



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

April 15, 2021

Called for 5:30 p.m. for the purposes of hearing public comment regarding interim superintendent candidates, and for the School Committee to discuss and vote next steps in the process including School Committee interview questions and reviewing feedback material from the community. It is anticipated that this meeting will end by or before 7:30 p.m.

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

Also Present:

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order 5:30 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.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call vote for the purpose of a sound check: Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT, Member Wilson PRESENT; Vice Chair Bowman ABSENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT

1. Public Comment

- Lisa Downing, in support of Dr. Greer
- Tara Edelshick, in support of Dr. Greer
- Emie Michaud Weinstock, on community engagement
- Karen Dobak, in support of Dr. Greer
- Mercedes Soto, in support of Dr. Greer
- Misha Rosenberg, in support of Dr. Greer
- Ena Valenzuela, in support of Dr. Greer

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

Mayor Siddiqui provided context and what the timeline has been for this process. She also shared that CPS received more than a 100 community feedback forms. She shared that Dr. Henson withdrew her candidacy. She said next steps is on April 27th for the two finalists, Dr. Greer and Dr. Metcalf. She shared the themes around the questions that have been coming up.

Member Rachel provided a debrief of the April 8th community forum.

Mayor Siddiqui steered the conversation to what April 27th will look like. She turned the meeting over to Lisa Richardson.

Lisa Richardson explained that the basic information has been provided and it's time to move into deeper level questioning: the character of the candidates, their philosophy and how they've handled different situations. Less theoretical questions. Take the feedback from the community and try to get the questions the Members need answered.

Mayor Siddiqui shared that they will start at 5 pm. Lisa Richardson has drawn up a schedule, the first interview will go from 5:15-6:45 p.m. then there will be a 15 minute break then the second interview will be 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

Member Wilson asked for clarification on legality. Lisa Richardson will share a document.

Member Wilson asked why the interviews are so long. Mayor Siddiqui talked about how the schedule are just guidelines, wanted to make sure that there was enough time.

Vice Chair Bowman asked about the deliberation piece and that there is usually space between the interviews and the vote.

Lisa Richardson said there is nothing legally bounding them to interviewing and the vote on the same night and they were just trying to stay at the original timeline. Mayor Siddiqui said there is still time to call another meeting.

Member Rojas asked about how we go about voting on the candidates. Lisa Richardson said the vote will be who will be chosen, the vote is on the selection not yea or nay. Someone will make a motion for one candidate and that gets voted.

Member Rachel talked about how they want to have a unanimous vote and the deliberation will be important. She said it's important to remember that we have in-house talent as well. Member Rachel talked about the expectations on what they want to do. Member Rachel would like to agree on priorities.

Member Rojas agreed on coming up with priorities and asked if we are doing that now.

Member Fantini agreed that the interviews and the vote on another night would be his preference. He asked is there still time to get a question in writing from the candidates. Member Fantini went into having a list of question before the meeting that people can see ahead of time. Member Fantini asked what the mechanism for follow up questions is.

Member Wilson asked for further clarification on what the question process would be.

Mayor Siddiqui suggested submitting questions to Ms. Richardson.

Member Rachel suggested trying to get themes.

Mayor Siddiqui talked about how she has navigated this process and she goes back to the job description.

Member Wilson discussed how they want an agent of change.

Member Weinstein talked about the parameters of a year contract.

Member Fantini wanted to make sure that the student school committee members ask a question.

Mayor Siddiqui talked about the theme of anti-racism.

Member Rojas asked about whether having healing is there. Vice Chair Bowman said healing is a lot to put on someone for a year.

Member Rojas talked about because of the tension with COVID.

Member Rachel asked about the appetite for change. She emphasized the importance of SEL work.

Member Fantini asked about the reference checks. Mayor Siddiqui shared the process for the reference checks.

Member Weinstein asked about how they can build a platform of success for the interim Superintendent and how will you manage and lead the district. Member Weinstein said we could ask about how they would lead through the pandemic.

Student Member Vera-DeGraff discussed the importance of listening to student voices.

Member Wilson that it's important to flesh that out some more and the exact expectations of what they want them to do.

Vice Chair Bowman discussed how there are a lot of negotiations going on and how you could ask about how they approach negotiations. Ms. Richardson confirmed that it's a fair question to ask about what their experience with labor relations is.

Member Rachel talked about how the feedback form is still open.

Member Rojas seconded the idea of having a question about ESSR funds. Both remaining candidates have said they both want to the permanent position. Member Rojas said could their relationship with charter schools be brought up. Ms. Richardson confirmed that they can.

Member Wilson said the importance of having a conversation with Dr. Salim on his successor to move forward. Ms. Richardson said that conversation could happen but not for it to be public. Mayor Siddiqui said that anyone is open to reach out to Dr. Salim.

Vice Chair Bowman reiterated her desire for the interviews and the vote to be on different nights.

Member Wilson asked what the next steps are and asked Member Fantini to reflect on this process. Member Fantini said it seemed like we are in a good place.

Member Fantini talked about the importance of having the questions in front of the candidates.

Member Wilson suggested having the students read off the question and for there to be a shared google document on the question.

Member Rachel disagreed with having the students read of all the questions, she thinks we should all ask.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.: Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA

Attest:

Allison Daley
Confidential Secretary to the School Committee