

Concord School Committee  
Ripley Conf. Room 4 & Zoom  
December 5, 2023

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 Anderson, Asst. Supt. of Teaching & Learning, CPS & CCRSD

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

T. Marano called the CCSC meeting to order at 6:00 PM and A. Anderson then called the CSC meeting to order.

**II. CCHS Student Update**

Harry Crowley, Felicity Zhang, and Zariah Alves joined the meeting via Zoom. Collectively, they shared updates on winter sports, performing arts, early college decisions, a field trip to the Institute of Contemporary Art, and that the school radio station WIQH has begun broadcasting 24 hours a day.

**III. Recognitions- Unified Basketball**

Coach Keene, Coach Lee, Coach Nickerson, and speakers Eric Lee, Emerson Bartlett, and Brendan Douglas presented a slide show showcasing the team's success this season. Emerson Bartlett, who is a member of the CCHS Unified Basketball team, shared how much he and his team enjoy playing on the team with his friends, mentors, and coaches. Eric Lee discussed team building, leadership, and new friendships.

**IV. Public Comment**

*Gail Hire, 54 Nancy Rd., Concord MA*

Offered information handouts, which provided studies done showing the effects of working and living in close proximity to a cell phone tower.

*Alicia Boyajian, 77 Westford Rd, Concord MA*

Provided informational sheets from the Environmental Health Trust, and noted that in terms of cell phone cover, there is very little advantage to having the cell phone tower placed on campus over the landfill site. She stated that she would like the Committee to decline the school campus as a cell phone tower location.

*Leela Jacobson, 39 Wallace Terrace, Concord MA*

Stated her concern for financial incentives from cell phone providers that would be offered to the district and wants to make note that telecommunication companies will do what is necessary in their interest.

## V. Consent Agenda

T. Marano moved to approve the Consent Agenda, and C. Booth requested that the SC hold off on approving #1, as there was a reference in the minutes that he is opposed to the Zero Based Budget, but rather he was referencing an emphasis on it as being a panacea. C. Booth to review and send corrected responses for minutes to Administration.

1. Joint Minutes 10/24/23
2. Joint Budget Minutes 10/24/23
3. Audio Material Surplus
4. Staff Enrollment Requests
5. Warrants
  - A. CPS A/P
    - 1044 11/22/2023 \$371,729.18*
    - 1045 11/22/2023 \$87.49*
    - 1038 11/9/2023 \$739,474.50*
  - B. CCRSD A/P
    - 1110 11/22/2023 \$60,475.80*
    - 1111 11/22/2023 \$149.49*
    - 1099 11/9/2023 \$168,491.43*
    - 1100 11/17/2023 \$333,816.44*
  - C. CPS Payroll
    - Pay Date 11/23/2023 \$1,622,482.28*
    - Pay Date 11/9/2023 \$1,653,840.02*
  - D. CCRSD Payroll
    - Pay Date 11/23/2023 \$1,026,267.23*
    - Pay Date 11/9/2023 \$968,334.33*

T. Marano motioned to approve the Consent Agenda; minus the joint minutes from October 24, 2023. Moved by C. Booth, second by C. Rainey, all in favor, aye.

## VI. Correspondence

T. Marano confirmed that from the Region, there were 2 pieces of correspondence, both from the same person regarding the potential cell phone tower.

A. Anderson confirmed that from the district, there was one piece of correspondence about the potential cell phone tower, approximately 12 pieces on the name of CMS, and 3 pieces of correspondence regarding the Washington DC Trip. C. Booth requested that anything surrounding the cell phone tower be referred to as cell phone tower questions, as no decision had been made at this time.

## VII. Superintendent, Chairs and Liaisons Update

Dr. Hunter happily shared that the CCHS Boys soccer team had an undefeated season and brought home the State Championship! She noted that she had invited the team and coaches to join the SC meeting on December 19th, and they proudly accepted.

Dr. Hunter noted that the new middle school has completely been framed and pieces of the building are really taking form and making great progress.

She then explained that DESE was on site last week and visited all 5 schools throughout the district in one day, with a particular focus on certain special education programs. Dr. Hunter explained that at the end of

their visit, DESE left with many positive responses to the district's climate and culture throughout the buildings.

DESE also met with SEPAC. Parent surveys will be reviewed in an iterative process and more will be shared come the spring.

DESE also recently invited Dr. Hunter to meet and discuss supportive measures for their community and share creative and information variations of how each community is making a difference for the homeless community with 22 homeless liaisons from across the state.

C. Rainey recommended that the SC and the public watch the Select Board's recently recorded meeting to hear community concerns about the rising tax bracket.

A. Anderson reported from the Finance Committee that tonight's budget will be discussed and that there has been some recent discussion on capital. She believes that next year there could be some further discussion on reframing how the schools manage capital. She noted that anyone is welcome to attend the budget meeting on December 14th.

## **VIII. BUDGET MEETING**

T. Marano and Dr. Hunter noted that this should have been listed as Budget Discussion and not a discussion on the Cell Phone Tower.

### *A. Superintendent's Recommended CCRSD Budget*

Dr. Hunter confirmed that the regional district budget carries insurance, workers compensation etc. that the CPS budget does not carry. She also noted that the months of building the budget allowed an evaluation of the budget.

### *Presentation*

B. Conry shared slides outlining the FY25 CCRSD Superintendent's Recommended Budget. Throughout the slides, he outlined the zero-based process, the evaluation of needs. It was noted that each line item in the budget is built by Principals, Administrators, and Department Heads. Parallel to this, there is a town budget process, particularly in Concord, with the guidelines process and ongoing communication with Carlisle. B. Conry noted that this is a snapshot of the budget and the flexibility to evolve as needed due to the zero-based budget.

Student enrollment numbers were shared and compared with the peer communities listed in the contract related to coaches' salaries. C. Booth asked that Acton-Boxborough be added to the slide show.

B. Conry confirmed that the budget process objectives are to maintain existing programs and support students, support strategic plan initiatives, and meet legal mandates for special education and homelessness. FY25 Proposed Budget is \$39,085,301.

C. Rainey asked about CPS electric budget vs. CCHS. B. Conry confirmed that the other districts' schools are not more efficient, and the budget was calculated more correctly based on previous usage reports.

C. Booth asked about leaving Minuteman Nashoba Health Group and having a new contract. Dr. Hunter confirmed there will be a new contract with another company prior to the district leaving Minuteman. Dr. Hunter also confirmed that due diligence is being conducted to finalize the most cost-effective solution.

Out of District tuitions were discussed noting that budget offsets from circuit-breaker and IDEA grants decreased.

C. Rainey asks if there is space in the budget for additional out-of-district students. Dr. Hunter confirmed that she discussed this with Angel Charles, Director of Student Services, on the current and potential student enrollment for out-of-district students. A. Anderson asked about the fiscal impact once a student is identified as needing additional services for out-of-district programs. Dr. Hunter confirmed the district does not financially budget for unanticipated out-of-district placements.

B. Conry confirmed that the Circuit- Breaker carryover would be the financial reserve for out-of-direct placements that were not anticipated but deemed necessary.

B. Conry updated about homeless students enrolled in the district. The funds are to be allocated for assistants, an ESL teacher, contract services (translation, etc), and a family coordinator. A. Anderson asked if the pilot program to reimburse transportation for out-of-district students earlier is a one-time funded program. Dr. Hunter noted that she does not anticipate it happening in the future. C. Booth asked if the term homeless is a sensitive word for young children. Dr. Laurie Hunter confirmed.

C. Rainey asked how many grants impact the district's budget and asked to see financial information from grants to identify what the total budget is for special education etc.

A. Anderson asked if the district is able to ascertain how many individuals are taking advantage of the mental health services. K. Anderson confirmed that the district has 50 Cartwheel licenses, and the license allows adding on students based on needs. A. Anderson asked if the district would come to the SC to ask for an increase in financial funding for more licenses. K. Anderson confirmed that would be reevaluated in the spring.

C. Rainey noted that there is a need for the community for financial support to participate in sports programs and believes trainers should be funded through athletic fees rather than operating funds. C. Booth responded that regardless of the fees, the revenue expenses over the last few years should be reviewed to do an analysis of our needs. Dr. Hunter confirmed that the safety regulations for athletics are growing, and to ensure the safety of our students and athletes, adding an additional trainer aligns with state regulations to ensure safety. A. Anderson asked about the family/student yearly fee possible future increase (sports, parking etc.). Dr. Hunter noted that 5 years ago, the fee was increased. C. Booth suggested an assessment to evaluate any upcoming potential increases in fees. C. Rainey confirmed that an analysis would be helpful and that athletics is not part of the core curriculum.

C. Booth asked if the DEIB Director is independent of the METCO program. Dr. Hunter noted that the METCO program belongs with the DEIB director. C. Booth inquired about where consultants are used. K. Anderson confirmed that training by consultants is used to incorporate new programs and curriculums and stay current with the strategic plan.

#### *B. Campus Cell Phone Tower*

T. Marano noted that questions were given out to the town, and the information about carriers was not fully submitted. She stated that she believes the SC is in a holding pattern after hearing from the public and the plan to continually engage with the town.

A. Anderson asked the SC how they would like to discuss this, and believes at some point the SC needs to

decide if this is the right choice for the campus. She also commented about the safety issues and location options on the campus and the landfill site. Dr. Hunter shared that the town does not believe the landfill site is viable.

C. Booth asked if the SC did not move forward with any decision would the town move forward on it independently. A. Anderson asked if the SC should advocate for the town to look for another location for the cell phone tower. C. Booth confirmed that the action of this SC does not bind the action of future School Committees and opportunities and that this conversation has been ongoing for many years.

T. Marano noted the cell phone tower on the high school campus is not going to solve the connection issues downtown and believes the town needs to offer additional information. She confirmed that if the SC does not vote to move forward, the town has confirmed they would look at other locations.

## **IX. Action Items**

### **X. Adjournment**

T. Marano adjourned the CCRSD meeting at 8:20 PM. Concord School Committee to remain in session.

### **XI. Discussion**

#### *A. Superintendent's Recommended CPS Budget*

##### *Presentation*

B. Conry shared the FY25 Proposed Budget of \$46,602,943 which is an increase of \$1,555,767 or 3.45% over the FY24 budget.

C. Rainey asked to have a conversation on the CPS capital budget. A. Anderson confirmed that the budget workshop would include the capital needs of both districts (CPS and the Region) on Thursday December 7th, during the workshop.

#### *B. Community Preservation Committee Letter: Support of Athletic Fields at CMS*

A draft letter to the CPC in support of the request for the CMS athletic fields was shared.

#### *C. Policy FF - Facilities Naming*

The Committee reviewed the MASC policy regarding naming a facility.

C. Booth discussed the community's interest in the naming of CMS and that he wondered if renaming the school would become a distraction or supersede the town's policy.

## **XII. Action Items**

### **XIII. Adjournment**

A. Anderson adjourned the CSC meeting at 9:48 PM.

Approved: 2.6.24