



Special Meeting  
May 14, 2020

**CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
(Official Minutes)

Called for 6:00 P.M. A virtual special meeting of the School Committee with Public Comment was held for the purposes of continuing the conversation about a COVID-19 recovery and learning plan.

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

Also Present: Superintendent Kenneth Salim, Dr. Carolyn Turk, Claire Spinner, James Maloney, Maureen MacFarlane, Barbara Allen, Lindsay Rinkus, Dr. Alexis Morgan, Dr. Michelle Madera, Steve Smith, Maureen McFarlane

Student School Committee representatives: Sophie Green, Hersh Kanner - not present

A quorum of the School Committee being present, Mayor Siddiqui called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and read the call of the meeting. She also read that the Open Meeting Law that has been approved for remote participation.

- Roll Call vote was taken to start the meeting:

Vice Chair Bowman present, Member Fantini present, Member Rojas present, Member Rachel present, Member Weinstein present, Member Wilson present, and Mayor Siddiqui present.

Mayor Siddiqui introduced Superintendent Salim to speak and update the School Committee on the FY 21 Budget.

Superintendent starts the presentation with thanks to all the staff who are in attendance this evening.

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The presentation will entail the following:

1. FY 21 Proposed Budget Overview
2. Reallocations to Support COVID-19 Recovery
3. Discussion

**Vice Chair Bowman** begins with appreciation and thanks to the Superintendent and talks about the good fortune of the City and what is able to be accomplished with this budget.

**Member Weinstein** echoes vice chair Bowman sentiments. Ask about savings on positions that are being held in queue, are the savings based on the freeze the entire FY.

**Superintendent Salim** - Saving based on FY however there will be a better idea in the coming months. It is a difficult time that predicated this decision and funding is fluid both federally and state and they are both determinants.

**Member Rachel** thanks the Superintendent for his presentation and its succinctness. Would like to focus on it being would like to have it be a transformative plan, not a recovery plan - A profound difference.

Questions regarding the Equity office - Wants to make sure everyone will be at the table to coordinate and build relationships. Wants more clarity with the office make up.

**Superintendent Salim** - Most important to establish the office. We know that the Chief Equity officer shapes the office. There would not be a full year of salaries that would help the budget piece. Staffing the office and proving equity is not mutually exclusive -Superintendent Salim has had many conversations with the Families and Educators of Color.

**Member Fantini Thanks** the Superintendent for his presentation and starts where the programming for Summer is. Out what is the thought on loss learning and what is the bigger picture, new educational plan? The levels of engagement differ. Speaks about being collaborative and focus must be on the whole child and not focusing on status quo, references Jeffrey Canada. Knows that parents have many concerns.

**Superintendent Salim** families are looking for connections and consistency and supporting their children's learning. Asking the parents to be so much involved in and support for the parents. Priorities - engagement and relationships, trauma informed practices.

References he was on a call with Mayor Siddiqui with professors from Harvard and MIT and what the return to school will look like. It is about engagement and not replicating what school looked like.

**Mayor Siddiqui** Echoes what Member Fantini was stressing. The Summer is here and we have parents that are actively looking for guidance and what is going to happen.

**Superintendent Salim** will offer an update at the Tuesday meeting.

**Member Rojas** thanks the Superintendent and would like to discuss the Summer Plan. How useful is Summer School and will specific students be able to be engaged? Noting that the traditional summer school affects the most vulnerable students who are the ones that have been most negatively affected by remote learning. Would additional money be needed? ELL coach in the budget, not a full time position? How does it become a full time position?

**Superintendent Salim** answers There is a big question around sort of supply and demand in terms of educators, availability, also regulates some of our out of school time partners and their bandwidth, are we fully limited to virtual or how we can think about creative ways of thinking about outdoor spaces, as well. There will be a number of different areas and ideas and questions to engage students that are the most concerning. Dollars could shift towards that and repurposing towards recovery efforts. ELL position - balance of position in the base budget. Making it a full 1.0 FTE

**Claire Spinner** clarifies what Dr. Salim said and by holding it vacated would be holding the entire FTE vacant.

**Member Rojas** - Would like to see a table where the discretionary funds are and its breakdown. References how he is happy with this exercise in how to adjust our budget with a pandemic lens. As things develop it may have to happen again so he is happy with the process.

**Member Wilson** - Talks about the importance of equity is and making balance, a district that is working towards becoming anti-racist. We need to look at the wrap around services and how important it is to wrap our arms around our youth and the Family Engagement Specialist will take it a step further. Would never want stakeholders to feel lost. Limiting places of Equity is not the right course. We need to be creative and transform what the curriculum must look like.

**Superintendent Salim** responds that OEIB and its proposal includes building on the work that has been in place and the funding around expanding the role of family liaisons at the upper schools continues, the director of family engagement, which is a new position also continues. And again, all the funding for the employee resource groups, the educators of color coalition, the family caregiver, a color coalition work. All those pieces are, part of still the work of the equity office. And again, this is about holding these vacant in order to revisit the feasibility based on our financial picture on the point around the curriculum, dollars, it's not a position, but they are implementation funds that typically are associated with actual materials. And looking at not like adopting new instructional materials at this point. As well as engaging working groups and planning for the fall, how do we tap into the expertise of our teachers and look at what are some innovative project based models that we can utilize? Particularly, across the different grade levels. There is an opportunity that as we think about the return to school, how we can be best positioned to think about engagement and learning in innovative ways.

**Member Wilson** follows up with a thank you for the Superintendent's response. Cambridge is resource rich and should be really leading the charge and how we are moving forward and thinking ahead and what the summer looks like for our kids. It's imperative -we are getting the emails from the worried and frustrated parents. Reiterates the loss of learning. These are equity issues. The funding needs to be apparent with what we are doing. References Jeffrey Canada and Dr. Bettina Love about being forward thinking. Talk to our partners, private schools - reach out, in order to help our children who are suffering.

**Superintendent Salim** addresses Member Wilson's thoughts and concerns by stating what drives every one of us is about meeting the needs of students that we know are struggling during this time and have experienced loss that they've never experienced. We're all experiencing incredible loss as a whole community. But particularly we know that this pandemic has disproportionately affected not just broadly families of color in Cambridge, but specifically African American black families. And we know that we, in our conversations with our planning, with our principals, with our out of school time partners, keeping that focus around racial equity and or anti-racism is how we live by and think about our planning. Our principals and central leaders are working day and night thinking about the most vulnerable.

**Member Wilson** thanked the Superintendent for his response and reiterates her points.

**Mayor Siddiqui** thanks Member Wilson and agrees with her sentiments. The need to strive to do better. Talk about the feedback from the meetings and various stakeholders and incorporate it.

Ask about staffing in the OIEB and be creative with making staffing part time to full? Family Engagement piece needs to be considered as it is brought up by families. OIEB, huge desire to have it be live and staffed. Wants a comfort level when deciding on these choices.

**Member Rojas** follows up and reiterates what the Mayor says and do we need to make that cut? Speaks about the financing.

**Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer CPSD** - through the chair - Direct student service - school based as opposed to district base. The District wants to maintain current employment. Adjustments can be made to facilitate this request. There will be a better understanding what the projections are and what our finances look like. A priority list could be established. Goes on to discuss the parameters and that it is too unknown however, Cambridge financially is still sound.

**Mayor Siddiqui** responds and agrees with Ms. Spinner's sentiments as well as updates the members with the fact that there will be 30 positions not filled on the city side.

**Vice Chair Bowman** asks about remote learning and how are we thinking about engaging our younger learners? As well as supporting parents because they are the educators in remote learning.

**Superintendent Salim** answers with the following: balance around screen time, identify the specific skills that the students are developing. Learning around differentiation. What are their performance take they are being asked to do. Trying to foster educator collaborators.

**Vice Chair Bowman** goes on to discuss her thoughts on being able to invest in our young people and that the OIEB and work of the parent liaison and engagement is one piece of the framework, and investing in our young people's academic growth by closing the achievement gap and looking at the right approach. There are a lot of families of color that want their children to have the fundamentals of education.

**Mayor Siddiqui** agrees and elaborates on what Vice Chair Bowman has brought up.

**Member Weinstein** appreciates the presentation however, the focus on looking for funds that may be something to help and hold for our response in hiring. Looks forward to a curriculum discussion. Encourages the Superintendent to think about the assets we have in the community to help with this task. Speaks about the community coming together and how it has served us all.

**Superintendent Salim** responds there was a criteria set and regarding the new positions. It is no surprise that these are areas of concern we felt that at this stage in the process to focus on not direct service to the classroom when going forward. However, these comments and concerns will be digested. We still do not have a complete and clear financial picture.

**Member Weinstein** thanks the Superintendent for his thoughts and how the focus is moving forward.

**Member Rojas** Appreciates Claire Spinners; analysis and possibly, which positions can be brought back based on resources - appreciated Claire Spinner thoughts and presentation. Speak about keeping the City Manager in the loop for any further monies the district may need.

**Mayor Siddiqui** clarifies that the City manager is acutely aware of where the city is going. Speaks about basic needs and creativity and keeps in contact with the City Manager.

**Vice Chair Bowman**, speaks about partnership between the City Council and the school committee as it relates to how we solve these big picture issues. That this is unrepresented times and working collaboratively. Opportunity to have big conversations.

Thanks the members and the City Council for rising to the occasion.

- Motion to extend the meeting by twenty minutes by Member Wilson seconded by Member Weinstein and subsequent vote was taken, Mayor Siddiqui (YEA), Ms. Bowman (YEA), Mr. Fantini (YEA), Mr. Rojas (YEA), Mr. David Weinstein (YEA), Ms. Rachel (YEA), and Ms. Wilson (YEA).

**Member Wilson**, expresses the importance of the budget and not to pull money from areas of equity, it would not be a wise decision to make at this time. That equity stays the focal point and that we find ways to support our scholars and families during this time of tremendous loss.

**Vice Chair Bowman** announces that there will be a five part series, titled Black Cambridge and COVID-19 along with City Councillor Denise Simmons. The first part of that series will be a conversation on Education. May 24, 2020 at 1:00pm on CCTV

Motion to adjourn by Vice Chair Bowman seconded by Member Wilson and subsequent vote was taken, Mayor Siddiqui (YEA), Ms. Bowman (YEA), Mr. Fantini (YEA), Mr. Rojas (YEA), Mr. David Weinstein (YEA), Ms. Rachel (YEA), and Ms. Wilson (YEA). Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm.

Next meeting scheduled will be a virtual special meeting on Thursday, May 19th, 2020, 6PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Dever Wood  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee (temporary)