



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Budget Workshop**

**January 14, 2021**

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the FY 2022 Initial Budget and Enrollment Projections, Budget Process and Key Dates, and School Committee Budget Guidelines.

Members Present: Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Vice Chair Bowman, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools  
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent  
Ms. Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer  
Ms. Ivy Washington Assistant Director, Budget & Financial Operations  
Dr. Lindsay Pinkus Brown, Chief Strategy Officer

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will be taken and there will be no public comment. She also read that the Open Meeting Law that has been approved for remote participation.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Fantini Present; Member Rojas Present; Member Rachel Present; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson Present; Vice Chair Bowman Present; Mayor Siddiqui Present.

Mayor Siddiqui yielded the floor over to the Budget Co Chairs, Members Bowman and Fantini.

Member Fantini welcomed all and introduced Superintendent Salim, who introduced:

**Claire Spinner**, Chief Financial Officer for the CPSD, who presented on behalf of the FY 22 Budget which focused on the presentation and process. The presentation will consist of the following topics.

- **Review of Budget Process and Timeline**
- **Preliminary FY22 Budget Projects**
- **Enrollment Projections**
- **Budget Guidelines**

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**Ms. Spinner** paused for questions from members

Member Rojas asked will there be a community meeting for CPSD staff?

- **Claire Spinner** confirmed as in years past, there will be a community meeting for staff – timing is set for 3:30pm for their convenience. She then proceeds to list meetings scheduled. **NB. There is a community meeting schedule for February 3, at 3:00pm.**

Member Rachel asked if the community meetings will be structured to emphasized participation, how can we ensure accessibility for those in the community who may not be up to date on the scheduling and options.

- **Claire Spinner** spoke to the efforts to have the community engaged in these meetings. Introduces Lyndsay Pinkus Brown, Chief Strategy Officer
- **Dr. Lyndsay Pinkus Brown** answered with several updates, speaks to building on the lessons learned from their efforts last year, with outreach there will be a brief presentation of the budget and a single prompt which will be descriptive and will lead to participation in breakout room. Translation services will be on hand. Traditional outreach will be in place to advertise and postcards will be sent SPED, BIPOC families and free and reduced lunch, a targeted outreach with QR codes that will walk them through the ongoing process. She then proceeds to list many ways Robin Harris will be specifically targeting and the outreach for community members and the FY22 budget.

Member Rachel asked what does the priorities look like for FY22?

- **Superintendent Salim** answered that will be a discussion later in the presentation.

Member Weinstein asked about working with the school councils to help with the Budget outreach and for their input regarding FY22?

- **Claire Spinner** answered that they would need to think about that suggestion, it is a very full period right now, she would be open to it in the future however it can be discussed with the leadership team and the School Committee.

**Vice Chair Bowman** reminded the Committee that there are a few crucial events happening concurrently, getting scholars back to in person learning and an upcoming Superintendent Search. She suggests leveraging the calendar so that the community meetings are attended by stakeholders such as the School Councils.

**Member Rojas** clarified that School Council meet monthly and one of those meeting is budget centric a reminder can be made about the upcoming budget cycle.

**Member Fantini** echoed what Member Rojas said and added about the school improvement council and how we can we structure the upcoming community meetings to ensure that participants attend. Reassures that there are mechanisms already in place for participation.

**Member Wilson** reminded the Committee that the community meetings for the budget were poorly attended. Expounds upon Member Weinstein's point of having a school council representative be part of the process.

- Claire Spinner offered to take more questions from the body.

Member Rojas asked about the 13.4 million grant allocation – in addition to our adopted budget included other grant monies? How much more did we receive? Followed up with asking about building depreciation? Is that factored in? Is there a percentage increase within the two FY years' budgets regarding COVID related costs??

- **Claire Spinner**, answered no it is a general fund budget that is supported by the property tax, city revenue and state aid. The School Committee adopts grant monies throughout the fiscal year. There was probably between 1 to 1.5 million additional federal monies. Distinguishes between the general fund and the Capital Budget. There will be additional costs related to COVID 19 however, it is too early to quantify now. Elaborates on the additional staffing due to the reopening and contractual obligations. Expounds on contingency plans for breaking down the budget on a very preliminary level.
- **Superintendent Salim** clarified that there other funding sources to help with the maintenance and construction of infrastructure.

Member Wilson asked about the changes to OSS and ELL, recovery loss and mental health, Summer programming. When will be figures be available to be more intentional.

- **Claire Spinner** answered that there has been a brief meeting with OSS leadership team and an in-depth meeting scheduled for next week which will include an analysis of needs. Already embedded in this projection is an additional eight staff members as a recovery team. Speaks to cost of compensatory services. In a preliminary analysis with ELL, it is felt that there is the right amount of staff. References Dr. Turk leading a multidisciplinary group of principals and curriculum coordinators in thinking about what strategies are available for academic and social emotion recovery for the Summer programming and next year.

Member Wilson asked about the status of the Student Opportunity Act.

- **Claire Spinner** responded that the state in the end did not fund the additional money to districts. The state used the Chapter 70 funding. The city definitely received less that what was projected. was not funded with the additional money. The current stimulus bill has funding for public schools, which would be treated for recovery. Does not see any future federal funds available for the SOA grant.

#### **Vice Chair Bowman takes the Chair.**

**Claire Spinner** continued with the presentation.

Member Weinstein asked about the impact of low enrollment is if those projections are off? Keeps in mind the uniqueness of the year.

- **Claire Spinner** answered that projections are grade by grade and school by school not district wide. Every school has its own retention profile. There is analysis which is a standard model. We have no issue about not having enough staff at every school. She continues that she thinks two years out for staffing models Would have to be pretty dramatic numbers to be impacted. References the UMASS Donohue Institute coming in and analyzing the enrollment projections till 2030. Future concerns were also about space as well.

**Superintendent Salim** would like Dr. Pinkus Brown to speak of the Leaver Survey.

- **Dr. Pinkus Brown** detailed what the Leaver Survey is and what it entails. The survey does include questions as to why families have the left the district and if they intend to return. Data will hope to be collected and disseminated in the coming weeks.

**Claire Spinner** concluded the presentation by speaking of the guidelines and framing this process

**Superintendent Salim** explained about the 5 strategic objectives and how the District is trying to achieve the outcomes they set out. Recognizing the impact of the pandemic and to focus on ways the District can

implicitly and intentionally think about ways for students to recover and thrive. That the strategies are aligned and built on a multi-tier system of support based on equity.

**Vice Chair Bowman** yielded the floors for discussion from the body.

Member Rachel spoke to cultural change where does this fall under and would like clarity on that on s that objectives place?

- **Superintendent Salim** considered the questions and will process what is being asked

Member Wilson thought about equity as the umbrella, all other objectives that fall under that, how are making sure each child who needs more gets more? How do make sure we are making up for lost time?

- **Superintendent Salim** answered that Member Wilson questions is the key question. What are the strategies that get us to ensure that students are recovering and thriving? References Dr. Turk's work and what has been ongoing.
- **Dr. Carolyn Turk** emphasized this is a beginning. There have been two brief meetings that have been a starting point. Representation from our core coordinators, OSS, ELL, Principals, Finance Department. She continues with the two words of Perspective and Conversation. This is a team that is starting the conversation, however it is larger. What needs to happened in the classroom, schools, district to help students and staff re-enter and re-connect, feel safe and secure. That conversation has begun. What will work for the students and their families? We have begun to ask critical questions of the district and determined that it is time to think as if there is no box. It is important for the District to think about the three tiers of work that needs to be for students, Dr. Turk breaks it down.

Tier 1 –core classroom instruction – Tier 2 access and targeted support. Tier 3 much more individualized. The district will provide opportunities that will help support these tiers. There needs to be focus on the core issues in order to provide the best impact.

Member Wilson appreciated Dr. Turks words agrees that we should be thinking with no box. Speaks to the crisis and the work of social workers and their expertise. How are we shaping, supporting and framing the definition of the “whole child” Compliments the family liaisons and remarks there is only one family liaison at CRLS.

- **Superintendent Salim** replied that for many general education social workers that are in the schools it is about coordinating those wrap around supports. That social worker's roles are making those connections they need in and out of schools.

Member Weinstein spoke to the depth and facets of the proposed budget. How do we make sure we are capturing either high level approach pieces that need support or any shifts? Appreciates Dr. Turk's segment and words.

Member Rojas remarked on having a fully staff district, operational and educational. Why are we assuming an increase of 4.5% in salaries and benefits? It shows that we committing to investing in our staff.

- **Claire Spinner** detailed for Member Rojas that 82% of the budget is salaries and budget. Breaks down the components of the budget including health insurance costs (about 30 million), negotiated COLA's staffing and outstanding contracts. Because the reduction of enrollment is spread across 18 schools. Is not cost effective to minimize staffing in light of the lower enrollment.

Member Fantini noted that he is pleased with the presentation and conversation that has followed.

Mayor Siddiqui comments that members have touch upon several key areas and looking forward to the process and reflect.

Vice Chair Bowman expressed to the members if there are any questions, thoughts, recommendations and concerns please let the Co-Chairs and Superintendent know.

Member Wilson continued her thoughts to having a district plan for the FY22 budget, a vision is the big picture but in terms of a community and how we need to move forward in a very specific plan is a necessity.

- **Vice Chair Bowman** reflected on the demands and complexities that are facing the School Committee, COVID, impending transition, superintendent search and the present budget. Comments on the next administrations and prior mechanisms put in place by previous stakeholders.

Member Rojas echoed Member Wilson thoughts about having a budget plan in place, potentially revisit the District Plan and goals.

- **Superintendent Salim** added that an additional perspective, COVID requires us to think about adjustments and shifts, comments on the FY 18 budget having no district plan, but a process was developing and those objective created the district plan.

Member Weinstein acknowledged the difficulties of this year and echoes Member Wilson and Rojas support of forming a plan.

Member Fantini spoke to the FY22 is a working document and what are our goals and how they can be incorporated.

Member Rachel agreed with Member Fantini thoughts on furthering the goals aspects to the budget.

- **Vice Chair Bowman** stated to the time commitment of goal setting and the ongoing conversations to the continuation of the budget process. A possible solution would be to have the School Committee bring forth recommendations to move the District forward.

Member Wilson asked a procedural question, what is the next step for recommendation from the School Committee?

- **Vice Chair Bowman** responded that an ad hoc committee can be formed, engage the Superintendent on the path forward, offers to speak off line in general. Closes out with any questions or concerns please email the Co-Chairs.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Rachel on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

There will be a regular meeting of the School Committee on January 19, 2021 at 6:00pm.

Attest:

**Jennifer Dever Wood**  
Cambridge School Committee