

Concord School District
Board of Education
December 4, 2017

Board members present: Clint Cogswell, Tom Croteau, Nathan Fennessy, Barb Higgins, Alana Kimball, Jennifer Patterson, Maureen Redmond-Scura, Jim Richards, Pam Wicks, student representatives Logan Stevens and Helen Massah

Administration: Terri Forsten, *Superintendent*, Donna Palley, *Assistant Superintendent*, Jack Dunn, *Business Administrator*, Matt Cashman, *Director of Facilities*

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

Board President Clint Cogswell called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Agenda Item 2. Approval of Agenda

Jennifer Patterson motioned to omit the Item 14, the non-public session, as it was not needed. Barb Higgins seconded the motion.

The Board voted 9-0 to approve the agenda with the change indicated above (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Agenda Item 3. Public Comment– agenda items only

Concord resident Betty Hoadley commented on the upcoming budget planning sessions and referred to several pages from a PowerPoint presented at the November 29 joint Finance/ Instructional Committee meeting: “State Funding for FDK,” “Projected Revenue Increase,” “Estimated Local Cost for FDK (with a range of costs for FDK - from roughly \$910,000 to \$1.2 million),” and “Budget FY19,” with more information critical to the next budget building. She thanked the administration for that work and stated that this Board must find a way to cut costs and increase revenue – and do it this year, now, with no delay. From the taxpayer point of view, this upcoming budget needs to satisfy four goals: 1. to continue with only the most essential support of programs and services; 2. to absorb, not add, the cost of FDK; 3. to rebuild and restore the Facilities Stabilization Fund in anticipation of the upcoming RMS facilities project; and 4. to satisfy all contractual arrangements and state-ordered cost mandates. Mrs. Hoadley said that the School Board must stop acting like it is the only taxing entity: there are three other entities – the city of Concord, Merrimack County and the state education tax. The state education tax is a dictated and mandated tax over which the School Board has no

control, and it only makes things confusing when Board members lump together the state and local education taxes. The School Board should not “take the blame” for a state tax that increases, nor should it take credit when that state tax decreases. She further noted that the CSD tax increase from January 2017 to January 2018 was 54 cents. Concord tax bills went up a total of 57 cents for the same period – 54 cents of the entire change of 57 cents was directly attributable to the School District budget. Last year the CSD per \$1,000 of assessed value dollar increase from January 2013 to 2017 was \$2.20. For the same period, the increase for the entire tax bill was \$3.30; thus, the CSD increase was 66.67% of that change – or fully two-thirds. The current CSD increase from January 2013 to January 2018 was \$2.20 + \$.54, for a total of \$2.74. The entire bill has increased \$3.30 + \$.57 for a total of \$3.87. The CSD portion is a robust 70.8%, up from 66.67% last year. Taxpayers do not want this trend to continue, so the Board must start considering now about what must be done: prioritize, cut less essential things, and raise revenue. The District must absorb the cost of FDK, not add it on. She noted that several years in the past, just before posting the budget, the Board would ask what would happen if the budget was cut by \$1 million, and the Superintendent always came in with \$1 million in cuts. She stated it the Board must develop a budget to educate students, but keep in mind the financial and tax burdens of the taxpayers. Mrs. Hoadley requested that the Board better advertise the Board budget work sessions to the community in the “What’s Happening” section of the *Concord Monitor*, and particularly that the specific budget work session dates, times, locations and particularly agendas be listed.

Agenda Item 4. Approval of Board Minutes

Mr. Cogswell presented the minutes of the regular monthly meeting on November 6, the Canvass of the Vote, and the Special Board meeting on November 20, which was a presentation from the director of the New Hampshire Retirement System. The most significant aspect of the NHRS, in terms of the budget, is that the District’s contributions are a state requirement, not an option – the state will not help with any of these costs.

It was decided that the November 20 minutes would be reworked and brought before the Board at its next meeting

The Board voted 9-0 to approve the minutes of the regular monthly meeting on November 6 and the Canvass of the Vote, as amended (moved by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Nathan Fennessy).

Agenda Item 5. Presentation by Rundlett Middle School (RMS)

Principal Jim McCollum, Assistant Principal David Bartlett, Assistant Principal Heather Barker, Special Education Director Cynthia Courounis presented several new initiatives at RMS and described the overall extracurricular program, noting that these initiatives are focused on school community development and energized by teachers.

Humanities and STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) Blocks

RMS Assistant Principal Heather Barker noted that the master schedule and classroom assignments had been rearranged in order to create two-person teams within each cluster with 2.5-hour blocks of time. Highlights of these include:

- Increased and balanced core academic times for Science, Math, English and Social Studies in grades 7 and 8
- Students travel together to Science and Math with a 30-minute remediation and enrichment block supporting both content areas. The same is done for the Humanities block
- Focus of future professional development time and shared planning time will be the development of integrated learning units and assessments

Remediation and enrichment (R&E) blocks

- Half-hour support blocks occur within the 150-minute STEM / Humanities block each day
- Designed and developed to support students based on where they are in their learning
- Support struggling students with additional support in the area in which they need assistance
- Support high-achieving students as they go beyond the curriculum
- Support all students with opportunities to reassess summative assessments to demonstrate a higher level of proficiency

Student advisory program

- Builds stronger, more positive, healthier relationships between staff and students as well as among peers
- Meets every Monday during R&E block
- Discussion- and activity-based
- Focuses on developing “habits of mind” excellence – staff teach the “zones of (emotional) regulation” model
- Positive feedback from students and staff

Student engagement beyond academics

21st century Extra-curricular program operates between 2:30 and 5:30 p.m. Daily activities include Players Pick, Minecraft, Homework Club, Stars, Underwater Robotics, Book Club, Debate Club, Tabletop games, Mad Scientist, Photo Foundations, Jeopardy & Trivia, Cooking Matters, Fun Friday, and the “Stars” group. While there were 237 individual participants all of last year, there are already 221 individual participants so far this year.

Fine arts extra-curricular programs include Chamber Chorus (18 students); Jazz Band (30 students); Chamber Orchestra (15 students); Performing Ensemble Group (PEG) (36-40

students); Readers Theatre (7 students); National Junior Art Honor Society (12 students); Yearbook (10 students); Dance club (22 students); and RMS Times newspaper (8 students)

Extracurricular clubs include Student Ambassadors (20 students); YMCA a.m. activities (60-80 students) (adding in gym time has been hugely successful, with 60-80 extra kids); Gay/Straight Alliance (10–14 students); Game Club (20–25 students); Girls Group (new; 6–8 students); Lego Robotics (10–15 students); Warrior Cats Club (6–8 students); Ski Club (65 students); DC trip (108 students); Blue Duke Care Closet (a new initiative that students started with their health teachers to help needy families; 20–25 students)

Athletics: Fall sports (field hockey, 33 students; girls' soccer, 32 students; boys' soccer, 57 students; cross country, 80 students; volleyball, 48 students), for a total of 250 students. Winter sports (girls' basketball, 25 students; boys' basketball, 29 students; Nordic skiing, 70 students; Winter cheer, 35 students; wrestling, 45 students); for a total of 169 students.

All of these activities are keeping students positively engaged after school.

Mr. Croteau commended the RMS team, and asked where the advisory program content comes from and whether there are means of determining whether the remediation and enrichment programs are successful. Mr. McCollum said that Vicky Hawkins has been passionate on this theme for years and along with Paula Stewart, the PBIS coordinator, created content for the first few weeks and also the “Zones of Regulation” program. He noted that anecdotal evidence and teacher feedback indicate that students are engaged; the team will analyze the new report card to see if students are meaningfully learning. Mr. Croteau suggested that parental feedback should be solicited.

Mr. Richards noted that his son was certainly being challenged with regard to R&E. Ms. Wicks said that students are focusing on literacy, and that she appreciated the weekly email from RMS.

Logan Stevens said that these new initiatives had him wanting to go back and re-do middle school; he liked the idea of the longer teaching blocks during which students can delve into topics and have rich discussions. He also said that advisories are essential.

Ms. Palley noted that the District was in year one of the second round of the 21C grant; the new dollar amount is lower; but they had great partners. She noted that part of the program required yearly parent surveys.

Agenda Item 6. Recognitions

Student representatives Logan Stevens and Helen Massah reported on recent activities at Concord High School. The All Girls Garage, a program to provide girls the opportunity to learn about automobiles, usually occurred Wednesday after school.

Teams that enter the DOT Bridge Building competition are mentored by CHS teacher George Golden; last year and this year Concord teams achieved first and second place. This was the first time an all-girl team won first place – team members included Grace Devanney, Hannah Barton and Audrey Carlson.

The former preschool training building was recently demolished – Helen said that many people hope it will be made into a parking lot. Soup’s On event – the soup-selling event during parent/teacher conferences raised over \$1600 for the annual canned food drive. The group also sold hand-made bowls from the Arts department and donated baked goods from Panera’s. All State Music – 15 CHS students were chosen for the NH All State Music Festival, with five students chosen to partake in the very selective Chamber All State Festival in January. Flag Project – the Be The Change Club initiated the idea of representing most of the countries of origin of CHS students by displaying their flags; last year’s senior class donated the flags as their senior gift. CHS Idol – about three weeks ago CHS hosted its own “Idol” show, where CHS students showed off their talent. National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) – 15 students and 6 staff members participated in writing the 50,000-word novel goal (other writing goals included 30,000- and 10,000-word writing pieces). The upcoming Coffee House is held by students and staff – it’s free and includes dance, song, and food; she noted that last year it was packed. Winter sports have started up, including hockey, basketball, Nordic, cross-country and alpine skiing.

Agenda Item 7. Personnel

Business Administrator Jack Dunn presented the roster of winter coaches. New coach nominations will come before the Board in January 2018.

The Board voted 9-0 to confirm the returning winter coaches, as presented (moved by Ms. Redmond-Scura, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Agenda Item 8. Communications and Policy

Ms. Patterson noted that the Committee recommended several policies to the Board for both first and second readings. The policies presented for a first reading, primarily influenced by recent legislation, included:

Policy 214/831 Acceptance of Gifts – the Committee added language encouraging individuals or groups to discuss solicitation of gifts with the building Principal prior to establishing crowd-funding pages, for example.

In response to a question from Mr. Fennessy whether there was a particular impetus for this change, Superintendent Forsten noted that the suggestion came from the NHSBA fall update, but she had heard about fundraisers or postings by staff with which she was not familiar. Mr. Croteau said the Committee had discussed crowd-funding that

individual teachers might use to get things in the classroom, for example. Ms. Patterson said the change was to prevent the raising of funds for inappropriate purposes.

Policy 401/601 Professional Development – the Committee added more detailed language from NHSBA and that pieces of technology given to staff as part of a District-paid conference that were valued above \$300 would become the property of the District.

Policy 411 Physical Examinations – Employees – the Committee removed section 2 (about TB), and clarified language about cost. Mr. Fennessy recommended that the Board be very careful about language allowing the Superintendent to require a physical examination as it might create open-ended liability for a potential ailment discovered by the examination. Ms. Patterson noted that the Superintendent could choose to require the exam, and that she would see this as being distinct from treatment. Mr. Fennessy commented that “examination” could be interpreted as “treatment.” Mr. Croteau suggested adding the word “initial.” Superintendent Forsten pointed out that language covering payment of requested/required examinations has been in the prior policy. Mr. Richards suggested that mental health examinations could be open-ended. It was decided that Superintendent Forsten will further check with the NHSBA, and the Committee will re-review the policy.

Policy 413 Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace – the Committee added new language derived from the NHSBA policy that strengthened the Board’s intent to hold employees accountable for violations of the policy.

Policy 537/432 Child Abuse and Neglect – the Committee completely adopted text from NHSBA, which was stronger and clearer; and added legal references. In addition, the policy now requires that a notice/poster be placed in each building in a variety of locations; faculty lounges and larger public areas, for example.

Policy 540 Code of Student Conduct – the Committee added legal references; changed “dismissal” to “expulsion” and added a statutory change that makes assignments available to students who have been suspended. Mr. Croteau noted that legal references are included to reduce the significant detailed text otherwise required.

Policy 592 Non-Educational Questionnaires, Surveys and Research – the Committee made minor changes to conform to state law.

No Board action was required on the first reading of these policies. The following policies were presented for a second reading and vote without further discussion: Policy 131 Regular School Board Meetings; Policy 133 Minutes; Policy 301 Fraud Prevention; Policy 421 Payroll Procedures; Policy 435 Staff Participation in Political Activities; Policy 462 Background Investigation and Criminal Records Checks; Policy 538/750 Safety Program; Policy 634 Health Education Opt-Out Procedure and Form; Policy 635 Advanced Course Work / Advanced Placement Courses; Policy 642 Opening Exercises and Patriotic Exercises; Policy 650 Parental Request for Alternative Course Material; Policy 692 Hazing

The Board voted 9-0 to approve revisions to Policy 131 Regular School Board Meetings; Policy 133 Minutes; Policy 301 Fraud Prevention; Policy 421 Payroll Procedures; Policy 435 Staff Participation in Political Activities; Policy 462 Background Investigation and Criminal Records Checks; Policy 538/750 Safety Program; Policy 634 Health Education Opt-Out Procedure and Form; Policy 635 Advanced Course Work / Advanced Placement Courses; Policy 642 Opening Exercises and Patriotic Exercises; Policy 650 Parental Request for Alternative Course Material; Policy 692 Hazing, as presented (moved by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Croteau).

Agenda Item 9. Negotiations Committee

Mr. Fennessy reported that the Committee met on November 15 to discuss contract negotiations with the attorney who has been hired to assist the Committee this year.

Agenda Item 10. Joint Finance/Instructional Committee

Tom Croteau reported on the November 29 meeting, which first focused on the proposed 2018-2019 school year calendar.

The Board voted 9-0 to approve the proposed 2018-2019 school year calendar (moved by Mr. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Kimball).

The Joint Finance/Instructional Committee also discussed full-day kindergarten (FDK), reviewing the findings of the Early Childhood Education steering committee. The program was initially thought to cost \$1.2 million, but might not be this high. The administration acknowledged that there would be a loss of tuition revenue from community providers as FDK is implemented.

Regarding classroom space, the current preschool might need to be moved from MBS, but discussions relative to RMS planning could change these parameters. FDK schedules and curriculum include more playing to explore and outside play. The administration put together a sample of the schedule: 60 minutes of literacy, and 60 minutes of math. Writing time would be doubled, and there would be more opportunity for read-aloud time instead of just once.

Enrollment would increase from the current 275 students to a projected 300 (kindergarten only). Projected savings of \$75,000 in transportation (eliminating mid-day bus travel) could be realized. State funding would include \$1100 in adequacy aid from the state for each of 300 students, aside from Keno gambling revenues, which would not kick in until later. Total costs could be between \$912,000 and \$1.2 million. The administration considered more leeway regarding teacher degrees; they initially planned for M+5 teacher degrees, but determined that this would not be necessary.

The committee discussed a 1.2% increase in insurance costs health billing, as the NHRS contribution increased from 11.08% to 11.38% for non-teachers. Community Education represented a current \$65,000 cost, but will be \$0 in 2019 as it transfers to the City.

Mr. Croteau noted that as the Board was negotiating five group contracts this year, the FY19 salaries would figure significantly in the overall budget picture. The impact of grants, capital leases, Deerfield tuition, facility rentals, and a potential district-wide technology fee would also be considered.

Mr. Cogswell said that the reason for voting now whether to include FDK as a budget item was to notify parents and other kindergarten providers in the community.

Mr. Croteau noted that, overall, he felt the Board was in a better position in terms of finances, transportation, space, scheduling, and curriculum, etc. than it had been last year when FDK was considered.

Mr. Fennessy noted that this vote would not guarantee the implementation of FDK until the Board went through its full budget process and voted on a preliminary budget in March.

Mr. Cogswell stated that last year there were many issues related to FDK that needed to be worked through but that, barring unusual considerations in the budget process, this vote would commit the Board to FDK.

Mr. Fennessy suggested that, if the Board's concern was about the impact on local early education providers of initiating FDK, the decision should be made in a binding form in order to provide them with a certainty. He stated that he did not think the Board would be doing the community a service if the Board kept the final decision up in the air until March.

Ms. Patterson stated that what this Board does tonight could not bind the Board that starts in January.

Mr. Fennessy suggested that this same motion would need another vote with the new Board in January.

The Board voted 9-0 to adopt the recommendation of the Finance committee to include FDK programming as part of the FY19 budget proposal (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

The Board voted 8-1 (Mr. Croteau opposed) to adopt the recommendation of the Finance committee to not charge tuition for FDK (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Wicks).

Agenda Item 11. Other Business

There was no other business.

Agenda Item 12. Proposed calendar of meetings

Superintendent Forsten discussed proposed committee meetings for December and January, noting the Annual Board Dinner on December 11. A Board retreat was added on January 20. The Opening Budget presentation will be on January 31.

Ms. Wicks asked about committee assignments in the new year, particularly whether the Negotiations Committee membership would remain unchanged. Mr. Cogswell noted that committee membership can change each year.

The Board voted 9-0 to set its date for the January 2018 meeting on January 2 (motioned by Ms. Redmond-Scura, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Agenda Item 13. Public comment

Mr. Fennessy thanked Ms. Higgins and Ms. Kimball for their service on the Board, and said he hoped both would continue to be involved in School District activities.

Agenda Item 14. Adjournment

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Croteau, *Secretary*

Linden Jackett, *Recorder*