



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Roundtable Meeting

January 24, 2023

Called for at 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a Budget Workshop to discuss FY 2024 Enrollment & Budget Projections, an ESSER plan update, and projections for FY24.

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Omolara Fatiregun, CEO of THRIVE, Thu Cung, THRIVE

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 not be taken, and there will be no public comment. The meeting proceeded with a roll call of members present: Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson ~~ABSENT~~; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Member Wilson joined at 6:05 p.m.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Greer who provided a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting which was for FY 2024 Enrollment & Budget Projections, and ESSER plan update.

Dr. Greer then turned the meeting over to CFO Claire Spinner who led a presentation on the enrollment and budget projects along with an update on the district's budget equity audit and ESSER projections. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Halfway through the presentation, Ms. Spinner paused the presentation for clarifying questions from the Committee.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired about the enrollment projections and asked for clarifications about the larger population drop over the next five years. Ms. Spinner clarified that the projections are internal enrollment projections made through the Finance Office. The projections are made for every school and program by grade via a weighted formula for five years. It is important to do these projections by school and program to make any needed staff adjustments.

Member Fantini inquired about THRIVE and any information about the ongoing equity audit. THRIVE CEO, Dr. Omolara Fatirgun, provided information and clarification on the organization, THRIVE creates software that assists school systems and government human services agencies to create equity-centered budgets. The organization conducts extensive research on interventions that close the achievement gaps and improve school climate but bundling it up to an index and using that index to determine what works and what schools and government agencies are spending money on.

Member Rojas expressed his surprise that the budget is increasing by 5.4% given that there was an 8% in inflation in 2022. He inquired about energy costs after hearing that some districts are considering hiring energy managers due to the rise in major increases in energy in schools and why the district is only projecting a 4.2% increase in energy and facilities. Ms. Spinner responded that the 5.4% increase is only applied to the General Fund. The district also has made numerous energy-conserving efforts including two net zero buildings, and outsourced bidding of natural resources for the city, so energy costs have not increased drastically.

Member Fantini asked THRIVE if they have made any major recommendations in previous equity audits that resulted in budget allocations. Dr. Fatirgum provided some examples of recommendations THRIVE has made while conducting equity audits which included personnel allocations and support for English language learners.

With no other clarifying questions from the Committee, Ms. Spinner resumed her presentation.

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor over to the Committee for discussions in the second half of the presentation.

Member Weinstein inquired about ESSER fund spending and if there are transitioned ESSER funds – funds that were initially through ESSER but are now in the general fund budget. Ms. Spinner clarified that the expenditures from ESSER are still a part of the district's analysis. The district is expecting to see another allocation in health and safety (tests, air filters, ventilation, etc.).

Member Hunter expressed her excitement about the equity audit and the ongoing work the audit will bring.

Mayor Siddiqui asked for clarification regarding funding for other district plan priorities and if this will be funded with ESSER. Ms. Spinner clarified that there is some funding in ESSER for other priorities such as RSTA improvements.

Member Wilson inquired about ESSER funding and learning loss. What is the district's intention in combatting learning loss? Dr. Greer responded that the district is working on both targeting and strategic tutoring which includes support for students for out-of-school time, targeted tutoring during the school day, summer vacations, and winter breaks. **Member Wilson** also inquired about the expansion of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities such as BAM and WOW into the upper schools. Dr. Greer responded that the district would analyze the impact of these programs which would guide the district in ways to expand these programs.

Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor over to Budget Co-Chairs, Vice Chair Rachel and Member Rojas, who led a discussion about School Committee priorities in the FY2024 budget:

- **Member Hunter** expressed her interest in information and data on Reading Recovery. Dr. Greer responded that there are gaps regarding Reading Recovery in the district, as well as school and bus safety. The district has been collecting and gathering information for a proposal to move away from Reading Recovery and expedite the implementation of the Science of Reading.
- **Mayor Siddiqui** reflected on the impact of our investments as they relate to academic outcomes and inquired about an update on the Calculus Project and support for our early childhood goals. She also shared some suggestions from the community meetings which include another Arabic teacher at CRLS, and more language program opportunities at the upper schools.
- **Member Fantini** is interested in high-impact tutoring and international travel opportunities for students as well as data systems improvements.
- **Member Weinstein** is interested in ways to close opportunity gaps which include moving forward with individual student success planning, universal pre-K, advanced learning needs, and heterogeneous grouping and ensuring the evaluation of our efforts and allocating funds to support

these efforts. He also expressed interest in outdoor learning and professional development opportunities for after-school and out-of-school activities at the upper-school level.

- **Member Wilson** is interested in wellness practitioners in the schools, universal pre-K, and support services to ensure all students are reading at grade level by third grade. She is also interested in mathematics – including the Calculus Project and the district's partnership with YPP as well as out-of-school career focus experiences for juniors and seniors, and unified sports at the upper schools.
- **Member Rojas** is interested in seeing support for ELL students and families post-high school. This was a trending topic mentioned in some of the community meetings surrounding the budget. He would also like to see more of an investment in our school buildings including support for the Long-Range Study and more resources for 8th-grade Algebra.
- **Vice Chair Rachel** is interested in seeing the opportunity to continue to provide free meals for students, along with continued access to technology (hotspots and Chromebooks), tutoring services in the ESSER funds, and more support for the RSTA program and SEL.

Mayor Siddiqui wrapped up the meeting by thanking Budget Co-Chairs Vice Chair Rachel and Member Rojas and the district executive leadership team for their efforts during this budget season.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA (7:55 p.m.).

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee