

**Canton School Committee
Open Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 21, 2023**

A. Call to Order: Chair O'Halloran called for a motion to commence the Thursday, September 21, 2023 School Committee Open Meeting meeting at 5:18 pm. Ms. Moran made the motion; Ms. McCourt seconded. Roll Call Vote was unanimous at 4-0 and recorded as:

Kimberly McCourt yea

Kristian Merenda yea

Maureen Moran yea

Kendall O'Halloran yea

4 yeas 0 nays

Attendees:

Kendall O'Halloran

Kristian Merenda

Laura Arboleda (arrived at 5:30pm)

Kimberly McCourt

Maureen Moran

Derek Folan, Superintendent

Stephen Marshall, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations

Danica Seto, Student Representative

Sarah Shannon, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Joanne Campbell, Recording Secretary

Guests:

Jeffrey Sperling, CHS Principal

Adam Hughes, PreK-12 Wellness Coordinator, Health & Wellness

Deborah Rooney, Director of Teaching and Learning

First Student Representatives, Barbie Doherty and Tracy Donahue

Joshua Fogel, Data Analytics Manager

B. Executive Session: Committee members immediately entered Executive Session for Purpose 7: Approve minutes; comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements and Purpose 1: To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Committee members returned to Open Session at 6:13 pm.

C. Superintendent's Report Superintendent Folan presented the following District progress, highlights, and accolades.

Excellence

National Banner of Recognition: Congratulations to Canton High School for receiving **National Banner recognition** from Special Olympics North America! CHS has successfully achieved national standards of excellence in the areas of **inclusion, advocacy** and **respect** for the second time.

Mekhala Costello, Hockomock Sports Player of the Week: Costello has been instrumental in Canton girls soccer's perfect 3-0 start to the season. The Bulldogs lead the league with nine goals in three games and have yet to concede one. Costello, a senior midfielder, scored in all three games and is tied for the league lead in goals (four) and points (six) and tied for second in assists (two). During the course of three games, she scored three game-winning goals. Costello is also an extremely strong student and demonstrates personal excellence as the director of the lip dub, her graphic design and video production.,

<https://hockomocksports.com/player-of-the-week-mekhala-costello-canton-soccer/>

GMS Marathon Mondays: Under the direction of Dr. Kristen Morgan, and through the collaboration of the staff, GMS Marathon Mondays are off to an amazing start. The Marathon Mondays dedicate independent reading time every Monday from 9:40 - 10:06 AM so that students and adults take time out to read 26 minutes of sustained reading to develop a love of reading.

Highlights

GMS Community Forum: We are so thrilled to announce the first of four Community Forums for the Galvin Middle School Project. All are welcome and highly encouraged to attend on **Wednesday, September 27, from 7-8 p.m.**, in the CHS Library. These sessions will be facilitated by our Design Firm Ai3. Each forum will have a particular focus to gain stakeholder input and inform the design process. For more information on the GMS Building Project, please visit this [LINK](#).

Senior Center Visit: I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the Canton Senior Center last week, as an effort to extend our school community relationships with the broader Canton community. Diane Tynan and I had coffee with many wonderful Canton residents. I participated in a Tai Chi class. They loved learning about the schools, and I loved connecting with them.

Open Houses: I want to celebrate our Open Houses across the District and commend the staff and administration for incredibly welcoming nights for students and families. These events are part of school traditions, and I want to commend the extra emphasis deepening our relationships and connections and developing a sense of belonging through these experiences.

Acknowledgments

School Custodian Day: On October 2, Massachusetts honors school custodians for their incredible impact on our school community and, in particular, ensuring our schools set the stage for the best learning possible. Our custodians take incredible pride in their buildings and the

relationships with students, staff and families. They are truly remarkable and impressive members of our team. Thank you.

Updates

MCAS and Accountability Reports: On Tuesday, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released MCAS scores and accountability reports for Districts across the state. Canton outperformed the state results in nearly every metric. We achieved our District goal of achieving a 5 percent increase in students achieving *Meeting or Exceeding in Math* MCAS. We are beyond proud of our results and we can't wait to share them with our staff and families, and here at School Committee in October.

School Security: Building administration has held safety meetings with all students and staff, and are now conducting fire drills and shelter-in-place drills in conjunction with Canton Fire and Police. We are ensuring all exterior doors are locked, the buildings and grounds are monitored, and our entry and visitor protocols are strengthened. We will be enforcing our policy that school grounds are closed to the general public during school hours. We respectfully ask our community members to refrain from walking through school grounds during the school day, especially near our buildings, windows and playgrounds. In consultation with Canton PD, there are two exceptions: the tennis courts and the track/lower lots. We understand that these are community spaces and we want to be good partners with the community.

Committee members noted that school playgrounds are also closed to the community throughout the school day and asked that all this new information be widely available to townspeople via a press release in *The Citizen*, and via both the District and town websites.

Important Dates and Events

Sept. 25	No School - Yom Kippur
Sept. 26	CHS Open House, 6:00 pm
Sept. 27	GMS Community Forum, CHS Library, 7:00-8:00 pm
Sept. 28	GMS Open House, 6:00 pm
Oct. 5	School Committee Meeting, CHS DLL, 6:00 pm

D. Student Representative Introductions: Principal Sperling described the role Student Representatives serve in the role of Student Representatives including working with elected members of each class as well as the School Committee. He explained the process of their election and their responsibilities. Mr.Sperling then introduced the 2023-2024 student representatives:

Class of 2024: Samantha Pham

Class of 2025: Aaron Scibelli

Class of 2026: Zoya Gildenberg

Chair: Emma Cummings

Co-Chair/Alternate: Danica Seto

9th grade: Elections will be held on October 11th.

All representatives were grateful for the opportunity to impact students as well as the greater Canton community.

E. Teaching and Learning Report: Ms. Rooney and Mr. Hughes provided the Wayfinder curriculum update. As the new SEL curriculum, Wayfinder is designed around 8 core skills for academics and life including self-awareness, adaptability, empathy, collaboration, agency and purpose. Mr. Hughes, the lead educator for this program, described Wayfinder as a flexible program that “lives” differently at each building level. Lessons will be appropriately adapted for each building; teachers will have access to fitting resources to address any needs for their particular classrooms. Mr. Hughes described the program as interactive and includes digital portals that offer grade level appropriate lessons.

Further information for parents is available. 30 minute Webinars (all of which will be recorded) for each academic level are scheduled for October 3rd; additionally, resources will be shared to parents via the Principals’ weekly newsletter.

F. Unfinished Business:

1. **Strategic Plan:** Acknowledging the efforts of the Strategic Planning Committee, Superintendent Folan shared the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, asking for a vote of approval to begin implementation. He discussed the development and application of the three step planning process and the evolution of the Mission Statement as well as the core values of CPS (REACH), its Vision Statement and Theory of Action and followed with four priorities as part of the action plan:

1. Teaching, Learning and Leading for all;
2. Management and Operations;
3. Communication and Community Engagement
4. Safe, Inclusive and Equitable Environments

Each priority includes objectives, focus and rationale and can be reviewed [Here](#).

Committee members applauded Superintendent Folan and the Committee’s efforts for bold achievements in producing an evolving document, and asked that:

1. the document contain an opening letter including a glossary of unfamiliar educational terms as well as better definitions of Rigor, High Quality Teaching & Learning; “exceptional education.”
2. list steps that will achieve outcomes from actionable items;
3. include more specific *Indicators of Success*, particularly when defining the “underserved population;”
4. address the explicit gap of commitment to rigor, and add demonstrable, measurable markers in the curriculum to know and quantify that they are happening. Mr. Folan felt rigor is happening everywhere everyday and needs to be seen.
5. details be added to the plan so it can be seen as a road map.

6. Tools to develop happy, healthy, safe, and successful students

Mr. Folan described this plan as a “guiding document” for the five year plan with flexibility based on evolutions of education, data points, emerging technologies, and other changes. He thought it prudent to review the Strategic Plan in each of the five years.

Hearing no further questions or comments, Chair O’Halloran asked for a motion to approve the CPS Strategic Plan as written and presented. Laura Arboleda made the motion; Kimberly McCourt seconded. Ensuing vote was unanimous at 5-0 and recorded as follows:

Laura Arboleda	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Kendall O’Halloran	yea

5 yeas 0 nays

2. Superintendent/District Goals 2nd Read: Superintendent Folan presented the revised and updated 2023-2024 District Improvement Goals born out of the Strategic Plan for a second read and potential vote of approval. Mr. Folan identified revisions made in each of the goals:

- a. **Goal #1**-included Superintendent goals and added glossary terms and standards to each key action; setting the course around professional practice;
- b. **Goal #2**-targets an average student growth of a 2% increase, particularly in the lower achievement levels and noted that these selective populations and achievement gaps need more attention as determined a priority by the Commissioner;
- c. **Goal #3**-
 - i. added professional development and multiple modes of engagement in communication; addressed baseline data and how to analyze data to recognize and determine discernible improvements for reaching everyone and reducing barriers to communication;
 - ii. Development of Social Media; celebrate the good work happening in the District;
- d. **Goal #4**-a 2 year goal to address and reduce disproportionality of the discipline ratio (monitored closely by DESE). This does not mean lowering standards of discipline, but rather addressing the disproportionality of selective population discipline and risk ratios. Goal will be met by employing Wayfinder curriculum, continued Restorative Justice training, and twice yearly Equity Professional Development. Mr. Folan noted that these standards are aligned with his Superintendent goals.

Discussion: Ms. Merenda appreciated the great thought and work presented, but wants to be sure all these goals parallel the School Committee's Superintendent Evaluation assessment for each of the four categories including evidence of alignment of standards and indicators for each goal.

Ms. Moran spoke of her concern of this year's deviation from the process of goal setting. In response, Mr. Folan stated that he had reviewed the policies and believes it is his charge to build the goals based on the Strategic Plan, then set, build out, and bring goals to the School Committee for discussion and approval. He would welcome a deeper dive into the evaluation process to be sure all are in compliance. Ms. Moran felt there is additional work necessary to make sure all are on the same page so all are fully aligned as the evaluation process comes together. Ms. Merenda suggested that, moving forward, the process might include engaging in conversations before Goals are set. Mr. Folan acknowledged the need of and welcomed a reexamination and new assessment of the process of his evaluation. He also called for an acknowledgement of the current goals and feedback from the Committee regarding these targets and goals in furthering the mission and success of students.

Committee members thought the student goal makes perfect sense, but would like to know more about these populations and agreed that the content is in the right direction in setting up students for success. A member inquired about time to allow a workshop for discussion around the Superintendent Evaluation. There was consensus that there is a continued need to be better educated about the specifics of the goals of the Superintendent evaluation process. Mr. Folan voiced concern that if these goals are not approved, all improvement plans and focus areas will stop. He felt setting and committing to focus areas were critical to the success of the school year. Ms. Merenda suggested the vote not be delayed, but that there be continued conversation and greater details around goals, specifically disproportionality in suspension rates. The Committee agreed to an added caveat that there be a workshop scheduled to further discuss District Goals.

With no more questions or requests for further discussion, Chair Merenda called for a motion to accept the CPS 2023-2024 District Goals. Ms. Moran made the motion; Ms. Arboleda seconded. Ensuing vote was unanimous at 5-0 and recorded as follows:

Laura Arboleda	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

- 3 **Policy Updates Section F & Section G:** Superintendent Folan and members of the policy subcommittee presented policy sections F & G for a vote of approval. Ms. O'Halloran indicated the subcommittee met with MASC representatives, Ms. Dorothy Presser and Ms. Alicia Malin, on Monday, Sept. 18th to further review these sections. Ms. O'Halloran indicated changes made during that meeting to address previously noted concerns in these sections including naming Facilities Planning as

part of the policy; renaming PTA to CAPT; and memorials being in line with policy. Moving forward, memorials will be in line with current policy. There was discussion over “naming” versus “memorials”. Subcommittee members will continue to consider thinking about the differentiation as it relates to this policy and to the town and its community. Proposed Section G wording changes were addressed including crowdfunding versus gift policy; updated reference notes, 1st amendment rights, new vs backfilling or modifying positions; stipends that are specific to CEA contracts; educator evaluations; and better definitions for regulations. Hearing no further comments or requests for discussion, Ms. O’Halloran asked for a motion to approve Policy Sections F and G with recommended changes. Ms. Merenda made the motion; Ms. McCourt seconded. Ensuing vote was unanimous at 5-0 and recorded as follows:

Laura Arboleda	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Kendall O’Halloran	yea

5 yeas 0 nays

- 4. School Committee Operating Protocols:** Chair O’Halloran reviewed the updated School Committee Operating Protocols (draft 9.20.23). This document will serve as a self-governing document clarifying the limits of School Committee authority and aiding in making informed decisions. Ms. O’Halloran noted that legal counsel had reviewed the document and saw no deviation from any other district. Additionally, MASC representatives, Jim Hardy, Dorothy Presser and Alicia Mallon, have also reviewed the document and agreed with legal counsel’s assessment. Ms. O’Halloran opened the floor for questions. Ms. Moran asked for clarity around the requirement that any member’s request for information that is not already in existence shall require a public committee vote. Chair O’Halloran noted that the distinction between “in existence” is the application of the Freedom of Information Act. A full committee vote will give the committee the opportunity to determine the value of significant central office administrative time and effort that may be required to develop and complete the request. Mr. Folan stated that the committee would look for the rationale of the request in consideration of the administrator’s time. Ms. Moran expressed concern about balancing the committee’s need to make informed decisions on behalf of the public. Ms. O’Halloran assured the group that any request would be fully deliberated by the committee. Ms. Moran followed with a question regarding a statement about communication within the District, specifically through staff and family surveys. Ms. O’Halloran noted that the flow of information within the school system should follow the hierarchy. Mr. Folan understood Ms. Moran’s concerns about themes and trends and will think about how to present these while continuing to improve Staff and Family surveys. Concern about the eligibility of only specific School Committee members to contact legal counsel was also discussed. Chair O’Halloran acknowledged the concern, but indicated that this was recommended by the attorney and is comparable to the policies of surrounding towns. Ms. Moran asked that if this level of protocol is put into practice, the full

committee be apprised of any and all communications by being cc'd on any document for full transparency. Concern was also voiced at how prescriptive the additions are to the protocol based on other towns' agreements. Ms. O'Halloran asserted that this was based on the format from the previous year as well as MASC recommendations.

Ms. Merenda noted that there has been a change in continuing education requirements due to revisions from the Mass. Ethics Commission. Bullet 2 sub-bullet 1 may need to be revised. General consensus suggested the revision was already in place, but Chair O'Halloran will follow up with MASC to assure revisions are up to date.

Ms. Arboleda requested that no vote be taken; rather, a revised document inclusive of all updates be brought to the next committee meeting for a vote. Chair O'Halloran was in agreement; she did ask the committee to respect the chain of command within the school system. The document will be brought forward at the next Open Session Meeting for a vote of approval.

G. New Business:

- 1. Transportation Update:** Representatives from First Student, Superintendent Folan and Mr. Marshall provided a transportation update. Mr. Folan stated that bus transportation had improved since the last update on September 7th, but is in need of further adjustments. Administration is targeting areas that continue to need refinement including crowded GMS buses and late arrival of some buses to school. 1st Student representatives advocated for a 20th bus to ameliorate space and timing issues—District officials agreed. Since its addition, on time arrival, overcrowding, and length of time on the bus has greatly improved; feedback from families and students has been positive. Buses are still challenged by Canton traffic, particularly on Tuesdays. New times and bus numbers are being communicated to parents/students impacted by changes via email. GPS has been activated; however, there are some tracking issues that Mr. Marshall is working to resolve these concerns in a document that will be forwarded to parents and added to the website. Dr. Greene and Ms. McLeod continue to pay very close attention to incoming emails. While safety issue responses are the highest priority, all incoming emails are generally answered within 24-40 hours.

1st Student representatives, Barbie Doherty and Tracy Donahue, welcomed questions and concerns regarding transportation from School Committee members. Pre-ride checklist adherence was a particular issue; committee members inquired why some cameras were inoperative. 1st Student reps conceded that hard drives were old; new ones have been ordered. Once installed, the camera issue should be resolved. Committee members appreciated the candor of the representatives and asked First Student to consider whole systems that will resolve current and overall continued and concerning bus issues. Additionally, committee members called for the District to develop short and long term considerations to improve bus transportation as a whole. Suggestions included clarity on standards and improved/ more comprehensive policies on bus ridership.

2. Kindergarten Enrollments: Mr. Marshall updated the committee regarding current Kindergarten enrollment numbers noting that the District is close to full capacity. While there are 9 pending students, Mr. Marshall is not concerned. He also stated that no migrant families have been assigned to Canton; if any families are ultimately assigned to the District, these students will be placed in proper grades. Mr. Marshall will forward the most updated numbers to the full committee on Friday, September 22nd.

3. Residency Recertification Update: Mr. Marshall provided an update on the summer residency recertification process for 6th and 9th graders. He documented 100% completion of residency recertification at the high school level. At this time, 12 families have not completed recertification at the middle school level. Mr. Marshall reported that the District continues working towards 100% completion.

H. Public Comment: Canton resident and parent, Ms. Jennifer O'Donnell, voiced concerns over bullying in the District and its effects on the mental health of school age children. Ms. O'Donnell asked the District to take appropriate steps in these matters.

I. Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations Report: Mr. Marshall had nothing further to report.

J. Consent Agenda:

1. Regular Session Minutes: August 3, 2023, August 17, 2023, September 7, 2023
2. Executive Session Minutes: August 15, 2023
3. Warrants: September 22, 2023.

Committee members requested that Regular Session Minutes from August 3rd, 2023 and Executive Session Minutes from August 15, 2023 be pulled from the Consent Agenda for further review. Chair O'Halloran then called for a motion to accept Regular Session Minutes from August 17, 2023, September 7, 2023, and the September 22, 2023 Warrant. Laura Arboleda made the motion; Maureen Moran seconded. Ensuing vote was unanimous at 5-0 and recorded as follows:

Laura Arboleda	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

5 yeas	0 nays
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K. Update of Sub-Committee, Task Force and Liaison Posts:

Kristian Merenda:

1. Suggested naming a new subcommittee for Negotiations of Unit B;
2. Asked the committee to consider how to approach attendance for the November SC meeting when proposed new GMS building will be discussed.

Kimberly McCourt: Reported that the DEI Subcommittee met two weeks ago and agreed to continue partnering with groups supporting ongoing activities in the DEI realm.

Maureen Moran: At the 9/15/23 Budget & Finance Subcommittee meeting, members reviewed priority items from last year to help set priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.. Ms.Moran will update the spreadsheet as the budget process begins.

Kendall O'Halloran: Policy subcommittee continues to work on updating policies; Content & Communications: the first ad of the academic year was published in *The Citizen* last week, and there is continued work on finding a student graphic artist for future ads.

CCPC: Application process is in full swing.

Mr. Folan: Recently met with CAPT presidents, inviting principals to join offering an opportunity to partner with them in community interests and goals.

Mr. Marshall: CCPC-noting cost overages at the Little League Concession Stands, Mr. Marshall recommended the organizational team submit an application for supplemental funds.

L. Other Business: None requested.

M. Future Business: The next School Committee Open Session meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 5, 2023 @ 6:00 pm.

N. Adjournment: Hearing no questions or requests for further discussion, Chair O'Halloran asked for a motion to adjourn the Thursday, September 21, 2023 School Committee meeting at 10:05 pm. Kristian Merenda made the motion; Kimberly McCourt seconded. Voting was unanimous at 5-0 and recorded as follows:

Laura Arboleda	yea
Kimberly McCourt	yea
Kristian Merenda	yea
Maureen Moran	yea
Kendall O'Halloran	yea

5 yeas 0 nays

Documents reviewed:

Superintendent's Report, Thursday, September 21, 2023

CPS Teaching and Learning School Committee Update, September 21, 2023

Wayfinder Core Skills and Competencies

CPS 2023-24 District Goals

CPS 2023-2028 Strategic Plan

CPS Policy Section F

CPS Policy Section G

Canton School Committee Operating Protocols Draft (9.20.23)

2023-24 Canton District Enrollment Numbers as of 9/15/23