

CCHS Newsletter Addition

February School Committee News

The upcoming months are busy for the School Committee. On **Tuesday February 28** please attend the **Public Hearings on the school budgets and building projects**. This is an annual hearing held by the Finance Committee prior to Town Meeting, and it is an opportunity to hear details on the upcoming warrant articles. The meeting is at 7:30 P.M. at the Alcott School.

There is an election in Concord on **Tuesday March 28th**. You may register to vote at the town house if you have not yet done so (until March 8). Voters will be voting to fill two seats on the School Committee and two seats on the Board of Selectmen, along with voting on design funds for a new Willard Elementary School. Please mark your calendars and **please vote!**

Town Meeting begins on **Monday April 24th**, and will continue on April 25th, and 26th, as well as the following Monday as necessary. Important school articles will be voted at Town Meeting. Please plan to attend.

As the School Committee continues to move forward with budget and building requests, we are also following news at the state level. As many of you are aware, state and federal funding for public education has not kept up with costs, and it covers a smaller percentage of the total cost of education in Concord and Carlisle. The towns receive less state money for education now than in 2002. The result is a larger share of the cost of education is being covered by the towns, and paid for by local property tax.

The School Committee is working with several groups to try to secure more money from the state directly to towns to help offset the pressure on local property tax. News from our state representatives is that Chapter 70 money, direct aid to towns for education, may be increasing, but the detail in the governor's initial proposed budget shows that Concord will get a decrease in Chapter 70 funds, while the Regional High School proposal is for a very slight increase.

The state has a structural budget deficit due to rising costs of health care, pensions, and previously voted obligations. While the economy has improved, costs have risen, and the boom of the 1990s has not returned. Cost cutting from areas such as health care, including mental health, have left school budgets to cover expenses that used to be covered by other state agencies. The shell game played by the state to shift costs away from the state budget has landed squarely on the local budgets. Overall, the situation does not look promising. Recent headlines in the newspaper about state surpluses and increased aid to education are not accurately reflecting our local situation, or that of many surrounding communities.

On April 26th there will be a rally at the state house to ask our state legislators to increase funding across the board for public education in Massachusetts. If you are interested, we urge you to attend. Please contact any member of the school committee for more details.

Please pay attention to these matters in the next months, as they will have a direct impact on our schools. While our schools are currently strong, I speak for the entire school committee when saying that we have great concern for the trends that we see. Concord can only continue to provide a strong public education to students if the funding is available to do so.

Thank you,
Betsy Bilodeau, for the School Committee.