Rainey, CSC, CCSC
Carrie Patel, CCSC

Absent: Ayesha Lawton, CPS METCO Rep
Domingos DaRosa, CCRSD METCO Rep

Present from Administration: Dr. Laurie Hunter, Superintendent of Schools, CPS & CCRSD
Robert Conry, Asst. Supt of Finance & Operations, CPS & CCRSD
Kristen Herbert, Asst. Supt. of Teaching & Learning, CPS & CCRSD

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Marano called the CCSC meeting to order at 5:00 PM and Ms. Rankin then called the CSC meeting to order.

Ms. Rankin stated that the meeting would be focused on the responses to FINCOM’s questions around the budget. Dr. Hunter noted that this was an annual activity that lays the foundation for the new budget build.

II. DISCUSSION

A. FY23 and FY24 Budget Update. Mr. Conry stated that the FINCOM asked the district to respond to specific questions and to provide 5-year projections. He stated that Administration has been working on the zero based budget approach with department administrators and principals. He reviewed the Strategic Priorities, including multiple supports to students, mental wellness, cultural competency, and innovative environments. He stated that the FY23 and FY24 budget updates were included at the last school committee meeting, but were also linked to his presentation.

B. Spending Levels. Mr. Conry stated that spending levels were summarized by functional expense. Regarding the ESSER grants, he stated that ESSER II was spent down in both districts, the remainder of CCRSD ESSER III was expected to be spent down in FY24, and ARPA IDA were essentially spent down. He stated that ESSER III had a little bit of a higher balance for CPS, due to a funded position coming in a little less than anticipated. Mr. Conry stated that there was one FTE funded by ESSER III that could be offset by other means and there were no additional follow up grants coming from the government.

C. Capital Program. Regarding Tier II capital (\$1 million to \$5 million), Mr. Conry stated that there was a warrant article in the FY25 budget process for \$2,340,000 for an amenities building – including design costs, professional service fees and construction costs, based on a feasibility study with some cost escalation. He noted that there has been talk about fundraising efforts to raise funds for a track and field at CCHS, with the hopes that fundraising would limit the contribution required by the district.

Mr. Booth stated that he was not a supporter of zero based budgeting, noting that it hasn’t fundamentally changed cost control efforts, noting that the value of a guideline gives a “do not exceed”. Regarding capital, he noted that solar at CCHS was being discussed. Ms. Marano stated that she, Ms. Anderson, and Dr. Hunter met with Dean Banfield from the Solar Task Force and requested a meeting with Dave Wood from the Light Plant in order to determine what the Light Plant’s ability to accept solar was. Ms. Rankin noted how impressed she was that there was no impact to the general fund after spending down the ESSER II and ARPA funds. Mr. Conry stated that spending level changes would be driven by the Strategic Plan, leveraging existing resources where possible.

D. Enrollment Impacts. Mr. Conry stated that updated enrollment numbers were anticipated in December 2023, noting that the most recent NESDEC projections were from last year. Dr. Hunter noted the conversations around the 40B project, NOVO Riverside Commons complex, and MBTA communities. She reviewed current enrollment numbers, noting that it was difficult to predict the impact of the new CMS building.

E. OPEB (for CCRSD). Mr. Conry shared an overview of OPEB, noting that it was a trust to fund healthcare costs for retirees. He stated that CCRSD had a healthy level of funding relative to a lot of municipalities and regional school districts. He stated that the funding ratio was 42% and annual contributions of \$550,000 were budgeted in both FY23 and FY24.

F. Education Reform and Mandates. Mr. Conry stated that there were costs related to supporting the homeless students, which the state was strongly funding. He stated that the federal government was providing \$1,000 per year, per student and the state government was providing \$104 per day, per student. He stated that the overall anticipated funding for the shelter students attending CPS was @ \$338,000 and @ \$79,000 for those attending CCRSD. He stated that these funds would be used for an ELL teacher at Willard, 4 Kindergarten Instructional Assistants at Willard, and a Family Coordinator. Dr. Hunter noted that the number of students had changed slightly, so the funding would be changed slightly. She also stated that there were children who would be enrolling in the preschool from the shelter in the next few weeks, but noted that these students would not be subsidized. Ms. Anderson stated that the only requirement for preschool English language learners was assessing their level of ability with the language, but that there were no legal requirements to service their needs.

G. Additional Information. Mr. Conry shared a five-year trend of rental fees requested by the Town, noting that the increase was due to redirecting the turf light fees from miscellaneous income to facility rental income. Mr. Booth noted that charging for the lights should be included in the rental fee schedule.

Mr. Conry stated that FY24 would be the fourth year of the seven-year phase in of the Student Opportunity Act, which provided increased state aid via Chapter 70 funding to address inadequate funding levels built into the previous Foundation Budget formula. He stated that they increased funding for communities with high percentages of low-income students, but also updated funding for health care costs and special education costs. He stated that there was a possibility that the district would get past the minimum threshold and see some healthy increases. He noted that estimates would be released with the Governor's Budget in mid to late January 2024.

H. 5 Year Projections. Ms. Marano stated that the town of Concord asked for 5-year projections, noting that there were many unknowns that could not be predicted, which was challenging. Dr. Hunter stated there had to be strategies and assumptions made in order to produce the 5-year projections. Mr. Conry reviewed the CPS preliminary five year projections by funding source, noting that FY25 was projected to have a 1.6% increase to the General Fund (not including teacher's salary or COLA increases because it was a bargaining year). He noted that FY26 was projected lower due to the commitment to reduce \$500,000 in middle school expenses when the buildings were consolidated. He reviewed growth across expense categories of teachers, non-teacher salaries, contract services, supplies and materials, OOD tuitions, utilities, other expenses and sick leave/retirement incentives.

Mr. Conry reviewed the CCRSD preliminary five year projections, noting that FY29 was less due to steady spending and moderate growth in grant/revolving funding. He stated that the Other Revenue line was increasing after FY24 due to interest rates making a big difference in the interest income. He stated that E&D would be slightly reduced, with the net effect of \$150,000 increase to general fund revenue that would help the towns' assessments. Mr. Conry stated that he factored in the impact of the CCHS road and some principle on existing bonds to the debt assessment. He stated that OPEB numbers would be reduced over time. Mr. Conry reviewed the town assessment projections, noting that he held FY25-FY26 constant.

Ms. Anderson noted that the next SC budget meeting would be held on November 14th.

The budget meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin E. Higgins

Approved: 12.5.23

Abbreviations:

AMP	Association of Music Parents
CCHS	Concord-Carlisle High School
CCRS	Concord-Carlisle Regional School District
CCSC	Concord-Carlisle Regional District School Committee
CCTA	Concord-Carlisle Teachers' Association
CEF	Concord Education Fund
CMS	Concord Middle School
CMSBC	Concord Middle School Building Committee
CPC	Community Preservation Committee
CPS	Concord Public Schools
CSC	Concord School Committee
CTA	Concord Teachers Association
DEIB	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
FINCOM	Finance Committee
PD	Professional Development
RF	Radio Frequency
SC	School Committee
SEFAC	Special Education Parent Advisory Council