



**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)

Special Meeting

March 14, 2023

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a presentation of the Superintendent's Proposed FY24 Budget.

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, Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 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 to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to the Budget Co-Chairs Vice Chair Rachel and Member Rojas who provided an overview of the current budget process for FY24. The meeting then transitioned to the Superintendent and Ms. Claire Spinner who presented the FY24 Proposed Budget. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#). The total budget for FY24 is \$245,000.00 where 89.8% of the budget funds are from property taxes (\$226 million), 7.6% from Chapter 70 funding (\$18 million), and 2.6% from other funding sources (\$6.5 million). There is an increase of \$12.6 million (5.4%) in Salaries and Benefits totaling 83% of the district's budget.

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor to the Committee for questions and discussions based on the following discussion prompts:

- Clarifying Questions
- Warm (Positive) Feedback Regarding the Overall Budget
- What concerns do you have about the FY24 Budget Plan? What additional information would you like to have at upcoming budget workshops?

Clarifying Questions:

Member Weinstein inquired about universal free lunch – does it include breakfast as well? Wondering if there are any ongoing pieces related to COVID upgrades (now that we have upgraded the filter and HVAC systems) and is interested in learning more about the district's vision regarding tutoring. Dr. Greer confirmed that universal free lunch does include breakfast. Ms. Spinner gave an update on the HVAC

filters and any replacements. The costs associated with the replacement of the filters have already been allocated into our budget and we will not be using ESSER funding for the replacement.

Member Wilson inquired about the implementation of wellness spaces in the district and inquired about information regarding the number of homeless families in the district, and ways to create healing spaces for students in the district. Dr. Greer responded that there has been a long-term implementation plan regarding wellness spaces created by Kim Huffer who will present it to the community in the upcoming weeks. **Member Wilson** also inquired about sustaining initiatives (covid testing, tutoring, etc.) that were created and paid for with ESSER funding. Dr. Greer responded that a big part of the budget planning process was to determine sustainability for initiatives from ESSER funds. A lot of what is in the proposed budget are reconfigurations from ESSER funding into the budget for next year. **Member Wilson** also asked about early college and the prospect of the district eventually creating a new department for early college and how will it help leverage some of the college and career exploration we are trying to leverage. Dr. Greer mentioned that currently, we have an Executive Director of RSTA and the district's desire to create an alignment between elementary school and high school students to better create pathways for all students with the aligned framework.

Member Hunter inquired about the Educational Pathway Program, employee benefits, and program evaluation, particularly the Calculus Project. Ms. Spinner responded that the district pays for benefits for all of the grant-related positions. There are currently 7.8 FTEs on the ESSER grant for FY2024. The Educational Pathway Program is the expansion of the pipeline of the paraprofessional pathway program at Cambridge College and Lesley University. **Member Hunter** inquired about the use of ESSER funds for professional learning. How are the consulting services coded and settlements in the proposed budget?

Member Rojas inquired about the migration of expenses associated with ESSER funding into the general budget. He expressed curiosity about the additional funding of permanent-type positions with ESSER funding. Dr. Greer responded that the positions are gradual as they are from FY21, FY22, and FY23. Some of these positions will most likely be permanent positions in the future and the district will have to work at analyzing and identifying how to transition some of these positions to the general budget.

Member Fantini asked about the high school extension program and the universal free lunch and if the district is anticipating state funding for universal free lunch in the future. He is curious to get data on the dropout rates of students in the district. Dr. Greer responded that she is hopeful that may be the case however, that isn't the expectation currently.

Vice Chair Rachel is looking forward to strategic tutoring and how it is staffed and asked if the district is still providing Chromebooks and hotspots for families.

Mayor Siddiqui inquired about strategic tutoring and what is a part of the general budget and what is a part of ESSER funding.

Warm (Positive) Feedback Regarding the Overall Budget:

Vice Chair Rachel expressed that we are very fortunate to be a city where our budget is more than twice the amount of state required funding. She is pleased about the ongoing support of the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging and that it remains a permanent part of the CPSD budget.

Member Weinstein expressed his appreciation to be a part of a community that has such great dedication to education and how the proposed budget is aligning with the district planning process.

Member Fantini appreciates how the proposed budget is assisting with removing the achievement gaps with initiatives such as strategic tutoring,

Member Rojas is excited to see the investment in college and career exploration and hopes it will lead to more out-of-school learning opportunities and internships.

Mayor Siddiqui is excited about the early college expansion and educator pathway program. She is also excited to see the additional tutoring services incorporated into the budget and the implementation of hiring of the Executive Director of Early Education and defining this position concerning the Office of Early Childhood.

What concerns do you have about the FY24 Budget Plan? What additional information would you like to have at upcoming budget workshops:

Vice Chair Rachel discussed the Design Lab Innovation Coach and hopes that the district will retain in-house expertise over consulting and would like to see the findings of the equity audits and student success planning. She would like to learn more about the two new positions related to career and college pathways and role-based PD. She asked about the ESSR funds supporting summer/vacation programming.

Member Weinstein inquired about the two new positions – Executive Director of College and Career Pathways and the Executive Director of Early Childhood Education and where the roles fit in the organizational chart. He also inquired about where student success planning fits in the proposed budget. In addition, he would like to learn more about guidance counselor staffing and caseload management.

Member Fantini would like to see an internship coordinator in the budget or assign that responsibility to someone in the district if a coordinator is not incorporated. He expressed concern about the Kennedy-Longfellow School taking the most teacher cuts given it serves the highest percentage of CPSD low-income students. He expressed support for funds targeting student international travel.

Member Hunter would like to discuss the funding for the buildings and facilities in the district, especially for the older buildings that need repairs and furniture for those aging buildings. She expressed interest in reviewing job descriptions in the district with direct service to students. In addition, she is seeking additional information regarding the number of students served by the Calculus Project, YPP, etc.

Member Rojas recommends the district put into context ESSER funds relative to the prior year for transparency. He would like to learn more about the maintenance plan for district buildings, as opposed to capital projects.

Mayor Siddiqui would like to see more information on the Calculus Project and the YPP program and the efficacy of both programs. She concurs with Member Rojas that there should be more clarity regarding the ESSER funding this year vs. last year and how it relates to the CPSD general budget. She inquired about the additional implementation of a 0.5 FTE bilingual liaison and if it will support an additional language in the district. She is curious about the possible expansion of the Bright Program given the current mental health issues. She is eager to learn more about the process of adding additional positions to the HR department and a data specialist position.

Member Wilson is interested in an update on strategic tutoring (Tutoring Plus and Paper Service) and how the district is utilizing these services. She also would like to get more information on what the district is doing to amplify additional resources for strategic tutoring, after-school programs, and Unified Sports.

Mayor Siddiqui gave an overall summary of what members have expressed they would like to discuss at the next Budget Workshop which includes information on career pathways for executive director positions, more information on role-based PD, findings on the equity audit, and student success planning.

On a motion by Vice Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Fantini, on the following roll call the meeting was adjourned: Member Fantini YES Member Hunter YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. (7:48 p.m.)

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee