

School Committee News

Town Meeting in Concord lasted five nights this year, and each of the nights had articles or discussions relevant to the schools.

On the first night of Town Meeting the school budgets were passed. **Both the CPS and the CCHS budgets will require override votes at the polls on Tuesday June 6, 2006.** Carlisle has already passed the budget at both town meeting and the polls, so Concord passing the budget at the polls will give the Regional High School the necessary “match” needed to resolve the budget for fiscal year 2007.

On the second night of Concord Town Meeting, the first order of business was an article by petition. This article asked that a specific annual budget overview be mailed to all households prior to Town Meeting. The School Committee did send fact sheets for both the CPS and Regional districts to all households, but the article specified the format and type of information to be included. While the School Committee, Finance Committee, and Selectmen all opposed the article for good reasons, including that the facts being requested were not the ones to focus on in order to have a well run school system, the article passed by a small margin. Parents are encouraged to pay attention to these discussions as they continue in the future. The School Committee continues to be concerned that viewing our school operations through a business model using metrics as yet to be established will not have positive results in our schools.

Other articles involving schools included an article to acquire the Burke farm land adjacent to the Ripley School in exchange for land the school currently controls at Strawberry Hill Road. This article passed, and a committee is being formed by the Board of Selectmen to look at various options for selling a portion of the Strawberry Hill Road parcel. A petition to transform the former Alcott School Building to senior citizen housing failed, money for air conditioning at the new Thoreau School passed, and renovations for the CPS buildings (Peabody, Sanborn, and Ripley) passed.

Following the successful vote at the polls on March 28, the Town Meeting also approved the Willard School Design Funds vote, and the Board of Selectmen is now appointing a building committee. Thank you to the School Building Leadership Committee and the Build Willard Committee for all of your hard work in making this happen. The School Committee plans to ask for construction funds for this project next year.

An article for capital improvements at CCHS passed at town meeting in both Concord and Carlisle, and also passed at the polls in Carlisle. **This will be voted at the polls in Concord on Tuesday June 6.** This must pass in both towns to move forward. The article addresses safety concerns in the building that the school committee feels cannot wait for a long term building solution. Projects include integrating the fire alarm and fire doors, addressing science lab safety issues, remediating ventilation issues in the art room, replacing the intercom system, and upgrading some lighting.

The School Committee would like to thank Pat Sinnott for six years of service to the town as an elected school board member. We all enjoyed working with Pat and will miss him. We welcome Peter Fischelis to our board as of this week, and thank him for being the only brave soul willing to run for this office in Concord!

Finally, the School Committee has received a lot of correspondence about the announcement that the elementary school day will be starting each day five minutes earlier and ending ten minutes later on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday for next year. Reaching agreement on how to achieve the 900 hour instructional time mandate from the state remains a subject of ongoing negotiations with the Concord Teachers Association. For next year, a decision had to be made prior to the resolution of that bargaining.

Some of the issues raised in these correspondences, regarding both hours and calendar, can be responded to now. The state mandates that school children attend school 180 days a year. Teachers are contracted to work 185 days a year, with five days being professional days. The contract stipulates that teachers will not work more than 180 days teaching students, so the calendar is set in order that snow days are added to the end of the school year. The contract also states that no days can be scheduled prior to September 1 without both the CPS and High School Unions agreeing, something they have not been willing to agree to in past years. Once state mandated holidays are accounted for, there is little room to change the calendar without changing the contracts. In a nutshell, the school committee always appreciates the input from citizens, and all changes of the sort suggested by many are subject to bargaining. Anyone wishing to contact the Concord Public School Committee on these matters or any others may do so by writing to us at the email address csc@colonial.net.

As the school year comes to a close the School Committee would like to thank the following retiring employees for their service to our school system. In the CPS system, the following teachers will be retiring; Susan Bikofsy (17 years of service), Christine Conner (35 years), Robert Fardy (38), Susan Pommers (26), Melissa Lang (14), Anne Mullen-Blumensteil (5), Robin Neuman (21). At CCHS, Denis Cleary (34), Thomas Curtin (39), Robert Raskind (35), and William Yunker (21). In non-instructional positions, Jo Pedato (26), Helen Powers (17), Ted Shattuck (17), and Carol Storrs (20).

The incredible number of years of service to the school system by these individuals translates into a great benefit to our students over many years. We wish all of you a happy retirement.

Finally, congratulations to the graduates of 2006. The School Committee wishes you the best in your future endeavors, and trusts you are well prepared as you move forward.

Enjoy the spring,

Betsy Bilodeau for the School Committee