

School Committee Newsletter Notes For Inclusion in January 2009 Newsletter

Budget Development

At its December 9 meeting, the School Committee voted to approve budgets for the Concord Public Schools and the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School. Between then and Town Meeting in late April, the Finance Committee, Selectmen, and citizens of the towns will have opportunity to comment on the budgets, clarify content, and develop a more thorough understanding of what is proposed during the public hearing process. The public hearing for school budgets is scheduled for Wednesday February 25 at the Alcott School at 7:30; should it be necessary to postpone the meeting due to inclement weather, the back-up date is Thursday February 26. This meeting provides a good opportunity to examine the nuts and bolts of what is in the school budgets. We encourage those of you wanting a better understanding to attend.

The School Committee has recommended a budget increase of 1.81% over the current fiscal year spending level for the Concord Public Schools (K – 8). This will allow for a small increase in staffing necessary to address enrollments at the middle school, the expansion of the Chinese language program at the middle school, the rebuilding of funds available for supplies and materials (cut during the past two fiscal years), and all contractual increases in salaries for faculty and staff at the schools.

At CCHS, the School Committee has recommended a budget increase of 5.21% over the current fiscal year spending level. The recommended increase is also \$305,935 greater than that recommended by the Finance Committees of Concord and Carlisle, which would have allowed for an increase of 3.78%. The School Committee has concluded that the budget reductions necessary to achieve the smaller increase – including an increase in class sizes, a compromised supplies and materials budget, and unemployment payments to cover staff reductions – move the CC educational program backwards. We recognize that in the current severely constrained financial climate we may not move forward; however, we cannot recommend a movement toward an inferior school program.

Like most public-sector concerns, we wait to learn what Governor Patrick will recommend for local aid support for next year, as this will have a significant impact on funding levels available for our schools. The state's revenues are dropping precipitously as capital gains decline, and the current budgeting assumption that local aid will remain level *may well represent a best case scenario*. The Governor's January release of House 1, his budget proposal for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2009, will offer the first "clue" as to how the state is likely to proceed for the next year.

At this time the recommended budgets of 1.81% increase for CPS and 5.21% for CCHS will not require an override for Concord. Because Carlisle holds its town meeting later in the spring, its Finance Committee has not yet established budget guidelines. Thus we cannot say with certainty whether the recommendation (or the 3.78% increase recommended by the Finance Committees of Concord and Carlisle) would require an override for Carlisle.

Massachusetts School Building Authority

The School Committee continues to work with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) as it gathers information from across the state and to determine what projects it will fund

this year. We have submitted funding requests for the construction of the new Willard School at Concord Public Schools and a separate request for work at the high school. MSBA has received more than 200 requests from communities to support construction projects. The School Committee anticipates feedback from MSBA in the late spring, at the earliest, as to whether it will support any construction program at CCHS.

At the December CCHS Parent Association meeting, Regional School Committee chair Jerry Wedge made a presentation on the deficiencies of the high school facility, and analysis that current and past School Committees have done to date on options available to address these problems. The School Committee plans to make future presentations during the winter and spring on high school needs – at neighborhood coffees as well as PTG meetings. We strongly urge all families to become familiar with this issue.

School Calendar – 2009/2010

At its December 9 meeting, the School Committee approved the school calendars for the next school year. Classes will begin on Thursday September 3 and (in a snow-free world with no other inclement weather!) end Monday, June 21. Look for calendar distribution later in this academic year.

Superintendent's Tea

Diana Rigby has set aside time each month to meet with anyone who has a question, a word of thanks, a bone to pick, or simply needs for a cup of tea. Please join her on the first Friday of each month (exception January 2009, when she will meet on the *second Friday* January 9) from 3:30 to 5:00. Her January tea is scheduled for Friday, January 9, at the Sanborn School Library. Please feel free to drop in whether you have students at the middle school or anywhere!

Submitted by:

Jan McGinn
For the School Committees