



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

December 22, 2020

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing revisions to COVID-19 opening and closing metrics and vote on 1) a modification to the Safety and Facilities manual provision for 6 foot distancing for preschool through grade 5, 2) a modification of the quarantine period as recommended by the Cambridge Public Health Department in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and revisions to COVID-19 opening and closing metrics.

Members Present: Vice Chair Bowman (~~ABSENT~~), Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson (ABSENT), Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools

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 public comment. Mayor Siddiqui explained the error in the call of the meeting and informed all present that there will be no vote on revisions to COVID-19 opening and closing metrics.

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

Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor for public comment. The following individuals were heard.

- Kate Skubecz, Thorndike Street, in support of **#20-311 and #20-312** and Dr. Allen's Report
- Elinor Actipis, Whittenmore Ave, Reopening plans
- Rua Kelly, in support of the reopening plans
- Catherine Reilly, Linnaean Street, School Reopening supports both motions & Dr. Allen's Report
- Jillian Kalen, University Road, Brookline, please do not change the metrics for grades 4 & 5
- Pia Cisternino, Holworthy Street, Metrics, speaking for a family that wants to remain anonymous
- Elena Fagotto, Bigelow Street, supports Revisions
- Lynn Li, Chestnut Street, in support of Updating metrics
- Annie Li, Second Street, school reopening
- Emily Chang, Magazine Street, Masks/ infection control N-95 masks work for dentists
- Miguel Perez Bianciardi, Union Street, Revisions to metrics
- Paola Grandi, Maple Avenue in support of in-person learning and changing the distancing metric
- Joseph Glorioso, Maple Ave, in support of the 3 foot distancing metrics
- Giulia Fulci, Broadway, supports in-person learning for all students
- Marta Bianciardi, Union Street, in support of in-person learning
- Alexandra Landman, Granville Road supports in-person learning, supports motion **#20-312**
- Rogier Landman, Granville Rd, supports in-person learning, good worker, bad parent, vice versa
- Anne Bothmer, Cambridge Street, supports three-foot distancing and Dr. Allen's Report

On a motion by Member Fantini, the Rules were suspended to allow the speaker to continue her comments. On the following roll call vote, it was voted six to one YEA for the reasons stated: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

The meeting returned to the regular order of business.

- Erico Rosa, Thorndike Street, in support of both motions
- Mathias Cousin, in support of both motions
- Kelly Dolan, Upland Road, supports all of the hard work that has been done so far
- Vahe Karagueuzian, Linnaean Street, supports in-person learning
- Amanda Beatty, Franklin Street, in support of the Motions
- Andrew Schutzbank, Norfolk Street, supports the updated metrics
- Pablo Argueso, Highland Avenue, supports in-person learning
- Caroline Stowell, Cedar Street, supports in-person learning
- Lisa Sebesta, Mount Pleasant Street, supports in-person learning, supports both motions
- Dan Monahan, Lexington Avenue, concerned about the decisions to be made tonight
- Shirley Kuhlmann, Franklin Street, supports in-person learning
- Natalie Lang, Main Street, supports Dr. Allens's Report, concerned about testing
- Maria Cortes, Cambridge Parkway, supports in-person learning
- Grace Chiang Nicolette, Pearl Street, supports in-person learning and Dr. Allen's Report
- Jennifer Rollins, Putnam Avenue, supports in-person learning
- Eric Lind, Norfolk Street, supports in-person learning
- Paola Pedrelli, Elm Street, encourages in-person learning
- Sharon Mombro, Upland Road, supports in-person learning, asks for transparency for decisions
- Chris Summersgill, Greenough Avenue, supports in-person learning
- Yi-An Huang, Worcester Street, supports in-person learning
- Justin Saif, Hurley Street, supports in-person learning and N-95 masks
- Gianna Marzilli Ericson, Concord Avenue, in support of Dr. Allen's report
- Cheryl Keane, Plymouth Street, supports in-person learning and updating the metrics
- Sushama Scalera, Gore Street, supports in-person learning

On a motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Member Fantini, on the following roll call vote, public comment was closed: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Salim who framed the presentation for the evening. The Superintendent turned the floor back to the Chair.

Mayor Siddiqui introduced Dr. Danielle Allen to speak on her report *Schools and the Path to Zero: Strategies for Pandemic Resilience in the Face of High Community Spread*.

Dr. Allen explained that the report is a collaborative of a large group of people; it was time consuming and considers all of the data from global and domestic contexts. In collaboration with Brown, MIT, BU and Harvard, this report came to be. The risk to educators and adults in on par with retail workers, and customer service roles however, it is even higher for telecommuters. The goal for zero transmissions and infection control in schools still largely depends on hand hygiene, staying home when sick, universal masking and keeping a recommended distance. There is a need to grow in regards to educating everyone on how to use spaces correctly. She mentioned that mental health support should be provided for employees to take time away and return when confident to do so. Pediatric vaccines are going to come after the adult vaccines. We are going to need these practices in the future, these measures will be

built into our everyday procedures. We need to deliver high levels of infection control within our organizations.

Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor for questions on the report.

Member Rojas asked about the reasoning for deciding on opening and closing schools

- Dr. Allen explained what is going on in Europe with the upcoming holiday, they took advantage of taking a natural break as an extra boost for closure.
- Dr. Helen Jenkins added that many countries were able to open early because they didn't take the time to implement the precautions that are in this report. They are closing now to take advantage of the holidays to take a break.

Member Rojas asked in what context is our transmissions taking place?

- Dr. Dobberteen explained that we are fortunate to have very low transmission rates. One case per 10,000 people means exceptionally low transmission rates.

Member Rojas asked what is recommended for data points going forward?

- Dr. Allen responded that co-planning is a very good start and using strong transparency for trust building is always a good pattern to follow
- Dr. Dobberteen could not agree more and added that we are doing all of that now. We are using very robust contact tracing and will continue to do so.

Member Fantini asked how we measure how well Cambridge is doing and to improve in Cambridge?

- Dr. Allen referred to the statement Dr. Dobberteen just spoke on for our outcome goal. Guidance on this is very hard and it depends on the variables. Schools are autonomous which makes it much more hard and at the same time create more opportunities to learn how to do better.

Member Fantini asked for clarity on whether or not to do away with the metrics

- Dr. Allen confirmed more or less, it is true that we need to stop relying so heavily on community metrics. She is very clear that it will take a lot of work. Performing with the discipline of infection control takes a lot of education and hard work. It gets worked out with management practice. We all must perform on a high level day in and day out.

Member Rachel stated she read the report and is grateful for it. Member Rachel asked about eating and would like to hear Dr. Allen's recommendations on trust.

- Dr. Allen replied that we learned a lot from NYC. They have an infection control team at each school, supported by the district. The full range of expertise cannot exist in every school, but there needs to be a structure to support the flexibility in all of the schools. We have learned about distrust and repair building from districts all over the world, we are not unique in that regard. This is where crisis management comes into play. Bringing in more shared learning from different parts of the organizations and diverse voices in the community has been useful in support of building trust.
- Dr. Jenkins responded that six feet distancing should be adhered to during meals for ALL grades. If the metrics are revised to three feet distancing during classes, the metrics should return to six feet distancing during meals.

Member Weinstein asked whether or not adults need to maintain six feet distancing during the school day and how educator experience/perspective can be incorporated into the realities of the classroom

- Dr. Allen answered that they sought input from the National Federation of Teachers for their perspectives, they may not agree 100% with everything in the report, but they were referenced.

Vice Chair Bowman asked Dr. Allen to define trust.

- Dr. Allen responded that the need is to shine a bright light on the challenges of having staff and faculty feel safe. Getting the teachers back into the classroom is a huge problem. Overall, educators do not trust the decision making by the district, also, there is a lack of trust due to lack of transparency of data in other districts which leads to staffing problems all over the country. Sharing data is not a problem that Cambridge is guilty of. There are other struggles by educators due to fear in general, i.e. the lack of trust in the safety of the schools they are working in, there is

a common pattern across the country of struggles in terms of staffing problems and of leadership working with educators and decision making. Everything written in the report is not about Cambridge. These challenges are true across the country.

Vice Chair Bowman asked Dr. Allen to describe the mitigation strategies of the success of other districts

- Dr. Allen replied that when someone tests positive, it matters what the district does about it. The goal needs to be to track our adherence to our protocols.

Vice Chair Bowman asked how other communities were able to build trust

- Dr. Allen referred to page eight of her report (the chart on infection control measures) to clarify her previous answer. Working on the infection control package in collaboration is key. Testing is very valuable and everyone needs to have access to it, Cambridge is fortunate in this. She explained there is no anecdotal data that measures trust.

Mayor Siddiqui added that teachers provided thanks for the access to testing twice per week for all adult employees. There are districts that have gone back to in person learning without any robust testing and have experienced problems.

Mayor Siddiqui asked Dr. Allen to speak on pool testing.

- Dr. Allen stated that it is a very valuable tool, different districts are using it as a pilot. It reduces the expense and can successfully provide surveillance; if there is a positive result, then individual testing needs to be done.
- Dr. Dobberteen stated that since so many people enter Cambridge from other communities for work, the pool testing should be a strong consideration.
- Dr. Bernstein directed the conversation toward cost analysis, stating that we need to decide on what is available and what is less expensive.

Member Rojas asked what differences there are in masking

- Dr. Allen answered that the assessment was that N-95 masks are not required. She recommends universal masking in all contexts.
- Dr. Crittendon responded that the N-95 mask is completely sealed to the face and reduces some breathing and require a medical assessment in order to use them all day. The masks that are used in surgery provide over 95% protection from small particles. If the district agrees to reduce distancing to three feet, we cannot use cloth masks, which are never above 30% effective. Both fit and filtration are important for breathing in and out. Everyone is not able to use an N-95 all day they fit very snug, become very uncomfortable and can create a rash.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Superintendent Salim.

Dr. Kenneth Salim informed the Committee that he will be bringing forth a recommendation at the January 5, 2021 Regular Meeting for using the frameworks on the schools that have a zero transmission report as an update to how decisions are made for school openings and closings. This recommendation will provide an opportunity for additional discussions and a vote from the School Committee in order to move forward.

Superintendent Salim returned to the PowerPoint presentation. The presentation can be viewed online.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=0ef808350d&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1686810298677720336&th=1768c1079027f510&view=att&disp=inline&realattid=f_kj0f0uq40

The presentation ended and Dr. Salim turned the floor over to the Chair.

Mayor Siddiqui asked for the pleasure of the Committee.

The School Committee Agenda was brought forward for discussion and adoption.

Member Rojas spoke on the success of the meetings with community turnout and he is comfortable with the motions.

Vice Chair Bowman asked that the two motions be read aloud for the public to better understand. Buildings & Grounds Chair Rojas agreed to share his screen and read them aloud for clarity.

#20-311, Motion by the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

That Section A7 of the Safety and Facilities Manual be updated as follows:

A7. Quarantine Due to Possible Exposure (Close Contacts) Updated 10/22/20 Due to Change in Guidance

Students and Employees must quarantine for **10 days** from date of exposure, if they have been in close contact with someone *confirmed* to have COVID-19 during the period when the individual was infectious. Close contact is defined as being *closer than 6 feet away* from a person who has COVID *for a cumulative total of 15 minutes* during the 24 hour period *when they were infectious*. The infectious period begins up to 2 days before an individual shows symptoms. If they did not develop symptoms but tested positive, the infectious period is considered to begin 2 days before they were tested.

Further quarantine protocols as follows:

10 days of strict quarantine	Release on Day 11 if: The individual has not experienced any symptoms up to that point; AND The individual conducts active monitoring through Day 14. No test is necessary under this option	Individual must actively monitor symptoms and take temperature once daily. IF even mild symptoms develop or the individual has a temperature of 100.0 F, they must immediately self-isolate, contact the public health authority overseeing their quarantine and get tested.
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Discussion followed on Motion **#20-311**

Member Weinstein asked for a brief comment from the advisors on why they need this change.

- Dr. Lichtenstein answered that we have more data on what the rates of transmission are after a certain amount of time and the CDC has updated their guidance.

Member Rojas mentioned that this motion does not refer to travel only close contact.

- Dr. Dobberteen has strong opinions on travel, i.e. don't travel. Stay home only visit those locally that you love and live with and don't travel far away. This guidance is for children above the age of 10 and adults.

Member Rachel stated that this is extremely hard; she is supporting this because of the science and we have heard from so many voices that remote learning is harmful. We will all benefit in the long-term.

On a motion by Member Fantini seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call, motion **#20-311** was adopted: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#20-312, Motion by the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

That the Section C1: Physical Separation, Paragraph 1, of the Safety and Facilities Manual adopted by The School Committee on October 6, 2020 be updated as follows.

C1: Physical Separation, Paragraph 1

Current guidance seeks to maximize the benefits of in person school with priority science-based minimum safety requirements.

Elementary Schools grades PK-5 will provide for 3 feet of physical separation between desks in classrooms and will utilize outdoor spaces wherever feasible. Within classrooms, desks will be positioned facing the front of the classroom and follow this guidance.

The Chair asked for the pleasure of the Committee.

Member Weinstein asked if the adults are going to continue to be six feet apart from children and only the students are to be three feet apart during class time. Member Weinstein also asked about whether eating will be six feet apart, and whether eating refers to snack or lunch. He is still unclear on the requirements for masking.

- Dr. Salim answered that six feet distancing at lunch and six feet distancing during class can be incorporated into the Safety and Facilities Manual. As far as masking goes, that is in a different section of the manual and we need to take a look at the logistics and the mask distribution piece.
- Mr. Maloney pointed out that currently when we have teachers that may get closer than six feet to explain something the shields can be used. Masking is going to require an increase in education on the part of the district. We need a school based compliance team.
- Dr. Crittenden stated that she wants everyone to wear high quality masks. She is happy to share all of the data between cloth masks and surgical masks.

Member Weinstein moved an amendment, seconded by Member Rojas that

Six feet distancing will be required during any meal times and anytime that masks are not are not being worn. On the following roll call vote, the **amendment to #20-312** was adopted: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Member Rachel asked how educators feel about the proposed shift from six feet to three feet distancing and about students eating in their classrooms

- Dr. Salim replied that just like any large group of individuals, there is no singular agreement on this. Some believe our low transmission rate is because of six feet distancing. The scientists agree that three feet will keep the transmission rate low.
- Dr. Salim responded that they have to figure out how the eating in classrooms will work, it will be a challenge to be figured out.

Member Rachel asked if these changes are immediate or are they for February 8th?

- Dr. Salim affirmed that it is part of the expansion of the in-person learning plan on February 8th reopening.

Member Weinstein wants to know if there is anything for adults on three or six feet guidance.

- Dr. Salim stated that it is expected and should be noted that the adults should maintain six feet distancing.

Member Rojas asked about distancing for fifth and sixth grades and is there more of a danger there?

- Dr. Lichenstein stated that the data shows middle and upper schools should remain at six feet at all times, using precautionary principles above all else.

Vice Chair Bowman moved, seconded by Member Rojas, to suspend the Rules to allow the President of the CEA, Mr. Dan Monahan, to also answer these questions along with the Superintendent since he is the voice of the faculty. On the following roll call vote, the Rules were suspended for the reason stated: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

- Mr. Monahan was not completely prepared to comment, stating it is complicated, however, he is happy this amendment has been added into the motion. The lunch piece is incredibly important. It will be considered for the February 8th reopening. He is not sure how this change will fit into our schools.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that going forward, having him answer in this way is a good way for him to participate.

The meeting returned to the regular order of business.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Vice Chair Bowman, on the following roll call vote, **#20-312** was adopted **as amended**: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#20-312 Motion by the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

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Closing Remarks

Vice Chair Bowman stated that the Superintendent will bring recommendations forward to update the metrics on January 5, 2021. We all have been working very hard and we are committed to this work.

Member Rachel is happy that Member Weinstein will have a subcommittee meeting on remote learning.

Member Rojas added that he wants us to be intentional about the science and wants us all to think creatively about sharing information on social media and infomercials.

Member Weinstein confirmed the date for the Curriculum and Achievement Sub-Committee meeting on remote learning will be held on Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Member Rachel shared the fact that today is Superintendent Salim's birthday.

Mayor Siddiqui stated that we have a lot more work to do and we will continue to work hard. We look forward to hearing about all of the pieces coming up. She thanked everyone.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, the open meeting adjourned: Member Wilson ABSENT; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. Adjourned (9:30 p.m.)

Attest: 

Dosha Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee