

Concord School District
Board of Education
Regular monthly meeting
November 2, 2020

Board members present: Jim Richards, *President*; Barb Higgins, Danielle Smith, Liza Poinier (Gina Cannon, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Tom Croteau, David Parker and Chuck Crush participated remotely), student representatives Alice Richards and Jenita Aquino-Patzan

Administrators present: *Superintendent Kathleen Murphy, Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley, Business Administrator Jack Dunn, Director of Facilities Matt Cashman, Director of Human Resources Larry Prince, Director of IT Pam McLeod, Title IX Coordinator Karen Fischer-Anderson, CHS Principal Mike Reardon, RMS Principal Paulette Fitzgerald*

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

President Jim Richards called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and noted that a quorum of Board members was present but, as several Board members participated electronically, any votes would be by roll call. He noted that public access to the meeting by telephone was provided, with additional access by other electronic means. The meeting was broadcast contemporaneously on ConcordTV's education channel (Comcast Channel 6 or www.youtube.com/ConcordNHTV). He noted the Board would take public comment in two public comment periods by unmuting phone lines one by one, and encouraged the submission of comments via e-mail at concordinfo@sau8.org.

Mr. Richards said he would confirm by roll call which Board members were participating, that participating members were able to speak and to hear each other, and whether anyone else was present in the room from which Board members were participating (a requirement of the Right to Know law). The following Board members noted they were present: Barb Higgins, David Parker, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith (Chuck Crush, Tom Croteau, Gina Cannon, Maureen Redmond-Scura, David Parker participated remotely and affirmed that no one else was present in the room with them).

Mr. Richards thanked the Superintendent for her communication to the school community on Friday and over the weekend regarding the misidentification of a Covid-19 case on the state's school "dashboard." He assured everyone in the District that the administration was aware of the reporting problem, and taking steps about this. He encouraged everyone to check spam and junk mail folders and, if there were problems, to please reach out. He noted that the meeting was the night before Election Night and thanked all candidates who were running for a School Board seat, noting that all had worked hard, done their research, met with Superintendent and with their constituents. He noted this was the last Board meeting for Maureen Redmond-Scura and, on behalf of the Board, thanked her for knowledge, insights, advice, and willingness to step in to serve on very short notice.

Agenda Item 2. Approval of agenda

Mr. Richards made a motion to approve the agenda.

The Board voted by roll call 9-0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to approve the agenda (motioned by Barb Higgins, seconded by Danielle Smith).

Agenda Item 3. Approval of Board minutes

Mr. Richards briefly reviewed the minutes of the Board meeting on October 5 and the Special Board meeting on October 28.

The Board voted by roll call 8-0 (Gina Cannon, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye; Barb Higgins was off the call at the time of this vote) to approve the minutes of the Board meeting on October 8 and the Special Board meeting on October 28 (moved by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

Agenda Item 4. Recognitions and reports

Student Board representative Alice Richards noted that on October 29, the District Strategic Planning Task Force met. This was a group created to develop a strategic plan for improving students' safety and well-being, which began its work last year but paused due to the pandemic. It includes students, educators, parents, community partners, administrators, and the new Title IX safety compliance officer, Karen Fisher-Anderson. The task force reviewed a matrix created from Perkins report recommendations and the previous work of the Task Force. Feedback was shared and recorded for the District's plans moving forward; the group will continue to meet quarterly. All students who wanted to started attending in-person classes through the hybrid model in October. Ms. Aquino Patzan reported her experience being in the hybrid model as well as in the CRTS, commenting that this was an improvement over last spring. Most students see the opportunity to be with their teachers in the hybrid model as a benefit. Overall, as social distancing rules had been made a top priority by the administration, they were being followed and, where they aren't followed, disciplinary actions had been taken. The fall sports seasons were coming to a close. CHS Cross Country won the Division 1 state finals. Those students in sports were very happy to have been allowed a session and expressed thanks to the Athletic Department, that worked hard to enable a wonderful season for students and coaches.

Superintendent Murphy shared the status of the Covid-19 pandemic in the District. While the situation was challenging and difficult, students were doing a great job with wearing masks consistently and observing social distancing, with teachers and administrators cueing when necessary. She said she was monitoring the state dashboard, and analyzing infection statistics. While there had been a high number of cases in the county, there had been no transmission within the schools. There had been four student cases since August and one

adult employee at CHS. In every case there had been no transmission and no one else impacted by the individual who tested positive. All positive cases had quarantined for 14 days and, as a result, there was no additional transmission of the virus, which had allowed the administration to keep youngsters in school.

In response to the question why CHS and RMS were closed last week but not CMS, although there were cases in each school, Superintendent Murphy noted that at CMS, youngsters were in close-knit “pods,” where they were very contained, and where those immediately in contact were quickly identified. By contrast, students at CHS and RMS move about the building considerably more. Under Mr. Reardon’s and the administration team’s leadership, different locations for lunch had been established. Many students move between traditional classes to CRTC, etc. and because of this, more time was needed to make sure all the individuals who had been in contact with that student were identified. Director of Facilities Matt Cashman and his maintenance staff did a “deep clean” of all three buildings; the middle and high school buildings have significantly larger square footage and take longer. For these and other reasons, she felt the decision to close for two days was in the best interest of students and staff at RMS and CHS.

She suggested the Board would at some point need to discuss what to do about the holiday season, with students and staff traveling and family gatherings occurring. Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley noted that 1782 students and 681 staff members responded to the survey about holiday travel, which was preliminary. Several hundreds planned to travel at Thanksgiving, and over 300 (only staff members currently providing in-school services) planned to travel out of state over the long holiday break (of those, one-third planned to travel out of New England). She noted that staffing capacity was a big piece of the decision-making process, and a projected 62 staff members at Thanksgiving and 113 staff members at Christmas planned to travel. All these people would require 14-day quarantines. Considering staff capacity, student cohorts, the typical cold and flu season, and those who enter New Hampshire, these would be complicated decisions. Superintendent Murphy noted the survey was still open and encouraged people to fill it out. The question to be considered by the Instructional Committee would be whether to stay in hybrid as long as possible, or move to remote through the holidays.

Superintendent Murphy noted that, as staff or students who travel out of the NE states must quarantine 14 days, the District anticipated not having enough staff to provide in-school instruction. Even if the administration could just go out and hire 62 staff members, the risk put on the student population with such an action would be significant. In addition, many if not most parents absolutely must be at work, and need their students to be in school. The discussion centered on going into a remote model after Thanksgiving break. A decision was needed whether to bring students back after New Year’s or after Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; or try to stay as close to Christmas as possible.

Board members discussed staff travel, staff quarantining, the possibility of moving to a fully remote model at this time; and, to the extent possible, encouraging families and teachers and staff to stay close to home and be smart. There were various suggestions about when to move from hybrid to remote; whether to stay in hybrid for students who need therapies or

particular instruction. It was noted that the majority of people were abiding by the established expectations and protocols.

Board student representative Alice Richards supported going fully remote through the holidays, but asked whether certain groups of students would be allowed to attend in-person (special education, ELL, homeless). The other Board student representative, Jenita Aquino Patzan, felt the District should not risk student health.

Superintendent Murphy said that more details would be provided to the Instructional Committee at its meeting on November 10, with a Special Board meeting on November 12 for a vote. Mr. Richards recommended meeting at CHS on November 10 and inviting public comment. Mr. Croteau suggested that, if the decision were made to close down the buildings, the needs of hourly paid employees should be strongly considered.

Superintendent Murphy said discussions had included those groups, including Food Service workers, bus drivers, maintenance workers. Mr. Prince noted that some staff members were also on leaves and FMLA accommodations. Mr. Parker commented that people may need to see their families, and the sooner these decisions could be made the more helpful for those families. Mr. Richards commented that he had been asked why the District could not just make the teachers stay in New Hampshire. Not only was the District not in the position to do this, it would not want to do this. The District needed to accommodate this appropriately.

Superintendent Murphy said the next Anti-Discrimination/Racism Advisory Group meeting was scheduled for November 10. The Admin Council (about 30 people) had received a 3-hour training with *NH Listens*, and four more 2-hour sessions on racial equity and discrimination would be facilitated by that group. Admin Council was also reading and discussing "Why Do All the Black Kids Sit Together in the Cafeteria?" She reported that CHS Assistant Principal Tim Herbert was beginning to look at social justice issues with a team, and with Suffolk University. Anna-Marie DiPasquale was working with HR Director Larry Prince and the Superintendent on issues of recruitment, retention, and training of staff for diversity. Superintendent Murphy said she thought the students would say the administration was not moving fast enough, but this work would take time and require relationship development. Ms. Richards and Ms. Aquino Patzan stated that students wish more was happening and faster, and encouraged everyone to be transparent and communicate how long the work was going to take.

Superintendent Murphy noted that a strategic planning committee begun over a year ago had been sidelined by Covid-19. Ms. Palley noted that this group had finally met again last week. Karen Fischer-Anderson attended and the group went through the matrix of recommendations from the Perkins report. Policy work and training would be a focused.

Agenda Item 5. Public comment

Members of the public providing input to the Board included Concord High School student Mattison Howard, Concord resident and parent Rachel Goldwasser, Concord High School alumni and School Board candidate Jonathan Weinberg, Concord resident and School Board

candidate Kate West, and a Concord resident and parent who did not want to give her name because she didn't want to "give away her student."

Agenda Item 6. Personnel

Larry Prince presented two teacher nominations.

Matthew Bodwell, Math Teacher, Rundlett Middle School, \$33,922, 138 days at B-1.

Certification: Statement of Eligibility, Mathematics, Middle Level. Matthew replaces Suzanne LeBlanc (M-14 = \$85,605) – retirement. Budgeted at \$85,605

Gabrielle DiRenzo, Special Education Teacher, Christa McAuliffe School

\$35,421, anticipated 131 days at M-1, year only. *Certification:* Statement of Eligibility. General Special Education. New Position

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to approve the teacher nominations as presented (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Crush).

Agenda Item 7. Finance

The minutes of the September 30 Committee meeting were included for the record.

Agenda Item 8. Negotiations

Committee chair Chuck Crush reported that the committee met on October 5 and continue to work on collective bargaining meetings.

Agenda Item 9. Instruction

Committee chair Barb Higgins reported on the meeting of October 7 at which a presentation on a pilot project of a cell phone application was made by a team from UNH. The Committee met a second time on October 21 to discuss the hybrid learning model and its implementation.

Agenda Item 10. Communications & Policy

Committee chair Gina Cannon reported on the meeting of October 14, at which a proposed Transgender Student anti-discrimination policy was presented.

New Policy #161 Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Employment was before the Board for a second reading and vote. This new policy was necessitated by new federal requirements to comply with harassment policies; a specific grievance procedure needed to

be developed. Adoption of this policy would make redundant Policies #160, #412, #571 and #631 Non-Discrimination.

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Chuck Crush voted aye) to approve Policy #161 Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity Employment (moved by Ms. Cannon, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Chuck Crush voted aye) to delete Policies #160, #412, #571 and #631 Non-Discrimination as redundant (moved by Ms. Cannon, seconded by Ms. Smith).

Agenda Item 11. Joint City Council / School Board Committee

Ms. Poinier reported on the meeting on October 16. Three District schools were to be used as polling places (BGS, MBS, ADS) for the November 3 election. Bleachers at Memorial Field needed to be replaced as part of a general renovation of the field. The Stable building was discussed. Superintendent Murphy gave an update on anti-racism work in the District, and spoke about last month's vote to change the District's use of the name *Columbus Day* to *Indigenous Peoples Day* and encouraged the City Council to consider this. The budget was discussed.

Agenda Item 12. Other business

Preparing for the canvass of the votes

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to allow the canvass of the votes to be conducted by telephone as expeditiously as possible, once election numbers are relayed by the District Clerk (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Superintendent search

Mr. Croteau read a statement, noting the importance of postponing the Superintendent search for another school year, meaning that if the status of the pandemic improved approximately one year from now, the Board would begin a new search. NESDEC, the Board's search agency, had agreed to charge only a nominal fee for a new search. NESDEC Art Bettencourt noted the District would not likely have a large pool of qualified candidates, and putting together a search committee again made of teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members would be extremely difficult and risky at this time. Outside of New England, candidates would be required to quarantine, and all interviews and community meetings would be remote. He stated that the Board had an excellent, qualified interim Superintendent now that the Board felt was doing a very fine job. Superintendent Murphy had been diligent and unflappable; the moment she joined the

District on July 1, she began actively planning how to education over 4500 students in a pandemic. The Board was grateful that Superintendent Murphy was willing to stay another year, to provide stability to the District.

Ms. Higgins noted that Superintendent Murphy was the third Superintendent in five years, and the District needed predictability and stability. Mr. Crush said it did not make sense to change leadership in the middle of a crisis, from a management and strategic standpoint. He stated he had seen nothing but knowledge and dedication from Superintendent Murphy, and wanted to be very clear to the public that she was more than qualified to do this job, and had succeeded in his mind. He said that, in unprecedented times, it was heartening to have an outstanding professional this committed to the District and its students. Mr. Parker noted the Board had sought to address a very challenging situation for this community, finding someone who was seasoned and could handle a task as challenging as this. He had been a big supporter of bringing Superintendent Murphy on board, and felt she had effectively and sincerely answered any doubts or disagreements. He said he was happy to move in this direction for the time being, and thanked Superintendent Murphy for an outstanding job. Mr. Richards stated that he was anxious to conduct a permanent Superintendent search but appreciated Mr. Bettencourt for his willingness to wait for a successful future search. He suggested it would not be fiscally responsible to pursue a search that would likely not be successful. He said that, having worked with Superintendent Murphy for six months, he felt she was looking to make positive changes with a long-term view. Ms. Cannon thanked Superintendent Murphy for stepping into a thankless role and continuing to hang in there with the community. Ms. Poinier said the Board was very lucky to have found Superintendent Murphy when they did.

The Board voted by roll call 9-0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to postpone the permanent Superintendent search until the 2021-2022 school year (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Smith).

The Board voted by roll call 9-0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to instruct Board President Jim Richards to work with Business Administrator Jack Dunn and Superintendent Murphy to work out a financial contract to extend her interim superintendency into the 2021-2022 school year, then that that be brought as recommendation to the full Board at its December meeting (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Smith).

Mr. Croteau again thanked the Superintendent Search Committee for its significant work over the past months, even though it did not result in a successful candidate. He also thanked Art Bettencourt. Mr. Richards thanked Mr. Croteau and Ms. Smith for their work leading this committee.

Superintendent Murphy thanked the Board for its support, reiterating that she would always make decisions based on what was best for Concord students.

Agenda Item 13. Proposed calendars of meetings

Superintendent Murphy reviewed the November and December Board calendars. It was noted that it was very complex to organize meetings both in-person and remote, and that considerable technical staff were required.

Agenda Item 14. Public comment

There was no public comment.

Non-public meeting – per RSA 91-A c for the purpose of discussing a student matter.

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to recess into a non-public session (motioned by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Smith).

The Board voted to come out of non-public session.

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to come out of non-public session (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Non-public meeting – per RSA 91-A c for the purpose of discussing a student matter.

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Maureen Redmond-Scura voted aye) to seal the minutes of the non-public session for the same reason they went into non-public session to discuss (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Agenda Item 15. Adjournment

The Board voted 9-0 to adjourn (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

The Board adjourned at 10:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Higgins, *Secretary*
Linden Jackett, *Recorder*