

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 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 anticipated 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 the state budget will include 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 concerning local aid may well represent a best case scenario. At this time the recommended budgets of 1.81% increase for CPS and 5.21% for CCHS will not require an override for Concord. At this time, 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.

Debt Exclusion

The Concord-Carlisle Regional School Committee is asking for \$750,000 from the two towns to fund capital expenses at the high school. The debt exclusion will require an affirmative vote from a majority of voters at the March 31 annual town elections as well as at Town Meeting in April. For further information on the debt exclusion, please consult the Concord Journal, the Carlisle Mosquito, or the Concord Schools website (<http://www.concordpublicschools.net/>).

Superintendency Union

The Carlisle School Committee has initiated discussions with the Concord School

Committee as to whether Concord would consider sharing a superintendent between the two towns. The state labels this arrangement a “Superintendency Union”, and currently the Concord Public Schools and the Concord Carlisle Regional School Districts engage in such a management arrangement. This would involve sharing administrative functions between the two towns, resulting in the three districts (Concord, Carlisle, and Concord-Carlisle) sharing the superintendent and management team. The Concord School Committee indicated a willingness to examine the issue, recognizing that the examination will require a thorough analysis of potential cost savings and benefits. The Carlisle School Committee has hired a consulting team versed in educational and financial analysis to conduct the review. As the review is completed Carlisle will determine whether potential savings would warrant a formal request to the Concord Public School Committee.

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, and again at a joint PTG meeting of the three Concord elementary schools in February, 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.

Willard School Construction

The Willard School construction is moving ahead on time. When you drive past the site on Powder Mill Road you’ll see a building well on the way to being up and running on the site in September! Representative Cory Atkins and members of Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas’ staff recently toured the site.

Superintendent’s Tea

Superintendent of Schools 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 from 3:30 to 5:00. Please feel free to drop in whether you have students at Alcott or anywhere in the K - 12 system!

Submitted by:
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For the School Committees