

JOINT SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Concord School Committee  
Concord-Carlisle School Committee  
Ripley Building  
Concord, MA  
January 22, 2008  
6:30 p.m.

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**Minutes**

PRESENT:

Mr. Peter Fischelis  
Mr. Michael Fitzgerald  
Mr. Chad Koski  
Ms. Jan McGinn  
Ms. Rebecca Shannon  
Mr. Jerry Wedge

PRESENT FROM ADMINISTRATION:

Dr. Brenda Finn  
Mr. John Flaherty  
Ms. Diana Rigby

ABSENT:

Mr. Fabian Fondriest

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting of the Concord School Committee was called to order by Mr. Fitzgerald for CCSC and Mr. Fischelis for CSC at 6:35 p.m. The SAC would be present at a future meeting.

Ms. McGinn asked the Student Advisory Council representative about the passing time between classes. How time is needed to get between classes. Mr. Fischelis stated there was a pilot last year where a 4 minute passing time was instituted as an alternative to starting the school day earlier. Marree Budris stated to start school earlier would detract from time students have for getting extra help, meeting with teachers, or getting breakfast. The 4 minute passing time can be done.

**II. READING OF THE MINUTES**

A MOTION was made by Mr. Wedge and seconded by Mr. Koski for CCSC and a MOTION was made by Mr. Wedge and seconded by Ms. McGinn for CSC to approve the minutes from the Joint School Committee meeting held on November 27, 2007. The MOTION was tabled.

It was decided to table the minutes from the Joint School Committee meeting held on December 11, 2007.

A MOTION was made by Mr. Wedge and seconded by Ms. Shannon for CCSC and a MOTION was made by Mr. Wedge and seconded by Ms. McGinn for CSC to approve the minutes from the Joint School Committee meeting held on January 3, 2008. The MOTION was voted and unanimously approved.

It was decided to table the minutes taken from the Joint School Committee meeting held on January 8, 2008.

## **V. REPORTS AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

### **B. Presentation on Forensics – CCHS**

Mr. Badalament stated this is a new course that has generated a lot of interest. Students demonstrated a fingerprinting exercise to the School Committee members.

### **A. State of Education in Massachusetts**

Representative Atkins stated the governor is due to release his budget later this week. The Circuit Breaker amount has been raised to \$220M from \$204M this year.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated the special education costs are mounting with no end in sight. We need to find as much relief as we can. He asked how to prevent the bubble from bursting. These are two communities that support education and vote over-rides. He stated towns who don't vote over-rides seem to get more state aid.

A discussion ensued regarding revenue generated from possible future casinos. Mr. Fitzgerald stated this is a short-term fix. He would like the continued state of frustration between these two towns passed on.

Senator Fargo stated there was a referendum in 2000 to get the income tax rate down to 5% and voters approved it overwhelmingly.

Representative Atkins stated the main topics are Chapter 70 money, local aid, special education, circuit breaker, regional transportation.

Mr. Wedge stated he is grateful for the money for the Thoreau School. We are up to a wall with the high school. The Willard project is moving ahead with or without MSBA help. He would like to talk about the high school. Senator Fargo stated the Chelmsford High project is being looked at as the model project. They took a \$103M project down to \$30M and are very happy with the building. This is now the standard.

There is talk of a dedicated tax for education. This has good and bad points.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked how is the Commonwealth promoting the field of education. Senator Fargo stated there are incentive programs where there is a shortage. There is a resource problem.

### **III. CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Wedge received correspondence from a middle school parent regarding class sizes at the middle school. Mr. Unobskey stated the concern is regarding higher level math classes. This is typical in stronger math students, strong students move quickly and work with each other. To set a limit of 25 students would create competition for spaces. Math is the most competitive subject.

Mr. Fischelis asked if big class sizes were not allowing students to reach their potential. Could they accelerate even further? Mr. Unobskey didn't believe so and he stated he is constantly considering it.

### **IV. RECOGNITIONS**

### **V. REPORTS AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **C. CCHS Time and Learning Presentation**

Mr. Badalament introduced members of the committee. Ms. McCaffrey detailed the proposal to get to the 900 hours per year of student learning. She detailed the 4 minute vs. 5 minute passing time. She discussed the different schedules.

Mr. Wedge asked if this was a short term solution. For the longer term, could we start the day later. This would involve looking at the entire district.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated he was skeptical that students could get from one end of campus to the other in 4 minutes.

Mr. Weinstein stated teachers hate to see the Carlisle and METCO students up and out at bus stops any earlier than they are now in order to accommodate an earlier start time.

Mr. Wedge suggested looking at a longer Tuesday when bussing is not an issue with elementary schools.

Mr. Fischelis asked if the 4 minute passing time plan was the lesser of two evils. Mr. Fitzgerald stated it seems as though there is no alternative at this point.

A MOTION was made by Ms. Shannon and seconded by Mr. Fischelis for CCSC to approve the adoption of a schedule at the high school of 7:25 to 2:08 with a 4 minute passing time subject to the committee looking at Tuesday extended days.

Ms. McGinn stated she would like a report back to the School Committee next year. Mr. Fitzgerald stated this would make a good summer workshop topic.

The MOTION was unanimously approved.

D. DOE Coordinated Program Review

Ms. Murphy stated the DOE is looking at how we are following the processes and looks at the records of special education students. We got the program review and have one year to become compliant. They noted how much growth we've made and cited us on slight procedural aspects.

Dr. Finn stated a coordinated review takes an enormous amount of effort. Ms. Rigby has provided leadership and Ms. Murphy has exerted a heroic amount of effort. Ms. Murphy stated she is indebted to a number of folks.

E. Request to Move Parking Spaces at Thoreau

Jack Finnegan lives at 20 Prairie Street and requests 2 parking spaces be relocated further down. There is no affect to the school. Mr. Flaherty stated he has no concerns about the flow of school buses and traffic.

**VI. ACTION ITEMS**

D. Vote to move parking spaces on Prairie Street

A MOTION was made by Ms. McGinn and seconded by Ms. Shannon for CSC to amend site plan to approve relocation of 2 parking spaces with no cost of any kind related to this project related to the school district. The MOTION was unanimously approved.

**V. REPORTS AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

F. Response to Full Day Kindergarten Forum

Mr. Fischelis stated a forum was held on January 8 regarding full-day kindergarten. There was a great turnout, great presentation and great questions. Ms. Rigby stated she has met again with kindergarten teachers to discuss some responses to the questions. She stated the team looked at 12 studies summarizing kindergarten research which looked at more quality time, teachers feel less stressed working through curriculum. They also looked at many different models. They also looked at the ½ day being Friday and were worried many parents might not send students to school that day if it were a half day. Ms. Rigby also stated there is a wide range of functioning ability of kindergarten students. With the possibility of a choice, teachers feel they could not provide equally to 2 groups of students.

Ms. Rigby also stated the state department funded the grant.

G. Quarterly Financial Report

Mr. Flaherty detailed the Concord Public School's expenditures year to date. They are in good shape and will end the year within budget.

Mr. Flaherty stated the high school has seen challenges in the area of special ed. He hopes to receive money to reduce the deficit. Outside the special ed deficit is

expected to come in under budget. This money will be dedicated to the special ed budget. He stated it is too soon to see how we'll end the year.

#### H. Superintendent Search Process and Timeline

Mr. Fitzgerald stated a timeline had been drafted. He stated we are at the tail end of competing with other communities. The timeline was too tight, so we will begin with an internal process. If a candidate comes forward, we will begin the process. If none, we will begin to find an interim and conduct a national search. Mr. Fitzgerald stated the School Committee and administration felt this was the best way to go. Mr. Wedge stated we will not appoint a search committee for an internal search seeing as we will only have 2-4 candidates. Ms. McGinn stated if we are not successful now, we will appoint a search committee. Members of the school committee will work with Jim Hardy.

### VI. ACTION ITEMS

#### A. Vote to grant permission for overnight ski trip to NH in early March

A MOTION from Mr. Wedge for CCRSD seconded by Mr. Fischelis, the SC voted to approve an overnight trip of the CCHS Fencing Team to Huntington High School, Huntington, NY, to attend the 2008 Huntington Fencing Relay Carnival on January 25-26. The Vote was unanimous.

#### B. Vote to approve EMI Action Research at CMS

Two CMS teachers have been taking an EMI course and want to do a research project to determine what factors foster perseverance and resiliency in low achieving math students. Interview will be conducted in two ongoing programs – STARS, an after-school program for 6<sup>th</sup> graders that tackles math problems with manipulatives and math games; the second group is made up of 8<sup>th</sup> graders whose curriculum has changed to include more algebra skills. Through the study, more information will be gleaned on where to concentrate resources. On a MOTION from Mr. Wedge for CPS seconded by Ms. McGinn, the SC voted to approve the EMI Action Research at Concord Middle School. Unanimous.

#### C. Vote to approve School Calendar 2008-2009.

Ms. McCausland explained the difficulty of establishing next year's calendar due to the teachers' not wanting to begin school prior to September 1<sup>st</sup>. The calendar needs to schedule 185 teacher days plus 5 snow days between September 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. To accommodate this, the CTA and the CCTA have agreed to designate Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> as the 185<sup>th</sup> teacher day, if necessary. The cost of opening the school if the Saturday date is required would be \$5-10K depending on how many building service workers were needed. Mr. Wedge asked if it wouldn't be better to make Good Friday a half day. Ms. McCausland stated that this option had been discussed and was rejected. On a MOTION from Mr. Wedge for CCRSD, seconded by Mr. Fischelis, and a MOTION from Mr. Wedge seconded by Ms. McGinn for CPS, the SC voted to approve the School Calendar for 2008-2009 and designate that Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> be the 185<sup>th</sup> teacher day. Unanimous.

E. Vote to sign MNHG Agreement for the Region

MOTION by Mr. Wedge for CCRSD seconded by Mr. Fischelis to sign the Minuteman Nashoba Health Group (MNHG) Agreement. Unanimous.

F. Gift Acceptance – Donations made to Adult and Community Education

MOTION from Mr. Wedge seconded by Mr. Fischelis for the CCRSD to accept and thank Betty Ann and Richard Wheeler, 99 Sudbury Road for their donation of \$100 for the purpose of supporting CCACE. Also to accept and thank the Concord Home for the Aged, Jane Brooks, Treasurer, for their donation of \$3K for the purpose of supporting the CCACE “Village University” program. Unanimous.

**VIII. SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT**

The MSBA will be coming to discuss reimbursement for the Thoreau School and have asked that building documents be submitted.

**IX. CITIZENS’ COMMENTS**

Paul Horwitz – Mr. Horwitz stated that he was a past School Committee member who had also served on the last Superintendent Search Committee. Mr. Horwitz asked that the SC rethink the selection process chosen by the SC. He stated that process is important to Concord and that without conducting a full nationwide search, there will be a perception problem. Mr. Horwitz suggested the hiring of an interim in the meantime or to have an internal candidate be the interim.

Patrick Carey. Mr. Carey stated that he has sent an e-mail to the SC signed by 7 families suggesting changes to the proposed full day kindergarten program. He felt that there needed to be accommodations made for families not wanting to participate in a full day program such as scheduling all academics for the morning so that all children would be exposed to the same academic curriculum. He also felt that because all children would be involved in the full day program that the early intervention students would be disadvantaged. He suggested that Thursday afternoons be only for early intervention students and not, as proposed, for all the children with like-abilities to get special help in groups on different Thursdays. He believed that the proposed FDK program was administration driven and that there’s not been adequate parental input.

Fred Martin. He asked that the SC not vote on the FDK program at the next meeting but to postpone the vote. He said that the research presented read like an advocacy document and that the research didn’t reflect Concord’s children. He stated that there were many stay-at-home parents in Concord and that there was a richness in Concord that was lacking elsewhere that made these studies irrelevant to our circumstances. He also asked why 75% of K students were not, as Ms. Rigby stated, meeting end of year goals and why there was the expectation that with a full day program there was the expectation that 100% of the children would be meeting the end of year goals? He thought this sounded unreasonable.

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Ed Hill. Opposed to FDK. A full day program would diminish children's lives. He stated that behavioral problems were aggravated, not helped, by school stress and that a longer day would cause young children to become more stressed. Endurance cannot be built; you can't make a kindergartner a first grader. He wanted options for parents who want an alternative to FDK.

Sharon McGregor. Kids develop at different rates. By 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, everything is going to click. Children need to experience freedom. A FDK program is heading in the wrong direction.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

With a MOTION from Ms. McGinn for CCRSD seconded by Mr. Wedge, and a MOTION from Ms. McGinn seconded by Ms. Shannon for CPS, the meeting adjourned at 11:30pm.

Respectfully submitted

Laura O'Sullivan

APPROVED: 3/11/08