



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Budget Workshop**

**January 26, 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 finalizing the FY 22 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 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 Present; Member Wilson Present; Vice Chair Bowman Present; Mayor Siddiqui Present.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Superintendent Salim who began with opening remarks and introduced the presentation of FY22. The presentation will consist of the following topics.

SC Budget Workshop  
FY 22 Budget January

- Finalize Budget Guidelines
- Member Discussion of Budget Resource Allocation
- Upcoming Community Meetings

Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer for the CPSD, presented as well on behalf of the FY 22 Budget focusing on the School Committee members and their overview of the budget and the process and if there were any questions or concerns regarding resource allocations. She then spoke to the Co-Chairs regarding the guidelines put forth.

Vice Chair Bowman opened the floor for questions.

Mayor Siddiqui began her thoughts with commenting on the present situation and working together to focus on the “what” of the process and to productively get to the “how” of the process.

Member Weinstein spoke to enhancing the communications for the budget process and where is universal pre-kindergarten? He followed up by bringing up these issues here for reference.

- Claire Spinner wondered to Member Weinstein are you asking in terms of the budget guidelines, is there something that needs adjustments or are these opportunities you are interested in having further conversation?

Member Rachel commented on the improvement category specifically adding the words **through collaboration and transparency** to capture the spirit of open and inclusive conversation.

Member Fantini reminded the committee that there were ~~7~~ strategic outcomes in FY 21 and currently it stands at 5 for FY22.

Vice Chair Bowman wanted to know if there is a way to bring to the previous year's strategic objectives that have been established and acknowledged and where they stand.

- Claire Spinner clarified that they continue to progress monitor those objectives and measure to those prior outcomes

Member Wilson wanted to ensure that there is transparency and if there is a plan to bring up the prior district plan when engaging the community. We need to have a full framework as to where we are before we engage the community.

- Claire Spinner wanted clarity if we are talking about measuring the outcomes of the seven measures that were part of the district plan? Or the strong partnership to focus on the district outcome measures?

Member Wilson based on previous conversation, stressed that there is a need for specific goals and a plan.

- Claire Spinner remarked that the next section of this process will apply to this conversation and will be helpful when engaging the community.

Member Rojas asked as far as guidelines, spoke to the nuts and bolts of typical budgets referenced actuals and examples. Would not like to penalize areas that need help through other programs.

- Claire Spinner acknowledged the uniqueness of this year's spending and resource allocation and there could be under spending. Siting for clarity this year is unusual and difficult.

Vice Chair Bowman clarified the process; this is the big picture guidance on how the allocation of resources and the process going forward. It would be difficult to fully engage the community. She recommended taking the guidelines to guide our data in order to move forward in the budget process.

Member Rachel followed up and asked if there was a way to incorporate the community and update the measures?

- Superintendent Salim answered what our measures are and tools we are using and adapting. What other data can we use to track our progress? In some way there are two baseline levels that are in play. The district plan and the COVID centric budget.

Vice Chair Bowman does not want to rush this process but is attune to Member Rachel's concerns. I Want to focus on the big picture and recovery. Referenced to a prior meeting where the formation of an ad-hoc committee was spoken about for the concerns of the committee.

Claire Spinner paused for questions from the School Committee and emphasized the conversation should focus on budget resources and its allocations.

Member Fantini emphasized his pleasure that there are allocations for investing in working towards early college and dual enrollment. Focus should be on middle school to engage them to be prepared for high school and their dream of college.

Member Wilson began with questions about students being able to read by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the new Superintendent search and its funding and status of the Chief Equity Officer and Diversity Officer, and the absence of those positions. Wanted to know about the program of *I Ready* and where it stands?

Member Weinstein reiterated transparency and open communication at all levels. Remarked about the process of outdoor education during and post pandemic. Individual student success plans and that there is supported in the budget. Pre-Kindergarten expansion is on track and reflected in the FY22 budget.

Mayor Siddiqui echoed her colleagues' sentiments and really underscores the early college piece and its importance. COVID 19 has highlighted issues that should have been happening in general, i.e. technology and meals.

Member Rachel shared her talking points and questions as they were framed around kids who are not a grade level pre pandemic and what are we doing for that. Signals out municipal broadband and its importance. High intensity tutoring and focus on reading. Real need to focus on remote pedagogy, there needs to be funds allocated for that. Mental health for scholars and staff and its exploration for digging deeper to help. Spoke of ways to heal for all stakeholders who are frayed and that the Superintendent search is an opportunity to message future candidates this is a community who wants to work and support you (who?). Recognize the central role of the family liaison and how critical their role is.

Member Rojas asked about the Superintendent search, there will be a need for an interim, will there be financial support? What about remote learning will the district keep and build on that? Spoke about the timing of the budget process, to think outside the box, it might be worthwhile to extend it again.

- Claire Spinner answered that the budget process and timeframe is a city driven decision. We have the flexibility to reassess and reallocate. As a future thought there will be federal monies coming in, and that would be potential for funding.
- Superintendent Salim referenced the remote option and the potential of a remote learning academy will be shaped by public health options. In discussions of extended learning time, small group instruction was an effective learning tool with expanded learning and the thought is to build on a student's needs.

Vice Chair Bowman discussed how we need to think about it as a small group prospective, outside of the traditional school day for support of adapted needs. Individualized and small groups should be a factor when hiring an educator.

Member Wilson followed up with concerns about compensatory and intensive services and how do we make that up? Pre pandemic we spoke about more hearts than hands in the classroom. What does that look like? Echoed what Vice Chair Bowman reflected on additional staff that can work in nontraditional ways. Highlighted the need for grief counselors

Member Weinstein spoke about the importance of civic engagement and that caregivers have the support they need when dealing with the Office of Student Services. Mayor Siddiqui spoke about having a culturally responsible curriculum and if there is any more support needed echo that many points were brought up by members.

Member Rojas questioned about the rising seniors and advanced placement classes and college applications and where and how we can support those students?

Member Wilson inquired about learning loss, especially the senior class. Referenced a motion by the previous committee about monetary allocation for students who have taken remedial classes. Supporting the RSTA program as well.

- Superintendent Salim answered that the District will update the committee on its status of that previous motion. There is a college success initiative office and there is work with that entity and does not have the path of noncredit bearing courses.

Member Rojas reflected that the pandemic has brought to light the status of CPSD buildings and their resiliency.

Member Weinstein echoed Member Rojas' sentiments and spoke of pandemic resilience building Mayor Siddiqui reflected that the family resource fairs were a success and were a significant amount of work and the need for further support for these events in the future.

- Claire Spinner commented on infrastructure and the pandemic resilient building theory and clarified that it would fall under capital investments and improvements. This is something that would be addressed in the general fund budget.

Member Fantini focused on the best practices that we have learned from and incorporated them to the future. There has been a lot of innovation with scheduling and learning and taking those opportunities to be creative for the future.

Vice Chair Bowman spoke about the office of the School Committee and the staffing model and the need to evaluate the essentials of the office. Recognized and thanked Councillor Carlone for his presence at the meeting.

- Superintendent Salim wanted to update the committee on the next community meetings. He invited Dr. Pinkus Brown to speak at the upcoming meetings.

Dr. Pinkus Brown informed the committee what the District has done for these meetings and began a presentation which detailed all of the outreach for the various stakeholders and the community.

Vice Chair Bowman asks that the Coalition for Public Education be included in the outreach. Member Rachel thanked Dr. Pinkus Brown for the presentation and wanted to know more specifics about outreach.

- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered there will be translators for the top three languages, and wanted to clarify that families are feeling overwhelmed at the information coming their way. There are a number of different ways to gather information.

Member Weinstein how are we going to turn the feedback to the community around and if there is something that comes out of the conversations where it will fall in the budget process?

- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered by referencing last year's sessions that the team documented the theme and color codes and organized and aligned them with what had been proposed and what was suggested. In some of the presentations we need to look at the strategies at what we are hearing.

Vice Chair Bowman commented that this process is about listening, balancing and being transparent while hearing the voices and coming up with solutions.

Member Wilson asked Dr. Pinkus Brown what Thursday's meeting will look like. Intimated how to make our goals smart goals? It may be important to tap into additional resources, such as the rainy day fund, at the City level.

- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered that the Community meetings are intended to and will focus on and support small group presentations. There will be a brief opening and budget overview and then they will break out in a facilitated process. The staff session will be broken down to two rounds which will mirror what was presented.

Vice Chair Bowman thanked all for their thoughts and participation and noted the conversation will continue.

Mayor Siddiqui read the call of the Executive Session meeting and entertained a motion to convene in the Executive Session.

On a Motion to move to Executive Session by Member Fantini, seconded by Vice Chair Bowman, on the following roll call, Member Rojas (YEA), Member Weinstein (YEA), Member Rachel (Yea) Member Fantini (YEA), Vice Chair Bowman (YEA), Member Wilson (YEA) Mayor Siddiqui (YEA),

On a Motion to adjourn by Member Fantini, seconded by Vice Chair Bowman, on the following roll call, it was voted to adjourn at 7:30 PM, Member Rojas (YEA), Member Weinstein (YEA), Member Rachel (Yea) Member Fantini (YEA), Vice Chair Bowman (YEA), Member Wilson (YEA) Mayor Siddiqui (YEA).

There is a community meeting to discuss the FY22 Budget scheduled for January 28, 2021 and the next regular meeting is February 2, 2021.

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood  
Cambridge School Committee