



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

### (Official Minutes)

#### Regular Meeting

April 15, 2025

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: Member Harding, Member Hudson (REMOTE), Vice Chair Hunter, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Others Present: Tom Arria, Director of Athletics, CRLS; Student Member Barua; Dr. Heather Francis, Executive Director of Academics; Dr. Chad Leith, Director of Accountability; Dr. Michelle Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Early Education; David Murphy, Interim Superintendent; Student Member Shimelis; Damian Smith, Chief Operating Officer

**Mayor Simmons** in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and 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: Vice Chair Hunter, PRESENT; Member Weinstein, PRESENT; Member Harding, PRESENT; Member Hudson, PRESENT; Member Rachel, PRESENT; Member Rojas, PRESENT; Mayor Simmons, PRESENT

#### 1. Public Comment

The following individuals were heard:

Dan Monahan, Lexington Ave, spoke regarding the Superintendent's Update  
Ann Coburn, Otis Street, spoke regarding **#25-079** Teacher Evaluations & Paraprofessional Staffing

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Rachel public comment was closed on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, ABSENT; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-0-1)

#### 2. Student School Committee Report:

Student members shared highlights on a student-led Club Leaders Roundtable held on April 3. The group discussed how club funding works with CRLS Finance Manager, Makayla Galvin and educator, Sam Musher. Issues highlighted included:

- Increased access for club leadership opportunities
- Concern about increased costs for senior class activities
- Need for increased budget communications with club leaders
- More transparency in participatory budgeting system

**3. Presentation of the Records for Approval: None**

**4. Reconsiderations: None**

**5. Unfinished Business/Calendar:**

**#25-079 Teacher Evaluations & Paraprofessional Staffing – Member Hudson & Member Harding**

WHEREAS: Student-facing positions, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and support staff, are essential to delivering high-quality education and ensuring positive outcomes for all learners; and

WHEREAS: Direct support in the classroom enables teachers to be more effective and responsive, particularly in meeting diverse student needs; and

WHEREAS: Investing in student-facing resources is an investment in immediate educational success, not just long-term planning for potential future success; and

WHEREAS: Meaningful teacher and administrator evaluations are critical tools for professional growth, accountability, and ensuring instructional quality; and allow the district to ensure that every additional dollar invested is spent with purpose and aligned with our educational mission of providing students with critical skills; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent is directed to add two paraprofessional positions to the District FY26 budget; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent is directed to offset the cost of these positions through reductions in areas of the budget that do *not* impact classroom staff or student-facing personnel or critical operations (including transportation and buildings and grounds operations and maintenance); and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent is directed to ensure full and faithful execution of teacher and administrator evaluations, as outlined in district policy, and to report back on evaluation implementation.

**Member Harding** and **Member Hudson** spoke regarding the motion and the importance of evaluating teachers and administrators, as well as including two additional paraprofessional positions in the FY26 budget.

**Vice Chair Hunter** highlighted her previous concerns of the motion addressing two distinct topics and her belief that it should be two separate motions. She noted that she could not support the motion. **Mayor Simmons** highlighted the conservative financial landscape for the City and shared that she could not support the motion. **Member Rojas** believed that the additional paraprofessional positions should have been discussed in the previous budget meetings and that he would not support the motion. **Member Weinstein** shared his alignment with Member Harding's advocacy of meaningful teacher and administrator evaluations and wanted confirmation that if two additional paraprofessionals were added to the FY26 budget that no other positions would be eliminated. Superintendent Murphy confirmed that other positions would not be eliminated.

Given the group's feedback, **Member Harding** proposed that the language referring to the addition of two paraprofessional positions be eliminated and the following amended motion was put forward:

WHEREAS: Meaningful teacher and administrator evaluations are critical tools for professional growth, accountability, and ensuring instructional quality; and allow the district to ensure that every additional dollar invested is spent with purpose and aligned with our educational mission of providing students with critical skills; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Superintendent is directed to ensure full and faithful execution of teacher and administrator evaluations, as outlined in district policy, and to report back on evaluation implementation.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Rachel the amendments to **#25-079** were accepted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-0-1)

**#25-079** was adopted as amended on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-0-1)

**6. Awaiting Reports:** None

**7. 7a. Superintendent's Update:**

*An update on pending matters and highlight various initiatives taking place across CPS school communities.*

Superintendent gave a brief update on the following:

- Update on the April 10 Administrative Meeting
  - Monthly gathering of principals and directors.
  - Focused on:
    - Developing stronger hiring practices.
    - Decision-making around conferring professional teacher status.
    - Addressing challenges in meeting evaluation goals and conducting summative evaluations.
- Educator Evaluations
  - Highlighted the shared commitment between administration and school committee.
  - Aim for greater fidelity and effectiveness in educator evaluations.
  - Need for consistent messaging and support for educators.
  - Emphasis on compliance with regulations and contracts at a minimum
  - Goal is to build capacity and ensure proper professional learning for supervisory staff.
  - Evaluation effectiveness identified as the top strategic focus.
- Upcoming Student Programs
  - Acceleration Academies for grades 6–8 during April vacation.

Following his update, Member Rachel highlighted the importance of student and caregiver input in the evaluation process. Member Harding stressed the importance of retaining and supporting exceptional teachers and the role of teacher evaluations in supporting these efforts. Interim Superintendent Murphy noted that 47% of evaluations were completed by deadline and 70% were compliant, but after deadline. He agreed that these numbers need to improve.

**7b. Presentation**

The Interim Superintendent and district administrators will provide brief updates on matters previously discussed before the committee, including the ongoing implementation of newly aligned curriculum, the implementation of a competency determination for high school graduates of the Cambridge Public Schools, and the ongoing school redesign efforts taking place at Fletcher Maynard Academy as well as other matters.

Dr. Heather Francis, Executive Director of Academics

Dr. Chad Leith, Director of Accountability

Dr. Michelle Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary and Early Education

David Murphy, Interim Superintendent

The group gave the following presentation which can be found on this [website](#). The presentation covered the following topics:

Fletcher Maynard Academy (FMA) Redesign

- Positive Observations
  - Gratitude extended to FMA School Council and Friends of FMA.
  - Parent engagement session highlighted current priorities and redesign efforts.
  - Strong educator-student relationships
- Identified Needs
  - FMA is an outlier compared to other elementary schools.
  - Commitment to ensuring equity in learning opportunities.
- Plans Moving Forward
  - Tailored professional development for educators.
  - Emphasis on aligned curriculum and social-emotional learning (Wayfinder Curriculum).
  - Review of expanded learning time usage.
  - Commitment to future updates.
  - Transparent communication and investment in redesign.

#### Graduation Competency Determination Post-MCAS Graduation Requirement

- Current Landscape
  - MCAS no longer a graduation requirement due to recent ballot initiative.
  - New law requires schools to certify students' competencies in ELA, math, science.
- Short-Term Plan
  - Classes of 2025 & 2026: Students can meet graduation requirement by:
    - Completing 20 credits in ELA and math.
    - Completing 10 credits in a science discipline.
- Retroactive Review
  - Reviewing cases of students since 2013 who received certificates of attainment to potentially award diplomas.
- Long-Term Considerations
  - Potential for performance-based assessments.
  - Awaiting state-level recommendations.
  - Collaboration with other districts and state officials underway.
- Concerns raised by Committee members include:
  - Alignment with college readiness standards.
  - Family engagement and communication regarding changes.
  - Student inclusion in planning processes.
  - Opportunity for holistic assessment methods (e.g., portfolios, presentations).
  - Educator preparedness for new standards.

#### Focus Curriculum for Kindergarten & CPP Classrooms

- Focus on K Curriculum
  - Implemented across schools since 2021–2022.
  - Previously only used in 4 out of 12 schools.
  - Now includes preschool (3s and 4s), with adaptations for special education.
- Instructional Approach
  - Literacy-focused, theme-based curriculum.
  - Guided play integrated with academic goals.
  - Inclusive and culturally relevant texts.
  - Writing begins at age 4.
- Results
  - 73% of third graders reading on grade level according to iReady screener data.

Following the conversation, **Member Hudson** had several questions regarding the inconsistencies of students' iReady vs. MCAS reading scores. She pushed administrators for ongoing transparency regarding sharing information behind the unique data points.

7c. **CPS District Plan:** None

7d. **Consent Agenda:**

On a motion by Member Harding seconded by Member Rachel the items **#25-081, #25-082, #25-083, #25-084, #25-085, #25-088, #25-089 and #25-091** were adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (7-0)

**#25-081 Recommendation: FY 2024-25 General Fund Budget Statutory Category Transfers be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve the following statutory transfers of appropriation within the General Fund budget for FY2024-25.

<u>Statutory Category</u>	<u>Increase/(Decrease)</u>
Salaries, Wages & Benefits	(\$1,000,000)
Other Ordinary Maintenance	\$600,000
Travel & Training	\$400,000
Extraordinary Expenditures	\$0
NET TOTAL	\$0

**#25-082 Recommendation: Day & Residential Program Service not Available from the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions as detailed in the list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts funds to be provided from the General Fund and/or Grant Fund Budget.

	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts:	1	\$42,843.92
Residential Program Tuition Contracts		
45 Day Program Contracts:	<u>1</u>	<u>\$27,200.25</u>
Total	2	\$70,044.17

**#25-083 Recommendation: Contract Award: Forefront Education: Math Education Platform (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Forefront Education, 75 Waneka Pkwy, Lafayette, CO for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$30,000.00.

**#25-084 Recommendation: Contract: Imagine Learning: Instructional Materials & Professional Development (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Imagine Learning, 8860 E. Chaparral Road, Scottsdale, AZ for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$97,715.00.

**#25-085 Recommendation: Contract Award: Mind Research Institute: Computer Software (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor,

funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Mind Research Institute, 5281 California Ave, Suite 300, Irvine, CA for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$103,000.00.

**#25-088 Recommendation: Contract Award: Perkins School for the Blind: Special Education Services be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA for the period of March 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025 in the amount of \$30,865.00

**#25-089 Recommendation: Contract Award: Perkins School for the Blind: Special Education Services (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$75,000.00.

**#25-091 Recommendation: Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following donations as described:**

DONATION - \$289.10 to Cambridgeport School and \$1,032.22 to Kennedy Longfellow School from HELPSY in return for items collected in the schools' clothing/book donation collection boxes. Funds will be used for the general support of the schools.

DONATION - \$298.12 dba O'Connor Studios to Kennedy Longfellow School for the general support of the school.

## **8. Non-Consent Agenda:**

**#25-086 Recommendation: Contract Award: Boston University: Professional Development be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Boston University, Metropolitan College, 755 Commonwealth Ave, Suite 325, Boston, MA for the period of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 in the amount of \$54,318.00.

A brief discussion followed **#25-086**. It was confirmed that the contract is addition to current pipeline programs.

On a motion by Member Rojas seconded by Member Rachel **#25-086** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (7-0)

**#25-087 Recommendation: Contract Award: B & H Photo, Inc.: Multi Media Equipment be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

B & H Photo Video, Inc., 420 9th Avenue, New York, NY for the period of April 1, 2025 to March 31, 2026 in the amount of \$43,800.00.

A brief discussion followed **#25-087**. It was confirmed that this expense was related to supporting the VPA.

On a motion by Member Weinstein seconded by Member Harding **#25-087** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (7-0)

**#25-090 Recommendation: Contract Award: Education Logistics Inc.: Transportation Routing & Management System (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below.

Education Logistics, Inc., 3000 Palmer Street, Missoula, MT for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$48,303.79

A discussion followed **#25-090**. It was confirmed that this expense was related to upgrading tracking equipment on Eastern busses. COO Smith offered additional insights regarding the contract and the district's commitment to address ongoing transportation challenges.

On a motion by Member Weinstein seconded by Member Harding **#25-087** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

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

### **#25-092 CRLS Consent Education Workshops – Member Weinstein and Member Rachel**

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Athletic Department in coordination and full cooperation with the Title IX Aurelia Advocates and Train the Trainer course students, and with the assistance of the Physical Education, Health and Wellness Department, and at times outside vendors, has worked very hard at delivering a comprehensive and practical Consent Education Program for all of our athletic teams over the last three school years; and

WHEREAS: This work, mainly completed through peer-to-peer instructional delivery by the students of Title IX Aurelia Advocates and Train the Trainer course students, has been geared towards information and training for athletic teams and the environment surrounding sports to gain a more mindful respect for all, and an understanding that words matter and actions matter; and

WHEREAS: Over the last three years, there has been an evolution of our student body including student athletes to build a culture of consent among our teams, within our school and beyond in our community; and

WHEREAS: CPSD is committed to continuing to build an effective and solid culture of consent in our Cambridge Public Schools community and to influence others to do the same to the point where consent becomes a norm in our society as a whole; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge Public Schools will continue to offer consent education workshops every year on a seasonal basis to our student athletes as student leaders, to continue this critically important work.

A discussion followed **#25-092** with **Member Weinstein** and **Member Rachel** sharing the impetus for bringing forth their motion. They stressed the importance of keeping this work at the forefront of the district's culture. Mr. Arria provided additional insights regarding the Consent Education Program and its impact and growth.

On a motion by Member Weinstein seconded by Member Rachel **#25-092** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-0-1)

**10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolences):** None

**11. Announcements:**

Member Weinstein

- Attended the CPS Community Passover Seder
- Attended the inaugural Cambridge Model United Nations at the high school, with guest speakers from Harvard Kennedy School and UNESCO.

Vice Chair Hunter

- Participated in the Social Justice Summit
- Participated as a jury member in Ms. Dion Campbell's class for a lesson reenacting the "shipwreck sailors" legal case.

Member Rojas

- Announced the school's first-ever boys' ultimate frisbee team, which won its first three games.
- Attended the National School Board Association conference in Atlanta with the Mayor and Vice Chair.

Mayor Simmons

- Announced a rescheduled Women's History Celebration and Story Slam on April 23.

Mr. Murphy

- Reminder about the Cambridge School Volunteers (CSV) Annual Appreciation Event
- Reminder about the 8th Grade Civics Showcase at the State House on May 23.

**12. Late Orders:** None

**13. Communications from City Officers:**

March 24, 2025 Policy Order re Utilizing Parking After Hours at King Open/Cambridge Street Upper School Complex

**Mayor Simmons** shared the policy order from the City Council requesting consideration of opening the secured parking lot at the King Open/Cambridge Street Upper School Complex for residential or commercial use during off-hours. Mayor Simmons and Committee members shared their concerns about allowing resident parking in an enclosed parking facility. **Mayor Simmons** recommended that the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee may want to discuss the matter further.

**Email communications:**

✓ Dan Monahan

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Harding the meeting was adjourned on the following roll call vote: Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, ABSENT; Member Rachel, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-0-1) (9:18 p.m.)

Attest:



Katherine Christo

Executive Secretary to the School Committee