

# CONCORD EDUCATION UPDATE



(Updated) CCGS Newsletter – August, 2024

While most of us have been concentrating on summer camp pick-ups and taking some downtime, town business goes on and there are several education-related matters we have been following. Both positive and other news.

As always, stay engaged, stay tuned-in and let's all work together to support our great public schools!

## DATES:

### SB MEETING

Monday August 19th 6:00 PM [Agenda and Zoom Link](#)

## FINCOM SIGNALS COOPERATION WITH SCHOOL COMMITTEE?

Recent Bridge [coverage](#) seems to indicate that new FinCom leadership is steering the conversation toward cooperation and collaboration. If true, this is a welcome and refreshing change! The FinCom seems to acknowledge the mistake of not factoring in enrollment shifts that fueled a town meeting vote to (once again) support school funding in opposition to the FinCom and SB position.

They also apparently are seeking parity regarding capital expenditures between the town and the schools. The "tone" seems different. But we shall see...

## MIDDLE SCHOOL RE-NAMING: POSITIVE MEETING WITH SUFE REPRESENTATIVES

Dr. Hunter and two members of the Stand Up for Ellen group had a seemingly positive and constructive July 11 meeting to discuss where things stand. This commentary was sent out by Stand Up for Ellen to their group, after the meeting:

*"Jen Turner and Michael Williams held their first collaboration meeting with Laurie Hunter today to discuss ways to work together to continue to pursue our goal of honoring Ellen Garrison in a manner that is equal to other luminaries of our town. According to both Jen and Michael it was a productive, collaborative meeting and they left feeling hopeful about the work ahead at honoring Ellen in the new school...and beyond."*

Seems a very good sign that compromise and collaboration will win the day.

## CMS CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

The Ellen Garrison Building at The Concord Middle School is taking shape and the project is on-budget and on-schedule!

The CMSBC issued the following report on June 15. *"The Concord Middle School Building Committee held its regularly scheduled business meeting on June 20th. The project remains within budget, the cash flow is within forecasted levels, and construction remains on schedule. Contingency levels remain healthy with 70% of both the hard and soft cost contingency budget line items being unspent while the construction is more than 50% complete for Phase 1, the design and construction for new middle school building."* Drive by and check it out!

## SELECT BOARD TRIED TO CHANGE MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE CHARTER TO INSTALL SPECIFIC PERSON

Apparently, an item was added to the July 22 SB Meeting consent agenda to **change the charter of the CMS Building Committee (CMSBC)**. Mark Martines of the group "Citizens for Improved Concord Town Government" **addresses this in a letter ([Link](#))**. It seems both chairs of the CMSBC and some on the SB were unaware. Apparently, when asked, SB Clerk Mark Howell said the goal was to change the charter to increase the number of committee members so as to reinstall Court Booth **back on** the CMSBC, based on a request by Court. And yet, this was not raised by Mark Howell as "new business" or otherwise mentioned at a CMSBC meeting held prior the July 22 SB meeting. Court was the CMSBC SC liaison but rolled off when he left the SC. New SC member Andrew Herchek is the new SC liaison. Apparently, the SB will not publish Mark's letter, even though it is public record.

We are still learning all the details, but we believe any change to an important school-related Committee charter should be made in an **open and transparent** manner, that citizens should be invited to express interest if a new slot is opened up, and that Andrew Herchek should have the space/respect to represent his views. All-impacted should be included in discussions, especially when it involves adding a specific person back onto a Committee "by decree", and **NOT based on a (any) need expressed by that Committee**.

**UPDATE:** The middle school building committee (CMSBC) met August 15 and, after discussion, voted 9:2 on a motion telling the SB that they do NOT want the committee expanded and a person added. Not a single member spoke about any "skill gap" that would warrant a charter change (to add someone) and many said the committee was running very well/smoothly as-is. Also, it was clarified that ALL CMSBC members past and present will be honored at ceremonies, etc.

While the SB has the **authority** to change this important committee's charter and install someone on it "by decree", the message sent (and vote) seemed clear. The SB meets on Monday night 8/19 and will take up this issue. [Agenda and zoom link](#). We hope the CMSBC the vote/message given will be taken into account.

## LETTER FROM DEI COMMISSION CHAIRS IN THE BRIDGE, RESPONSES

[This letter](#) from the DEI Chairs was printed in the Bridge July 26. It prompted [a letter in response](#) from SB candidate Joe Laurin, accusing the DEI Chairs of "bullying" and them setting the stage for more conflict with the SC. **Update:** [This response](#) to Joe Laurin's letter (by Michael Williams) has been published in the Bridge.

As most know, the SC "reached for compromise" and [voted in May to name the building](#) at CMS "The Ellen Garrison Building". SB Clerk Mark Howell called this decision a "thoughtful and respectful compromise". In the letter, the DEI Chairs call this a "gesture" that "falls short" and "formally request" their inclusion in a list of items.

We hope all-involved can move forward in a unified and collaborative way to honor Ellen Garrison in the context of the new middle school, without looking backward and criticizing the SC and without making demands.