

Concord School District  
Board of Education  
**Regular monthly meeting**  
**December 7, 2020**

**Board members present:** Jim Richards, *President*; Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins, Danielle Smith, Liza Poinier, Pamela Walsh (Gina Cannon, Chuck Crush, and David Parker 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 Human Resources* Larry Prince, *CHS Principal* Mike Reardon, *RMS Principal* Paulette Fitzgerald (*Director of Facilities* Matt Cashman participated remotely)

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

President Jim Richards called the meeting to order at 7:04 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](http://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](mailto: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: Jim Richards, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins, Danielle Smith, Liza Poinier, Pamela Walsh (Gina Cannon, Chuck Crush, and David Parker participated remotely and affirmed that no one else was present in the room with them).

Agenda Item 2. Approval of agenda

Mr. Richards asked for 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, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to approve the agenda (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Barb Higgins).**

### Agenda Item 3. Approval of Board minutes

Mr. Richards briefly reviewed the minutes of the Board meeting on November 2 and the Special Board meetings on November 12 and November 23, and the Canvass of the Votes. One error was noted on 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, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to approve the minutes of the Board meeting on November 2 and the Special Board meetings on November 12 and November 23, and the Canvass of the Votes with correction as noted (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Smith).**

### Agenda Item 4. Recognitions and reports

Danielle Smith read the Board resolution for Liza Poinier. Ms. Poinier commented that this was a wonderful community and it had been an honor for her to serve on the School Board.

Barb Higgins read the Board resolution for Chuck Crush. Mr. Crush thanked the citizens of Concord for putting their trust in him over the past three years. A number of difficult events occurred in the District that cascaded throughout the community: sexual assault; universal pandemic; “remote learning.” He said he learned a great deal, had been honored to serve with such a great group of Board members, and never doubted that the Board members wanted to do the right thing for students and community. He was confident that the new Board would do the right thing.

Mr. Richards read the Board resolution for Tom Croteau. Mr. Croteau thanked the community for its support over the last eight years. He said he had served with some of the brightest and most caring individuals and had established friendships with Board members, administrators and community members. He thanked his wife for her support, and wished the Board of the future the very best.

Mr. Richards thanked the departing Board members, including those who had left previously: Jennifer Patterson and Maureen Redmond-Scura.

Student Board representatives Alice Richards and Jenita Aquino Patzan noted that the transition back to remote learning had been an easier switch because it had already been done at the beginning of the year. Students were able to meet more often with teachers every week. Students were conducting a food drive online for the Capital Region Food Drive, with proceeds currently at almost \$3,000. Winter sports were getting started; the students had heard mixed reports about safety protocols. CRTC was continuing its in-person schedule. Ms. Richards and Ms. Aquino Patzan thanked outgoing Board members.

Superintendent Murphy thanked the outgoing Board members, noting that the Concord community appreciated their work and their hours.

She said the administration was focused on the impact of Covid-19 on the schools; Concord High School, Rundlett Middle School and Abbot-Downing School recently switched to remote learning, with four days of synchronous learning with one flex day. The advantages

of this were more hours for special education teachers with students, activities, and project work. The other elementary schools were still in hybrid at that point. Administrators were focused on providing more support to particularly vulnerable students, although this had been hampered by a lack of staff resources. A number of staff members were in quarantine for a variety of reasons, as well as students who might be in quarantine even if they had not tested positive for the virus. She stated that these factors made it impossible to deliver instruction to everyone, although teachers had been doing everything they could. Transportation was still working, as Mr. Crotty and his team created new bus routes every week. Food Service was also preparing meals and getting them out into the community, as there had been a very real concern about food insecurity. Winter athletics had started, although activities were solely skills and drills, with teams broken up into smaller “pods” of students.

Superintendent Murphy said the administration was now focusing on the 2021-2022 budget. The next Anti-Discrimination/Racism Advisory Group meeting would be on December 8. The administration was also working on another set of required new or updated policies. There was a brief discussion about improving the hybrid model.

#### Agenda Item 5. Public comment

There was no public comment.

#### Agenda Item 6. Personnel

Larry Prince presented the nomination of Kathleen Murphy as Interim Superintendent of Schools, Concord School District, \$167,000, one year only, from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH; CAGS Administration; Rivier College, Nashua, NH; M.S. Educational Administration; Plymouth State College, Plymouth, NH, B.S. Education. *Certification:* Experienced Educator Certificate, exp. 06/30/22, Superintendent, Principal.

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to approve the Interim Superintendent nomination as presented (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Higgins).**

Larry Prince presented one teacher nomination.

Rebecca Chenette, Grade 6 Classroom Teacher, Rundlett Middle School, \$56,457, 117 days at M+30-14. *Certification:* Experienced Educator Certificate, exp. 06/30/21; Principal; Mathematics (5-8); Elementary Education (K-8). Rebecca replaces Michele Bartlett (M+30-14 = \$88,304). Budgeted at \$88,304

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Pamela Walsh**

**voted aye) to approve the teacher nomination as presented (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Crush).**

Larry Prince presented several coach nominations.

Bienvenu Kigugu, Boys Freshman Basketball Coach, Concord High School, \$3,824, Step 2, Group 6, 9.5%. Bienvenu replaces Vincente Zenni.

Vincente Zenni, Boys JV Basketball Coach, Concord High School, \$4,273, Step 3, Group 6, 9.5%. Vincente replaces Scott Dunlop.

Cassidy Emerson, Girls Basketball A Coach, Rundlett Middle School, \$2,699, Step 3, Group 11, 6%. Cassidy replaces Robert Darrell.

Scott Guyer, Wrestling Assistant Coach, Rundlett Middle School, \$ 1,125, Step 2, Group 14, 2.5%. Scott replaces Mark Feigll.

Tim Herbert, Girls Ice Hockey Head Coach, Concord High School, \$7,647, Step 3, Group 14, 17%. Scott replaces Patrick McDonough.

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

Larry Prince presented the roster of returning winter coaches.

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to approve the roster of returning winter coaches as presented (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Croteau).**

#### Agenda Item 7. Communications & Policy

Committee chair Gina Cannon reported on the meeting of November 9, at which new proposed Transgender and Gender Non-conforming Students, Pregnant Students, and Suicide Prevention and Response policies were presented. The Committee would meet again in December to further discuss these and other new policies. She described the delicate balancing act between student rights and parent rights; State law allows minors to make autonomous medical decisions at certain ages.

Mr. Crush asked whether students were involved in the discussion of the policy on transgender students. Mr. Croteau said that students might be willing to discuss this sensitive topic at a future committee meeting. Mr. Parker said he had found involving students in these discussions to be unsuccessful, as this was a clinical issue (not a policy issue) involving very difficult privacy questions. Ms. Cannon said that Title IX Coordinator and Student Safety Compliance Officer Karen Fischer-Anderson had contacted many resources related to this topic, and was working on appropriate language and levels of sensitivity required in these policies.

## Agenda Item 8. Instruction

Committee chair Barb Higgins reported on the meeting of November 10, at which all aspects of hybrid vs. remote learning were discussed at length. The committee looked at what to do about the upcoming holidays and received community input. The committee also examined the winter athletics program.

The Committee met a second time on November 18 to discuss the 2021-2022 school year calendar, winter athletics and co-curricular programs. The committee also discussed the “decision matrix,” and, briefly, the plan for remote learning. The committee recommended to the full Board that the District move to remote learning from January 4 to January 19.

She noted that staffing issues had dictated the recent move to remote for CHS, RMS and now ADS, and that many of the same decisions would be required for December and January, as the pandemic would continue for at least the next few months.

Mr. Croteau expressed concern about the number of absences at RMS and CHS for remote students. He said RMS had an 85% attendance rate, and CHS had an 87% attendance rate, representing 136 students at RMS and 197 students at CHS who were not showing up for remote learning. RMS Principal Fitzgerald said administrators were aware of and actively working on this, noting that it was particularly tricky with students who were both remote and hybrid. Attendance was taken at “Advisory” every single morning, as well as class attendance. CHS Principal Reardon recognized there were too many students out, and this was very frustrating to administrators. CHS had opened the Commons areas to bring some students in, issuing about 30 invitations for students to come in and work with an adult for the day. They were also sending electronic reminders to parents about attendance, and following up in every way possible, including sending out the truant officer. He said the schools engage students IN the buildings, but the students are not actually in the buildings. He agreed there were too many students who were out and too many who were disengaged and suggested that, in most cases, parents were likely at work. While he said the lower attendance was not acceptable, right now it was tough to get some students in. Mr. Parker said he had a lot of sympathy for Principals, noting that educators look at attendance all the time. With high school students on their own at home, parents who must work may assume students will be responsible. He said this was very challenging and a lot of effort was being invested in resolving the problem. Superintendent Murphy noted that average attendance over the past few years had been 94–95% at CHS. She noted that parents of elementary students had written to administrators and teachers that they assist their children largely before they start work, and again after work, but that students were not on their screens. Many youngsters in hybrid were currently in quarantine.

Ms. Higgins described the proposed 2021-2022 school year calendar. Ms. Walsh said she was worried about locking in the traditional school year calendar before immunizations were available, questioning whether the upcoming year would be hybrid, remote, or in person. Superintendent Murphy pointed out that the District must approve a school year calendar to determine teacher contracts and other negotiations in March. She said amendments to the calendar could be made as needed. She said the Board might want to push dates back, but it did have obligations related to teacher contracts.

Mr. Richards asked whether two professional development days at beginning of the year would be sufficient for training and support as the District was coming out of a definitely challenging year. Ms. Walsh asked whether dates could be moved up instead of moved back. Superintendent Murphy said moving any dates up would have to be cleared with the CEA and CEAA. CEA preferred these workshops later; CEA and CEAA members already worked very hard to prepare for the school year each summer. In response to a question from Mr. Crush about whether the administration assembled a focus group or surveyed parents about the development of the calendar, Superintendent Murphy replied that involving parents had not been part of the process. Mr. Crush thanked her. Ms. Higgins noted that one reason for another PD day in the fall was to address some of the necessary trainings. Mr. Parker said that two PD days works pretty well, as teachers have a few months to work things out before additional PD days in the fall and the spring. He said he did not think having three days at the beginning of the year was the best idea.

Mr. Richards asked whether teachers had access to their rooms before the school year begins. Superintendent Murphy said that many teachers were currently in their rooms, teaching hybrid or teaching remote from their classrooms, and that they would have access except if the rooms or floors had not yet been cleaned.

Ms. Higgins made a motion to approve the 2021-2022 school year calendar, with the understanding that the Board, administration and staff would work together should changes need to be made. She said approving the calendar was a starting point for negotiations.

Ms. Walsh said students were not getting the same amount of instruction and learning they used to, and she was worried about them leaving school in June and coming back to hybrid. Ms. Higgins said the calendar did not address summer school, but did not exclude it. Ms. Walsh said she would like school to start earlier; in August, so students could be outside and learning. Superintendent Murphy noted that teachers and other staff contracts and agreements have specific start and end dates, and that CRTC sending schools needed Concord's calendar as well.

Mr. Croteau said the motion was fine as is. He said the Board could consider whether more learning time was possible but that it was enough that the idea be in the minutes at this point. Mr. Parker said he could envision that a more extensive summer program could be put together, if additional funding could be found, to complement what students might have missed out on.

**The Board voted by roll call 8-1 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker, Pamela Walsh voted aye; Mr. Crush voted nay) to approve the 2021-2022 school year calendar as presented (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Smith).**

#### Agenda Item 9. Proposed calendars of meetings

Superintendent Murphy reviewed the December and January Board calendars. The date of the Board retreat in January was discussed. Matt Cashman suggested that next steps for

RMS might be discussed at the retreat. Mr. Richards noted that time at the retreat was at a premium. Ms. Cannon expressed interest in the NHSBA annual assembly.

Agenda Item 10. Public comment

There was no public comment.

Mr. Parker thanked all the online workers: teachers, food service staff, bus drivers, custodians, maintenance workers and everyone had been working so hard, and wished them a happy holiday.

Agenda Item 11. Non-public Session

Mr. Richards made a motion to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II(b), the hiring of any person as a public employee.

**The Board voted by roll call 8–1 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to move into non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II(b) (moved by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Walsh).**

The Board came out of non-public session.

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to come out of non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II(b) (moved by Ms. Poinier, seconded by Ms. Smith).**

Mr. Crush made a motion to seal the minutes.

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to seal the minutes of the non-public session relative to items in RSA 91-A:3, II(b) (moved by Mr. Crush, seconded by Ms. Smith).**

Mr. Croteau made a motion that the Board support the Superintendent's recommendation to raise the salaries of Jack Dunn and Matt Cashman as discussed and to bring their specific contracts to the January Board meeting. Ms. Smith seconded.

**The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, Pamela Walsh voted aye) to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to raise the salaries of Business Administrator Jack Dunn and Director of Facilities Matt Cashman, details of which to be brought to the January Board meeting (moved by Mr. Croteau, seconded by Ms. Smith).**

Agenda Item 12. Adjournment

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

The Board adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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