



**C A M B R I D G E
S C H O O L C O M M I T T E E**

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

March 1, 2022

Called for 6:00 p.m. in the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing any and all business that may properly come before the Committee.

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

Also Present: Nuriel Vera-DeGraff, Anais Killian, Student School Committee Representatives

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

The Chair provided a statement to the public regarding governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order on guidelines for remote participation and then read the call of the meeting.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call vote for the purpose of a soundcheck: Member Fantini PRESENT, Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Bhambi PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

1. Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Dan Monahan, Lexington Street, spoke in support of **#22-32** and **#22-36**.
- Teresa Walker, Magoun Street, spoke about her experiences as a paraprofessional at CPS.
- Linda Costa, spoke in support of **#22-32**.
- Marianne Rezaei-Kamalabad, Rindge Ave, spoke in support of **#22-32**.
- Catherine Reilly, spoke about the current mask mandate at CPSD.
- Kate Skubecz, Thorndike Street, spoke regarding the Superintendent's COVID presentation and the district's current mandate on masks in schools.
- Alisa Khan, Third Street, spoke in regards to current COVID protocols.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Rojas. on a voice vote, it was voted to close public comment.

After public comment, Mayor Siddiqui reiterated the School Committee rules surrounding public comment.

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Member Killian reported that the CRLS scholarship portal will close at midnight on March 1st. There are currently 107 scholarships available. **Student Member Killian** also provided an update on the student perspectives of a lift in the mask mandate and students and reported that vaccination rates have surpassed 80% at CRLS. She also gave an update on the student perspective and climate regarding the current Russian-Ukraine crisis.

Student Member Vera-DeGraff reported on the new COVID testing system that was implemented on February 28th. The new testing hours are beneficial for students since they have the option to test either before school or during lunchtime. He also recognized the following student-athletes for their recent success in winter sports: Kylee

Bernard (Indoor Track and Field), Aoife Shovlin (Indoor Track and Field), Cami Rheault (Girls Swimming), and Will Kaufman (Boys Wrestling).

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- **February 15, 2022, Regular Meeting**

On a motion by Member Bhambi, seconded by Vice-Chair Rachel, it was voted to accept the Minutes as presented via a voice vote.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7. Superintendent's Agenda:

7a. Presentations:

Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor to the Superintendent who led the presentation that focused on COVID-19 updates. The Superintendent's presentation centered around the district's vaccination rates, opt-in testing for students and staff as well as an update to the district mask mandate. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

The district's COVID dashboard will be updated in the next few days. During the presentation, the Superintendent proposed to make the current mask mandate optional beginning on March 14th – which is one day after the city will lift its indoor mask mandate. Dr. Turk reported on the next steps surrounding the potential optional mask mandate and additional covid mitigation strategies in the district, including sporting and performing arts events.

Mayor Siddiqui provided background on the March 14th optional mask mandate proposal. She supports the proposal based on current trends in the virus with the caveat that the trends continue to be where or better than they currently are. She reiterated that the School Committee has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the CPS community, and encourages everyone to be supported including those who continue to wear masks after March 14th. She also explained the reasoning of the March 14th date versus the March 27th date the city has regarding municipal buildings. There is a case law in which the School Committee and the Superintendent have the well-established power to provide the best mitigation strategies for students.

Member Rojas supports the Superintendent's proposal in an optional mask and inquired about the continuance of masking on buses after March 14th. Dr. Turk responded that the reasoning is due to the state requiring masking on transportation and to support the student who is immune-compromised. Dr. Greer also reported that although the CDC lifted their requirements on nurses' offices and buses, per DESE guidelines, masking is still required in both settings.

Member Wilson inquired about mitigation strategies regarding school lunches. Dr. Greer responded that the Health and Safety Working Group will meet this week, and school lunches will be a topic of discussion for recommendations.

Member Weinstein mentioned that he is not opposed to the mandate but not supportive of it either. He expressed his concern about the processes and inquired about the strategies that will get the district to optional mask mandate by March 14th. Dr. Greer followed up by discussing the timeline of the decision which came during the February 15th Regular School Committee Meeting and explained some of the drivers on the decision would be surveillance testing data feedback from caregivers regarding their child(ren)'s covid status.

Mayor Siddiqui gave further explanation on the Superintendent's proposed optional mask mandate and explained that the Superintendent was transparent on the upcoming decisions being made by the district. She passed the floor to Dr. Dobbleteen for further explanation. Dr. Dobbleteen reported numerous conversations between the

Public Health Department, City Manager, Health and Safety Working group, and district administration in which all of the current mitigation strategies were thoroughly considered and planned out. She mentioned that with current trends she supports the lift in mask requirements in the district and the city.

Member Fantini asked for clarification on the decisions being made by the Health and Safety Working Group and who makes decisions regarding best practices. **Vice-Chair Rachel** recommends that perhaps a proposal to the Committee be given on what will be decided by the working group and what is decided by the School Committee. **Member Fantini** recommended more communication to the School Committee surrounding Health and Safety Working Group decisions. **Mayor Siddiqui** recommends the Health and Safety Working Group bring their recommendations to the scheduled March 15 Regular Meeting. Dr. Greer added that the district will have additional data by March 15th, which is two weeks after the return of February break.

Vice-Chair Rachel noted that a phased approach would have been beneficial and stated that it is important to communicate to the community about continuing mitigation strategies besides a lift in the current mask mandate.

Member Bhambi inquired if masks will still be available in schools after the March 14th proposal date. Dr. Greer responded that masks will still be available for students and staff at all school buildings.

Member Wilson discussed the student's perspective on masks. Most of them mentioned that they are more likely to continue wearing masks. She recommended a possible survey to students and staff on their initial thoughts surrounding a lift in the current mask mandate.

Member Rojas mentioned that the Health and Safety Procedures Manual is a working document and the Health and Safety Working Group and district administration can update when necessary and bring changes to the School Committee.

7b. CPS District Plan: None

7c. Consent Agenda:

Mayor Siddiqui removed **#22-32**. Member Wilson removed **#22-34**.

On the following roll call vote, items **#22-33** and **#22-35** were adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#22-33, Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows: that the School Committee contracts to the institutions as detailed in the list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, funds to be provided from the General Fund and/or Grant Fund Budget, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Program	#	Amount
Day Program	2	\$60,859.37
Residential Program		
45 Day Program		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>\$60,859.37</u>

#22-35, Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following gifts and receipts as described:

1. \$1,600.00 made by the Museum of Science to the Tobin Montessori School for buses to visit the museum.
2. A gift of \$1,000.00 to CRLS for the general activities of the high school made by the Laura A. Piasecki Charitable Trust.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#22-32, Approval of Memorandum of Agreement between the Cambridge School Committee and Cambridge Education Association Unit E for a Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Period of September 1, 2021 Through August 31, 2024, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee ratify and approve the Tentative Agreement between the Cambridge School Committee (the "Committee") and Cambridge Education Association Unit E for a successor collective bargaining agreement for the period of September 1, 2021 through August 31, 2024 as detailed in the attached document.

Discussion followed on **#22-32**.

Member Fantini provided context about the Memorandum of Agreement and recognized the great work of all of the paraprofessionals in the district. He also requested for the Superintendent to respond to some of the concerns made by the paraprofessionals that spoke during public comment.

Mayor Siddiqui, Member Weinstein, and Member Wilson echoed Member Fantini's comments about the impact of the paraprofessionals and the great work they do for CPSD. Mayor Siddiqui mentioned that she will follow up with the CEA president on some of the comments that were made during public comments. Member Wilson also echoed Mayor Siddiqui's comments regarding what was mentioned during public comment.

On the following roll call vote, **#22- 32** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Ms. Sheila Keady-Rawson (on behalf of the City Manager) YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#22-34, Contract Award: Building Audacity: Professional & Technical Services be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for temporary employment services, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Building Audacity, 75 Allen Avenue, Lynn, for the period of October 15, 2021 to June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$26,000.00.

A brief discussion followed on **#22-34**.

Member Wilson inquired more information surrounding the contract including the timeline of the project and the reasoning for the October 15, 2021 start date and not a July 1, 2021 start date, and if the contract award would just be for half of the year based on the proposed date. Ms. Spinner responded that the reasoning for the October 15, 2021 start date was due to the timing of the district coming to a decision to partner with the vendor which happened to be in October.

On the following roll call vote, **#22-34** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):

#22-36 Joint Motion by Member Fantini and Mayor Siddiqui

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Public Schools Pathways for Paraprofessionals program, which was launched in Fall of 2020, has released a mid-program report, citing a successful first year and high interest from the Cambridge community; and

WHEREAS: For most paraprofessionals, graduate programs are out of reach due to the costs and time, and the Pathways for Paraprofessionals program was started to help address that dilemma; and

WHEREAS: The program is structured so paraprofessionals can receive a master's degree and initial license for only the cost of course fees and materials, and the mid-program review included a report from faculty that the majority of students are engaged and enthusiastic; and

WHEREAS: The paraprofessionals in this program will be able to move into lead teacher positions across the district upon completion, increasing their earning potential as a result of furthering their education; and

WHEREAS: The goals of this program align with the goals of the School Committee and the District, and will help to diversify CPS staff and support community members from whom the traditional path to teaching is unattainable due to external forces; and

WHEREAS: The initial cohort was capped at 20, and given the success and interest in Cambridge, a second cohort should be considered; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: The Superintendent report back to the School Committee on the feasibility of a second cohort.

Discussion followed on **#22-36**

Member Fantini provided background on the motion and its significance of the paraprofessionals in the district. The program creates a pipeline for diversity in the school system as well as a national model for the professional development of the paraprofessional.

Member Wilson requested to be added as a joint sponsor to the recommendation and highlighted the significance it has to both the paraprofessional and the district.

Member Bhambi also requested to be added to the motion and echoed the previous comments on the significance this has on career readiness for professionals of color in the district.

Mayor Siddiqui announced that the motion will be amended to become a unanimous Joint Motion by the entire Committee.

Member Rojas inquired if the Pathways to Paraprofessionals Program be a part of the Superintendent's FY23 proposed budget. Dr. Greer recognized the importance of supporting this pipeline for paraprofessionals and it will be a part of her FY23 proposed budget.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Bambi, it was voted to add the entire School Committee as co-sponsors of **#22-36**, via voice vote.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, **#22-36** was adopted.

10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolence): None

11. Announcements:

Member Weinstein announced the Young Artist's Exhibit is on display at the Multicultural Arts Center. The exhibit will be available until March 4. He also announced the twenty-eight students who were awarded with Scholastic Writing and Art Awards and read aloud the list of recipients.

Member Wilson announced that there will be a Special Education and Student Supports Sub-Committee will be meeting on Monday, March 7th at 6 PM. She also gave a shout-out to the Boys Basketball team who is currently playing in a state tournament game and the team captain who was named DCL all-stars

Member Rojas announced the Middle School Boys and Girls basketball is also playing in the final tournaments this week.

Member Fantini announced that the Boys Hockey Team will play Saturday evening at Simoni Rink.

12. Late Orders: None

13. Communications from City Officers: None

Email communications:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| ✓ Dan Monahan | ✓ Kate Skubecz | ✓ Catherine Reilly |
| ✓ Kalle Heikkinen | ✓ Anne Barnes | ✓ Diego Alonso |
| ✓ Natalie Ribeiro | ✓ Bridgette Sheridan | ✓ Alana Serignese |
| ✓ Sarah Johnson | ✓ Melissa Rico | ✓ Sam Ribnick |
| ✓ Alex Gourevitch | ✓ Elinor Actipis | ✓ Arti Pandey |

On a motion by Vice-Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Wilson, it was voted, on a voice vote, to adjourn the meeting (8:11 p.m.)

Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew

Ariel Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee