



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

March 30, 2021

Called for 6:00 pm broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, there will be a Virtual Roundtable Meeting of the School Committee, for the purpose of a School Committee Review of the FY 22 Proposed Budget.

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

District Present: Superintendent Kenneth Salim; Dr. Carolyn Turk, Claire Spinner, CFO, Dr. Michelle Madera, B. Kimmerman, Dr. Lyndsey Pinkus Brown, Dr. Alexis Morgan, Dr. Nicole Gittens, Lisa Richardson, Jim Maloney

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair and asked for a moment of silence in honor of Xavier Louis Jaques.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm 6:03 pm.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised; per the Rules of the School Committee and the call of the meeting, no votes will be taken except to adjourn, and there will not be public comment.

Mayor Siddiqui yielded the floor to Vice-Chair Bowman and Co-Chair Fantini for a word to begin the presentation.

Vice-Chair Bowman yielded the floor to Superintendent Salim; he starts with the framework of the evening's meeting. After the overview, introduces the presenters, Robin Harris, and Manuel Fernandez

The agenda is broken down as follows for tonight's meeting:

Objectives:

- Provide a shared understanding of budget, including staffing, for Office of Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- Provide updates on critical initiatives that progressed this year

Agenda:

- Overview of Office of Equity, Inclusion & Belonging
- Update on Key Initiatives
- Looking Ahead: incoming Interim Chief Equity Officer, Manuel Fernandez

Interim Chief Equity Officer Manuel Fernandez introduced his platform and thoughts as he takes on this position for July 1, 2021. Spoke on championing the work that has already been done. Cites there is a need for more announcements from teachers and District on what has been done with inclusion and equity—noted that he has come from listening.

Superintendent Salim congratulated Principal Fernandez on his appointment as Chief Equity Officer and looking forward to working with him. He closed the presentation and yielded the floor to the budget co-chairs to take questions from the members.

Vice-Chair Bowman congratulated Principal Fernandez on his interim position and is excited for his work on the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

Member Weinstein was appreciative of the work of the OEIB and that of Manuel Fernandez. Wanted to ask about the caregiver Advocate Program? What is being planned to support the curriculum and equity work? Does the District have the monies for this work?

- Superintendent Salim answered that it was under the caregiver university umbrella. It was a specific area that Robin Harris has been working with the team on. Resources are available to continue this work.
- Dr. Turk answered that some of the curriculum review work had begun before the pandemic. Post pandemic, the District will pick up where they left off, starting with reviewing the alignment of standards and looking at cultural-responsive historical accuracy and responsiveness. They will be working in concert with the new OEIB.

Member Rojas commented on his support for being best practices to School Councils. Where does the specialist mediation role reside? Why move it to the OEIB?

- Superintendent Salim replied that the mediation support still exists in the deputy superintendent's office. The additional funding in the budget is based on additional training for mediation.
- Dr. Turk added that there had been growing through the years with restorative practices and approaches. Gave a brief history of the role. Referenced Chandra Bank's role in shifting the District's mindset and how her training has been influential and helpful. Brought on the SCORE program and its success and is shown to the community as a whole. Remarked on restorative practices, building relationships, and have honest dialogue.

Member Wilson commented that she enjoyed hearing about the Family Ambassadors introduced during the presentation—asked for an expanded answer on the incident reporting position? - Went on to ask about the allocation of funds for family groups. How is that being broken down? Curious about the Anti-Bias training and how do we get feedback from our educators.

- Manuel Fernandez answered looked at other districts and the scope of this position. There is a comfort level with just one person receiving complaints. It could become adversarial. There is a need for a reporting system. The current one in place needs to be re-examined and reassessed. There needs to be better ways to support colleagues and administrators, and others in positions of influence. The procedures are public and in a place to mitigate the issues and or concerns.
- Superintendent Salim would work with the Family of Color Coalition. The intention is to continue the partnership with CFCC and to have the resources to support that.
- Superintendent Salim answered the feedback is reviewed and would now fall under the OEIB.

Member Fantini commented on the positives of having a Diverse School Committee, Diverse Educational Leadership, 2nd highest investment in hiring diverse school teachers. All this work on equity has to tie into our roles in education achievement. How do we restructure some of the parts that play a more significant role in equity? Asked what the Superintendent is most proud of.

- Superintendent Salim replied it has to be the work of every leader. It is not something that belongs in one's career. If educators do not think about their work and roll through an equity lens, we have not done our job. The District has done significant work and coaching. Seven

measurable outcomes define the answer. There are essential pieces around culture, climate, and belonging that the District has seen gaps in. The diversity of our students is reflected in the diversity of our leadership. This work is ongoing.

Member Rachel congratulated Interim Chief Equity Officer Fernandez. I appreciated the many parts of the additions to the budget made with an equity lens and advocated for a family liaison position for 40 hours per week, which is in the FY 22 budget. Asked about the CFCC workshops be funded. What does the LGBTQ+ mean? Based on what comes out of the equity audits, that will determine the recommendations?

- Superintendent Salim responded the OEIB leads school-level work; specialist roles will support that. Various partners and stakeholders will be working with OEIB and identifying the needs at school and what is most effective. There will be resources available in this current budget as well as subsequent years. One of the objectives is the follow-up to the recommendations.
- Manual Fernandez answered the engagement we will be looking for is from the beginning to support LGBTQ+ youth in terms of schools, and we will be looking to the community for their ideas and support.

Vice-Chair Bowman announced that the District is working on the funding in the budget and the family Liaisons. There will be more information coming.

Student Member DeGraff asked about level funding for the Equity Fellow's work. Could that be increased? Asked about student voices and their input.

- Superintendent Salim replied that the current budget is balanced, and it would be problematic unless the funding was taken from somewhere else.
- Interim Chief Fernandez answered yes; he hopes there can be a retreat in the summer to have students' needs heard.

Mayor Siddiqui wanted to acknowledge a lot of the great work that has been done with family engagement and praised Robin Harris's work. Looks forward to working with Principal Fernandez. Recognized the family liaison budget piece.

Member Rojas asked how the money is spent on Restorative Practices and Justice?

- Superintendent Salim replied that Ms. Banks roles support the schools, staff, and student that is part of the Deputy Superintendent's office. The focus and resource that will fall to the OEIB in the practice of Restorative Justice and will look at the district-wide strategy. Some of this is in tier 1 programs; several principals have id there is more need.

Member Wilson asked about the rollout? How do we move as a community to do better as an anti-racist district?

- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered yes, there would be reflected both educational scenarios. There will be more follow-up to the question.

Vice-Chair Bowman praised Dr. Salim for his work with equity, inclusion, and diversity. As a resource-rich district, our most significant challenge in this District is culture and climate. Equity will be seen when all children are achieving at the same rate as their peers.

On a motion to adjourn by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Member Wilson, On the following roll call vote, Member Wilson YEA Vice-Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. 8:00pm.

NB- The next regular meeting is April 6, 2021, at 6:00 pm6:00 pm.

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood
Cambridge School Committee