

COUNCIL OF CHELMSFORD SCHOOLS

Chelmsford High School - McCarthy Middle School - Parker Middle School
Byam Elementary School - Center Elementary School - Harrington Elementary School - South Row Elementary School
Chelmsford Integrated Preschool

Minutes of March 26, 2026 meeting Zoom meeting 7:10 pm start, adjourned: 9:16 pm

Welcome – Lisa Bryant, Co-President

Discussion about enhanced security for Zoom meetings:

- Tested multiple security measures, including verification, waiting rooms, time limit for entry, name change
- One member will be tasked with admitting participants from waiting room
- Participants will be asked to include school names in display
- Only those participants known to host will be allowed to enter after 30 minutes
- Written instructions will be provided before May meeting

Minutes – written by Melissa Brennan, Secretary

- Motion to accept minutes
- Ashley Cakounes first, Alysun Kenney seconded.
- All in favor

Treasurer’s Report - Courtney Cooper, Treasurer

- All photo commission checks have been deposited
- All of Council’s expenses that need to be reimbursed to people have been paid out
- Question asked about Katie Greer presentation and how many parents attended parent presentation - approximately 24 parents
- Question also asked about possible presentations by Dr. Jill Walsh - nothing has been scheduled as of this time

Microsoft Update - Ginger Skoog, Co-President

- Council receiving great feedback from parents that it is being used, especially by families with students at multiple schools
- Reminder you can upload an image with your calendar invites
- Council will be asking PTOs to upload budget, bylaws, and nonprofit paperwork to the microsites
- Center PTO added that they want to add their own events to the microsite, and share what they want - want to be thoughtful about what they share out to the public, especially with ticketed events

Community Read-In Report - Melissa McCaffrey, VP

- 94 teachers and 62 volunteer readers participated across the district
- Only two last-minute cancellations with no no-shows

Photo Update - Amanda Collison, VP

- Clarified that rumors about Lifetouch and Epstein files are unfounded
- Explained Lifetouch follows FERPA regulations and stores images encrypted for 18 months before deletion
- Photo contract continues through end of next school year
- Parents with any concerns can contact Council
- Committee will need to be formed to review vendor options for future contract
- Amanda stepping down as Photo VP at end of this school year

Superintendent’s Report, Dr. Jay Lang

Fiscal Year 2027 Budget:

- Presented level service budget in February with no staff reductions required
- School Committee approved budget, allowing hiring process to begin
- 9 retirements throughout district, expectation that all positions will be filled by April break
- Reminder to all PTOs to submit reimbursement receipts by mid-June due to fiscal year end on June 30
- Budget will be presented at town meeting in April
- District will purchase back to school supplies for all students again

Parker Building Update:

- Confirmed project will be at current Parker site
- Three options under consideration: new school, addition/renovation, or code upgrade
- School committee will decide grade configuration in April - either grades 5-6, grades 4-5-6, or grades 5-8
- Preferred Schematic Design Report due to MSBA end of April
- MSBA must concur with school committee decision
- Town-wide vote expected end of January or February
- Schematic design phase runs May to October with full building design

School Committee's Report, Maria Santos

- School committee agreed to continue with outside consultant for next strategic plan
- Presentations received from Byam, South Row, and Harrington with Center upcoming
- Katie Simes presentation on potential medical pathway grant for nursing and dental assistant positions

Discussion regarding Innovation Pathways:

- Question arose regarding reported feedback that students in pathways are being told they cannot continue in performing arts and that this contradicts earlier assurances that students would not have to sacrifice arts for pathways
- Explained scheduling conflicts are inevitable with limited singleton course sections
- Students must make choices about priorities including potentially delaying world language
- Emphasized importance of clear communication to students about limitations from the beginning
- Noted pathway participation numbers are relatively small, under 150-200 students

Principal's Report, Steve Murray (CHS)

- Byam: Celebrating Us cultural festival was a huge success, upcoming spirit week themed with National Autism Awareness Month
- South Row: Scholastic book fair was last week, well attended game night, families filled 200 Bit bags for the Wish Project, successful read-in, multicultural festival will be on April 4
- Center: 3 rounds of seating for bingo night, more than 100 students participated in the science fair, Multicultural event called One Center, One Community - more than 20 countries represented
- Parker: Hosted over 40 projects for STEM fair, drama just completed Mary Poppins
- CHS: Becky Savage presentation was the best opiate presentation Mr. Murray has seen, House Olympics just completed

McCarthy REPORT, Alysun Kenney

- Staff Appreciation Events - replenished teacher supplies
- Blacklight Dance - were able to have two spaces
- Fundraisers - Rock n Roll Bingo, Riverhawks game, Recycle Day in May, Middle School night at Fenway in May, Spinners Night

Parker REPORT, Alysun Kenney

- Enrichment - STEM Fair - 40 students signed up
- Staff Appreciation - Classroom Resupply, Show me love notes for Valentine's Day
- Upcoming: Middle School Night at Fenway, Spinners Game, Woo Sox Game, Parker Pride Run, Showboat

CHS Report, Leanne Pich-Sak

- Upcoming events: 2nd annual pickleball tournament on May 16th and After Prom Party on June 3 at the Elks

CHIPS REPORT, Beth Dalley

- Enrichment: Library visit, Ozzy visit, Sugarbug Dental, Ivy the Very Determined Dog, Music Academy
- Fundraiser: Square 1 Art
- Staff Appreciation: Lunch on March 11
- Community event: Collected over 700 pairs of socks for the Wish Project
- Upcoming: Big Joe the Storyteller

Byam REPORT, Carolyn Sousa

- Staff Appreciation: Classroom restock for staff, Souper Bowl lunch
- Successful fundraisers - Roller Kingdom night, Sweetheart Dance, Walk a thon on May 2
- Transition year coming ahead with members aging out
- Enrichment: in school Discovery Museum visits, Natasha Lowe, Lowell Mills visit, Mass Audubon coming,

Center REPORT, Ellen Ellis

- First Multicultural night: had 21 families set up booths, representing 16 countries
- Families came that we usually don't see at events
- Fundraiser: Currently running Taste of Chelmsford raffle
- Staff Appreciation: changing week to the week of the 18th due to MCAS
- Upcoming Recycle Day - harder to get volunteers because they already have their hours - suggestion to look to scouts for volunteers

South Row REPORT, Ashley Cakounes

- Enrichment: 4th grade went to Boston Symphony Orchestra, Kindergarten books and bunnies event with Good Pickins Farm, upcoming Origamito origami studio
- Fundraiser: tiny tiles crafternoon with variety of paid and free crafts
- Upcoming: basket raffle fundraiser combined with Sunshine Dance
- Suggestion to compile library of things: items PTOs have access to and are willing to share with others Web Studios was going to work on that during the next phase, but the more information we can share, the better

Field Trip Conversation

- Concern that elementary schools may bring students on same field trip that is then duplicated in 5th grade
- Dr. Hirsch confirmed district has compiled a list of field trips by grade level to avoid duplication
- Question asked if list could be shared with principals and enrichment coordinators

New Business

- ConnectEd has been sent detailing PTO scholarships available to graduating seniors
- Jill Walsh's presentation is on hold right now, but Dr. Lang will co-sponsor it with us if we move forward
- Call for nominations - please inform Council by May 4 if interested. VP of Photos stepping down, Secretary stepping down, and Co-President stepping down
- Council provided all PTOs with proposed updates to Council bylaws. Members of Council will need to vote in May
 - Question asked regarding dues and filings listed in document
 - Council asks each membership submit a budget and financial statement each year, along with proof of insurance, nonprofit certificate, and a copy of bylaws
 - Council is not auditing; standing rules will say these documents will be posted on PTO sites so they are available to all the parents in the district
 - Council will send link out to all members to review and give feedback
 - Maria Santos mentioned that Council did not used to conduct fundraisers or got involved in individual PTO's financials due to liability
 - If Council has them on file, is it because they have reviewed them for compliance?
 - If just for disclosure, Council should refer people to individual PTOs
 - Suggestion to have Council have this policy reviewed
 - Question about overreach - need to provide detailed Treasurer's report, need to use same calendar, provide PTO reports, more collaboration
 - Statement that this push for more collaboration makes people want to be less collaborative and being pushed away from wanting to participate
 - Comment that asking for anything more than what already doing is too much
 - Comment that school reports are helpful as shared
 - Comment that there is a barrier between what CoCS is trying to do and how PTOs are interpreting it; each PTO serves a different community and should do their own thing
 - CoCS not trying to tell PTOs to do specific things, just trying to facilitate information transfer

Meeting Adjourned – 8:46pm