

Highlights from the School Committee Meeting – attended by Anne Irza-Leggat
March 23, 2010 Joint Meeting at CCHS Library
Concord, MA 01742

CCHS Environmental Field Studies Group

Presentations by student leaders and faculty advisors included the Blandings turtles and the benefits of the Head Starting program, a leaf phenology project, mapping invasive species around CCHS using GPS, reading Thoreau's journals outdoors, and attending the Gulf of Maine Institute conference.

Robin Cicchetti on the CCHS Learning Commons

Robin presented how the changes in the CCHS library are beneficially impacting the students. While the old library served as an archive with chairs that could not be moved and no food allowed the new Learning Commons model encourages students to work together to problem solve. The goal is to make this place "technology infused, wireless, and student-centric." It supports building "Transliteracy" skills so students are using the wider range of communication platforms and tools at their disposal, including print, film, networked digital media, and more. Librarians function as "Chief Information Specialists" and each take on a roll to cover "Student Services," "Accounts," and "Media Production" (as well as many more things they do!).

Space has been cleared to make it more open and lighter, technology has been improved, books have been weeded and reorganized, there are new materials added to the collection including graphic novels and audio books, and there is new furniture.

The staff has applied for grant for additional student materials, they are working with the teachers who are bringing classes to the library frequently to use the technology there. Class visits to the library have increased, as have circulation and patron visits.

Due to budget constraints database subscriptions have had to be reduced significantly, our peer schools all have more. Robin is investigating trials for some databases (e.g. Gale, EBSCO, and ABC-CLIO) as a possible way to get some. While databases were originally developed for librarians, many services (GALE in particular) are doing a good job making them more user-friendly, more like social media.

The fact that the library closes at 3:30 was seen as a problem and one the committee, Louis Salemy in particular, was eager to address immediately. Louis said that "keeping the library open to 6:30 should be a first priority." The issue is staffing and, as the budget for FY'11 is already set, to do this would mean something else would have to be taken out. Diana Rigby and John Flaherty confirmed this. The committee said this issue should be considered and brought back to them in the future.

School Choice

It was recommended the Concord not take part in Interdistrict School Choice Program and the committee approved not taking part for 2010-2011.

The CCHS Masterplan

The CCHS Facilities Masterplan Report was to be presented at Willard on March 24. Many details of the Masterplan including a wiki, Twitter feed, and Facebook page are up on the website: <http://cchsmasterplan.org>.

Middle School Trip to China

Diana Rigby will be traveling with teachers and 18 students from the Middle School to China from April 15-26, 2010. John Flaherty will represent the school administration at Town Meeting.

Town Meeting

Presentations were assigned to various school committee members for the school-related articles to be proposed at Town Meeting. Town Meeting will open Monday, April 26, at 7 p.m. at Concord-Carlisle High School. Ned Perry hopes to get through article 29 on the first night of Town Meeting which would include all school related articles.

These articles include:

Article 8 Public School Budget

This article provides the annual operating budget for the Concord Public Schools. The proposed budget conforms to the spending guidelines set by the Finance Committee in November 2009.

Article 9 Regional School Budget

This article provides Concord's share of the annual operating budgets for the Concord-Carlisle Regional High School and the Minuteman Regional High School.

Article 24 Concord Public Schools Renovations

This article authorizes the Treasurer to borrow \$600,000 for remodeling, reconstruction and extraordinary repairs, and related work at various Concord Public School facilities. This borrowing is part of the Town Manager's Five-Year Capital Plan, with the debt service cost to be funded within the Levy Limit.

Article 25 Concord Public Schools Technology Stabilization Fund, Creation and Funding

This Article seeks Town Meeting approval to create a Technology Stabilization Fund and authorization to transfer into the newly created fund monies encumbered from prior year school budgets for technology expenses. The Technology Stabilization Fund is invested by the Town Treasurer.

Article 26 Transfer of Funds to Concord Public Schools Capital Need Stabilization Fund

This Article seeks Town Meeting approval to transfer into the existing Capital Needs Stabilization Fund monies encumbered from prior year school budgets for capital expenses. The Stabilization Fund is invested by the Town Treasurer.

Article 27 Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Technology Stabilization Fund, Creation and Funding

This Article seeks Town Meeting approval for the Regional School District to create a Technology Stabilization Fund and authorization to transfer into the newly created fund monies encumbered from prior year school budgets for technology expenses. The Technology Stabilization Fund is invested by the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Treasurer. As with any Stabilization Fund, a two-thirds vote of the Town Meeting is required to put money into such fund or to take money out for a specific technology purpose.

Article 28 Concord-Carlisle High School/MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority)
Feasibility Study

This Article seeks Town Meeting approval to authorize the Concord-Carlisle Regional School District Treasurer to borrow funds for procuring feasibility study and schematic design services. The Massachusetts School Building Authority requires that the Regional School District be authorized to borrow the full amount of the appropriation, including such portion that may be reimbursed by the Authority.

Note: the descriptions of these articles were NOT discussed at the school committee meeting. I have copied them from the WARRANT FOR TOWN MEETING which can be found here on the town's website:

http://www.concordma.gov/pages/ConcordMA_BOS/2010Warrant.pdf