

Concord School District
Board of Education
Regular monthly meeting
April 6, 2020

Board members: Jennifer Patterson, *President*; Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker

Administrators: *Superintendent* Frank Bass, *Assistant Superintendent* Donna Palley, *Business Administrator* Jack Dunn, *Director of Facilities* Matt Cashman, *Director of Human Resources* Larry Prince, *Director of Student Services* Bob Belmont, *CHS Interim Principal* Mike Reardon, *CHS Assistant Principals* Jim Corkum, Kaileen Chilauskas, *RMS Principal* Paulette Fitzgerald

Agenda Item 1. Call to Order

Board President Jennifer Patterson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. She noted that a roll call would be taken to determine which Board members were participating. Based on Governor Sununu's emergency order #12, and the necessity of all Board members to remain in separate locations to protect public health during the COVID-19 emergency, she as Board President had determined that all members would participate remotely, and this emergency determination would be noted in the minutes.

Ms. Patterson said she would confirm by roll call who was 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. She said if a vote was taken it would be by roll call. The following Board members noted that they were present, could speak and hear others speaking on the call, and that no one else was present in the room with them: Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, David Parker, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Jennifer Patterson, Danielle Smith.

Interim Superintendent Frank Bass, Business Administrator Jack Dunn, Assistant Superintendent Donna Palley, Director of Human Resources Larry Prince and Director of Facilities Matt Cashman attended remotely.

Ms. Patterson noted, in the event she lost connectivity or was unable to participate in the meeting, she had determined, in consultation with Vice President Jim Richards and Secretary Barb Higgins, that Gina Cannon would chair the remainder of the meeting. Ms. Cannon had participated in NHSBA training on the requirements and procedures for conducting meetings in conformity with New Hampshire's right-to-know law. Ms. Patterson expressed appreciation for Ms. Cannon's willingness to serve as backup.

Ms. Patterson noted that a declaration of an emergency meeting which would suspend the presence of quorum or a physical location under the Governor's emergency order #12 and RSA 91-A must be stated and included in the minutes. She read the following statement:

“In calling the meeting, the Board President, in consultation with Interim Superintendent Frank Bass, determined that the protection of public health, in keeping with the Governor’s emergency order #12, dictates that no physical location be provided for today’s meeting and that Board members participate remotely.

Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Emergency Order #12, I declare this to be an "emergency" meeting per RSA 91-A:2, III (b) qualifying for suspension of the requirement that a quorum be present at a physical location of the meeting.

The requirement of a physical location from which the public can observe is also suspended based on the following steps that the District has taken, consistent with Emergency Order #12:

Members of the public can observe the meeting by watching on CCTV, by joining on their computers, or by calling in on their phones. We are not taking public comment during this meeting, so public lines will remain muted except for a brief test we will conduct in anticipation of the public hearing on April 2.

The meeting has been posted for more than 24 hours on the District’s website, and information about the meeting and how to participate remotely was disseminated last week to community members.

District staff will be available by phone during the meeting for members of the public to contact if they are unable to connect to the meeting. If there is a systemic problem preventing the public from observing the meeting, District staff will inform me and I will recess the meeting if the problem can be addressed quickly, and adjourn the meeting if it cannot be addressed quickly.

On the basis of these actions, I believe the meeting may go forward without a physical location, and that holding the meeting in this manner is consistent with the emergency order, other relevant provisions of RSA 91-A, and the protection of public health during the COVID19 emergency.”

Agenda Item 2. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Patterson made a motion to add consideration of the amicus brief after agenda item 7.

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

Agenda Item 3. Approval of Board minutes

Ms. Patterson briefly reviewed the minutes of the Board meeting on March 2; Board Work Session minutes on March 2, March 5, March 9, March 12; Emergency Board meeting on March 15; and Special Board meeting on March 30.

The Board voted by roll call 9–0 (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the minutes of the Board meeting on March 2; Board Work Session minutes on March 5, March 9, March 12; Emergency Board meeting on March 15; and Special Board meeting on March 30 (moved by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Richards).

Ms. Cannon stated that she would like to revisit at this meeting certain topics that had been mentioned in previous meetings.

Ms. Higgins said she had approved draft minutes as they were sent to her, but that she had been vocal at the March 9 Work Session and her comments were not reflected in the draft. It was decided those minutes would be reconsidered at the next Board meeting.

Agenda Item 4. Recognitions/Reports

Dr. Bass made a few announcements about upcoming Passover, Easter and Ramadan, expressing his hope that those observing these traditions would do so safely. He thanked everyone for their efforts regarding remote learning, and noted that the administrators meet every day, and the coordinators meet every other week. He said he had put together a seminar on James Joyce and William Faulkner for CHS juniors, in part so he could participate in remote learning himself, to understand teacher and student challenges.

Concord High School Junior Sydney Kilgore was named the New Hampshire's *Poetry Out Loud* contest winner. Sydney spoke about the *Poetry Out Loud* competition, noting that every student participated in the initial stage of the competition at the building level, and some students chose to go further. Students chose poems from the *Poetry Out Loud* website to memorize. She liked the memorization process of the competition; learning how to dive into a piece of media, explore it and find an understanding.

Mr. Parker recognized Dr. Bass for his leadership in teaching a class so he became familiar with the remote learning platform. Dr. Bass noted that spring vacation would be held on schedule; as everyone needed a break at this time and many teachers were working overtime. He said students were reporting that they were appreciating a more collegiate learning environment. Some of the Principals, home with their children, were reporting that they were learning to take advantage of this new educational environment.

Agenda Item 5. Public Comment– agenda items only. Ms. Patterson reviewed the relevant policy and gave guidance about input.

Kate Frey said she was interested in Ms. Cannon's interest in following up on several items that had been brought up over the last several months that the Board had said it would discuss at a later time.

Christina Taylor said she did not like the direction CHS was taking with competency education, and thought Mr. Reardon was on board with that. She said Mr. Reardon should

be kept only as interim. Superintendent Bass commented that he had spoken with Ms. Taylor at length. He said he was working on a plan about rolling out competency-based grading, and that next year's seniors would not be affected by a new grading system. He said the entire grading system had to be teased out; any changes to transcripts would not take place until the incoming freshmen were graduating, and no one in the current system would have a duplicate grading system; the District had not come to a definitive position on that. He said this transition would not be made without input from the community. He said he wanted to hear what the public had to say.

There was no further comment.

Agenda Item 6. Personnel

Human Resources Director Larry Prince presented a professional leave of absence.

The Board voted 9-0 by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the professional leave of absence as presented (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Mr. Crush).

Human Resources Director Larry Prince presented two administrator nominations.

Karen Fischer-Anderson, School Safety Compliance Officer, 60 days, Concord School District, \$28,500. New position

The Board voted 9-0 by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the administrator nomination as presented (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Cannon).

Dr. Bass spoke about the selection process for the permanent CHS Principal. Four candidates were interviewed, and two were chosen as finalists. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thorough in-person interviews were interrupted. He described the process that ensued, including responses from the search committee, from the CHS Assistant Principals and from the CHS staff.

Assistant Principals Kaileen Chilauskas and Jim Corkum both spoke to the process. They noted that the primary needs were an excellent communicator, focused on safety and security, with a high level of visibility within the school and the community. They said those were qualities they had been able to see over a three and a half month-long interview process. They noted that the Assistant Principal team, guided by Dr. Reardon, had been able to provide steady guidance and consistency that the school had not had for nine or more months. Dr. Reardon had shown a strong ability to compromise when given input. Mr. Corkum said that typically when candidates are interviewed, committee members would not know the person behind the interview; however, the person Dr. Reardon presented in his interview is who he is as an administrator. Dr. Reardon was also very clear that he would not continue his candidacy unless he had the support of the faculty. On the

interview day – March 13 – he was pulled in many directions, as there was a crisis situation that day (anticipated closure of school for COVID-19 pandemic). Mr. Corkum noted that staff had had the opportunity to see Dr. Reardon in action over the last three months. He emphasized Dr. Reardon’s strong decision-making ability; that he was masterful at distilling many conversations, bringing staff back to their primary focus: teaching children.

Ms. Higgins said she had had concern about a possible perceived “lack of transparency” on the part of the Board. She said the other candidate, Mike Berry, was sincere, and she liked his willingness to be detached from CHS’ past problems. She said Mr. Berry’s fit at Souhegan High School, where he eventually took a post, was good. She stated that the District was at the place it needs to be – with Mike Reardon. The other candidate was not shortchanged.

Mr. Richards noted that Board members, administrators, teachers and students were on the search committee. The committee narrowed the field to the two best candidates. He also felt the Board continued to need communication and transparency.

Mr. Parker said he had spent time with Dr. Reardon and was also on a phone interview with Mike Berry. He said he was impressed with Dr. Reardon’s 92 percent faculty approval and the type of healing he had been able to do since his arrival. While the public had not been as involved as the Board would have liked, he recommended parents with concerns to bring them forward.

Ms. Cannon expressed concern about the lack of public involvement in the search process, through no one’s fault. She said the Board had promised the community that it would have a chance to have input, but it did not.

Ms. Patterson commented that the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of this search process could not have been worse, and that it was fortunate that so many on the search committee did have the opportunity to engage with both candidates.

Chuck Crush said he had not been directly involved in the search process, but had a child who would enter the high school the year after next. He said the pandemic was a game-changer as far as transparency and community and public involvement were concerned. He said he had heard much that was positive about Dr. Reardon’s leadership; that he took responsibility for some things that went well, and for things that did not go as planned.

Mr. Richards spoke to the difficulty of keeping an interim, noting it was a very expensive way to have a Principal for a year. He said he appreciated Ms. Taylor’s input but preferred to hire Dr. Reardon.

Mr. Croteau said Dr. Reardon “hit the ground running;” he was dedicated; attended Board meetings; listened to both good and bad; taken criticism well and moved through it; and was a great listener. He stated that any time one had 92% faculty approval was amazing.

Ms. Patterson commented on Dr. Reardon’s willingness to jump in at a very difficult time, noting she was grateful that he had applied and was willing to devote his time to Concord.

Dr. Bass said the public could engage with the administration, or teachers, at any time, and invited parents to be involved when school reopens. He suggested parents call their child's school if they have issues, and if they were not resolved, to call the Superintendent. He noted that all administrator contracts are one-year contracts.

Michael Reardon, Ph.D., Principal, Concord High School, \$33,455, Step III, M+30/PhD. prorated 61 days. Michael has been filling this role on an interim basis since December 2, 2019. Budgeted at \$32,650

The Board voted 9-0 by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the administrator nomination as presented (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Ms. Smith).

Mr. Prince presented the annual Veterans Salary Schedule for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. There are six faculty members who have applied. If approved and if they accept the option, they cannot return after 2022. Mr. Prince said this was a provision to reward veteran teachers who had been with the District for a minimum of 17 years and were at least age 53 years when they apply. The bump in salary is spread over two years. There were 33 eligible teachers this year.

The Board voted 9-0 by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the Veterans Salary Schedule list as presented (motioned by Ms. Higgins, seconded by Ms. Cannon).

Mr. Prince presented a number of coach nominations, to be prepared in case the NHIAA did have any semblance of a spring sports season.

Warren Bartlett, Assistant Track Coach, Concord High School, \$2,784, Step 2, Group 9, 6.5%. Warren replaces Kyle Brown

Christopher Beyer, Assistant Track Coach, Concord High School, \$2,999, Step 3, Group 9, 7.0%. Christopher replaces Patrick Casey

Kayla Chase, Supplemental Track Coach, Concord High School, \$1,713, Step 3, Group 13, 4.0%. Kayla replaces Logan Lamoureux

Michele Bartlett, Girls Head Track Coach, Rundlett Middle School, \$2,570, Step 3, Group 11, 6.0%. Michele replaces Sarah Grant

If there was a partial season or some semblance of a season, coaches would be paid their entire stipend. They would not be paid if there were no spring sports season.

Relative to the previously voted Veterans Salary Scale, Mr. Parker asked what percentage of teachers of the overall faculty take advantage of it. Mr. Prince noted that six had done so last year; and 10 the year before. He reiterated that educators must be at least 53 years old and must have taught for 17 years.

The Board voted 8-0 with one abstention by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye; Barb Higgins abstained) to approve the new coach nominations as presented (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Mr. Richards).

The Board voted 9-0 by roll call (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Jim Richards, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye) to approve the slate of spring coaches as presented, noting that stipends would not be paid if there were no spring season. If there were a partial season, full stipends would be paid (motioned by Mr. Crush, seconded by Ms. Cannon).

Liza Poinier said that, historically, the Board talked about renewal of administrator contracts in April, and asked for an update. Ms. Patterson noted that these were deferred until after the budget vote on April 13. She noted there would be a few vacancies noted in the nomination sheets for the April 13 meeting.

Agenda Item 7. Update on Superintendent search

Mr. Croteau noted that NESDEC was able to put together information from surveys and forums and created interview questions. He reminded everyone that confidentiality is extremely important; respect for candidates. Art Bettencourt of NESDEC noted that, given the challenging circumstances, public involvement, communicating with people, etc., the Board might want to weigh in. He said the screening committee was committed to the time and the quality of interactions during the interviews. He said a great deal had been accomplished: committee development, survey, focus groups, to develop the “successful candidate profile.” He said the COVID-19 pandemic might impact the next steps in the Superintendent selection process, including when the Board would like to interview the candidates. He noted that potential candidates felt some conflict about their loyalties to their current districts. Mr. Bettencourt asked for an agreement of the Board that they would conduct the interviews privately, and remotely. Ms. Patterson noted the circumstances had necessarily changed the process but that the Board needed to move forward with remote interviews. She suggested the possibility of continuing the confidentiality aspect of the process a little longer. Mr. Bettencourt suggested some sort of confidential encounters so the Board could hear from candidates about the process moving forward, and the possibility of changing the new Superintendent’s start date. Ms. Cannon suggested having the candidates create a video the Board could view. Mr. Bettencourt suggested the District could lose a candidate if confidentiality was not maintained. Superintendent Bass suggested inviting candidates to a ConcordTV show, inviting public comment. Mr. Bettencourt said that might be a good idea to give the public the opportunity to not only see the candidates but have an opportunity to interact with them. Mr. Parker said he’d like to ask his own questions. There was further discussion about possible changes to the search process. Mr. Croteau will look for answers and bring them to the April 13 meeting; he also noted that ConcordTV was willing to host additional remote meetings if needed.

Agenda Item 8. Amicus brief on school funding suit

Ms. Cannon made a few comments about the language of the brief but said she had no concerns after reading it. Mr. Croteau commented that he had also read the draft and had no objections to it. Ms. Patterson made a motion to adopt the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Board of the Concord School District agrees to be a signatory to the amicus brief to be filed in the NH Supreme Court in the ConVal school funding case on behalf of a number of school districts across the state. The Board understands that this brief is being prepared without any cost to the District, that the filing of this brief does not commit the District to any ongoing role in the ConVal case, and that a draft of the brief has been reviewed.

The Board voted 8-0 by roll call with one abstention (Jennifer Patterson, Gina Cannon, Tom Croteau, Chuck Crush, Barb Higgins, Liza Poinier, Danielle Smith, David Parker voted aye; Jim Richards abstained) to adopt the resolution as presented (motioned by Ms. Patterson, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

Agenda Item 9. Proposed calendar of meetings

Superintendent Bass discussed the proposed Board calendars for April and May, highlighting the final budget consideration and vote on April 13, and the simultaneous Superintendent search process.

Ms. Cannon reminded the Board that it had intended to further discuss JV Hockey; Medicaid reimbursement of occupational therapy (OT) services; and whether William White Educational Consulting (WWEC) would be willing to not increase his annual contract due to this extraordinary crisis. Superintendent Bass said there was an initiative to have a conversation with William White.

Ms. Patterson noted that the Board would discuss JV Hockey, OT reimbursement, Nate Levenson. She noted that a sub-group of the Board had met to discuss a comprehensive review of the special education program and whether to have a more systematic approach to it. They were considering the cost and timeframe of a review by Mr. Levenson, which would need to be set in motion outside of the budget process. Superintendent Bass said this had germinated from a conversation at the Board level about various costs associated with the WWEC contract: what works, what doesn't work and that an ad hoc Board committee had interviewed Mr. Levenson to determine his services, his cost, his results. Ms. Patterson said this was a good conversation in which to have the public involved.

Agenda Item 10. Public comment

Concord resident and parent Dan Marcus asked at what point in time grading policies would be addressed by the Board. He said he was a teacher at a different school with

experience with competency-based education. He said that if one identified summatives and said these were going to be measures for testing, and only used these measures – students would lose motivation to do formative work when it is no longer part of the grade. He provided a number of specific examples, noting that he did want the Board to be aware of these concerns. He said he was a strong believer in public education and would prefer not to move outside the system, but was so concerned he was looking into private schools for his children.

Concord resident and parent Christina Taylor said a child is given school tasks and should be able to show what they know. She said that this sounds like it should be effective, but her observation was that her son was no longer being trained to hand in his work on time. She said he was receiving good grades but was not handing assignments in on time. She said that school also needs to teach how to set goals, meet goals, and the ability to triage and manage time effectively. She said she was concerned that the District was asking for content competencies, but that graduating seniors also need other skills.

Ms. Patterson said this should be a part of the conversation. Superintendent Bass said duty and responsibility were important skills with consequences and expectations.

Concord resident, parent and college professor Zeus Simioni discussed competency-based learning, noting that it was an unfortunate situation for students applying to college. He said that students were coming home saying they had received these large “sales pitches” from the school about changes for next year and how they were told to be very excited about them. He said he had been assured that changes were only “in the running” and “had to be approved.” He said teachers were giving 82s to everyone because they only had two options: 82 or 100. As mentioned previously, students are not observing deadlines and that in this and other regards, they were being prepared to fail his (college) class. He said many students were having difficulties with online learning program, which required self-discipline; and had been rewarded even if they’ve handed things in late and can re-take a test. He asked how community members can broach this subject and put a stop to it.

Superintendent Bass noted that parents needed to understand “where we are, where we want to go and how we’re going to get there.” He noted discrepancies among teachers regarding competencies, and that what would be done needed to be consistent and systematic throughout the school system. He said he did not disagree with much of the commentary. He noted that the District had reached out to a number of colleges; which did not have problems with the 1-4 system.

Mr. Simioni asked whether they might be a different term to be used than “competencies” for the other skills previously mentioned (lack of deadlines, etc.) He said those skills had nothing to do with competencies.

Concord resident and parent Beth Richards asked for a recommendation from the Instructional Committee (based on its January 23, 2019 meeting) to consider the competency grading system in a slow process. She said the Board had asked for this a long time ago, and suggested this committee should address that issue.

Ms. Patterson noted that the Board would not likely be having committee meetings until May. Ms. Higgins noted that it was important to be clear about what the Board's role was in this matter. She wanted to be sure that she was acting appropriately as the Chair of the Instructional Committee, and as a Board member. Mr. Parker said he was on the Instructional Committee and did not think its function was to dictate the actual policy; its job was to oversee the process and make sure schools were following protocol. He noted that any system of grading had its merits. He did foresee the possibility that a student might not reach a competency, while the class had proceeded to the next competency.

Ms. Richards commented that it would be helpful to understand which entity "owned" that process and had the policy vote. She asked Dr. Bass if that information could be provided as a next step. She wanted to know where the policy decision was made and voted on to be made clear. She asked whether, if a change that would affect the handbook was made, where that change would be made and announced.

There was no further public comment.

Mr. Crush left the meeting.

Agenda Item 11. Adjournment

The Board voted 8-0 to adjourn (motioned by Mr. Richards, seconded by Ms. Higgins).

The Board adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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