



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)

Virtual Special Meeting

May 14, 2025

Called for Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway for the purpose of discussing the superintendent search.

Members Present: Member Harding, Member Hudson, Vice Chair Hunter, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Others Present: Glenn Koocher, Executive Director, MASC
Ashley Pierre, Executive Director of Human Resources, CPSD
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Director of Education Policy, Mayor's Office

Mayor Simmons in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, **Mayor Simmons** called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. **Mayor Simmons** read the call of the meeting and explained that the meeting was being televised and recorded. Votes may be taken.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Member Weinstein, PRESENT; Vice Chair Hunter, PRESENT; Member Harding, ~~ABSENT~~; Member Hudson, PRESENT; Member Rachel, PRESENT; Member Rojas, ~~ABSENT~~; Mayor Simmons, PRESENT

Member Rojas joined at 5:04 p.m. and **Member Harding** joined the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

Following introductory remarks, **Mayor Simmons** opened the floor to public comment.

There were no registrants for public comment.

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

Mayor Simmons turned the floor over to Ms. Ashley Pierre, Executive Director of Human Resources. Ms. Pierre shared that the job description was posted on the CPS website and multiple job boards. She noted that social media outreach would begin once the position is posted with the City of Cambridge. The application deadline is listed at June 6, 2025 with a start date of July 1, 2026. She highlighted that a few applications had already been received. Following Ms. Pierre's comments, **Vice Chair Hunter** expressed concern about the short application window and suggested a later deadline to expand the applicant pool. **Member Rachel** asked whether the abbreviated timeline was flexible if the current applicant pool was insufficient. **Member Weinstein** raised a concern about how extending the timeline might affect perception among early applicants. **Member Harding** supported seeking a larger pool of applicants and asked about contingency plans if the current candidates were not a good fit. Ms. Pierre shared that if the current applicant pool was not sufficient, the Committee could revisit extending the deadline and stressed that the current approach allows for flexibility and early commitment from strong candidates. She noted that post-COVID, small applicant pools have been more typical. **Vice Chair Hunter** stated that a minimum of 7-9 candidates was needed to be selected at least 3 viable finalists.

The discussion pivoted to community engagement. Ms. Pierre noted that the outreach would include in-person community forums, possible Zoom conversations and a survey. Members expressed concern that these opportunities should be scheduled in the very near future as the school year was coming to a close and families were exceptionally busy. There was an extended discussion about the initial screening of resumes, including the roles of Committee members vs. a recruitment firm. The group also discussed who would serve on the screening and interview committees, as well as how those individuals would be selected. The Committee agreed that the hiring decision should not be delayed until the next elected Committee. **Mayor Simmons** proposed an alternative timeline citing that it

would allow the Committee to engage the community more fully. She expressed concern that a rushed timeline could deter quality candidates.

Member Hudson expressed her desire for the School Committee as whole to review all “serious” resumes, not just finalists. **Mayor Simmons** shared that due to Open Meeting Law (OML) the Committee as a whole could not review resumes, and only a subset of the Committee could serve this role. Dr. Turk clarified that resume screening is typically handled by a search firm and not directly by the Committee. **Mayor Simmons** contacted Glenn Koocher, Executive Director of the MASC, to clarify if the Committee of the whole, or a subset, could screen resumes. Mr. Koocher joined the conversation via phone and shared the following:

- A majority of the School Committee cannot participate in initial screenings or interviews, even in executive session.
- Only when discussing candidate character or reputation, with a candidate's permission, can the Committee meet in executive session.
- Legislation has been filed to potentially change these constraints, but under current law, the Committee must proceed cautiously.

The meeting having reached 6:00 p.m., the meeting was extended to 6:30 p.m. on a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Rachel on the following roll call vote: Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

Member Weinstein and **Member Rachel** strongly suggested that community engagement take place immediately to inform both the screening process and candidate selection. **Member Weinstein** supported keeping the current job posting while allowing for edits if a search firm is added. Ms. Pierre confirmed that the posting could remain live while edits are made and that she had identified a vendor for under \$10,000 to assist with recruitment. An extensive discussion ensued about the option of removing the job description for updating following some community feedback. **Mayor Simmons** advocated for this approach. The Committee decided to keep the current description as is and community input would help share interview questions. The Committee discussed maintaining a timeline for the search process, focusing on transparency and planning for Plan A (accelerated) and fallback Plans B and C.

The meeting having reached 6:30 p.m., the meeting was extended to 7:00 p.m. on a motion by Vice Chair Hunter seconded by Member Hudson on the following roll call vote: Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, ABSENT; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

The group discussed the composition of the resume screening committee which may include three School Committee members and additional community members. The conversation included whether to keep the June 6 application deadline and how to respond if the applicant pool is too small. **Member Harding** proposed that each School Committee member appoint three trusted community members to form a larger screening group for resume review, narrowing candidates down to a manageable number. **Vice Chair Hunter** stressed the importance of hiring the HR firm quickly and ensuring confidentiality for applicants. She proposed that community members be chosen from various stakeholder groups rather than appointed by Committee members. The Committee agreed to move forward with the working group of Ms. Pierre, Dr. Turk, Vice Chair Hunter and Mayor Simmons.

Member Harding left the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas the meeting was adjourned on the following roll call vote: Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, ABSENT; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6:55 p.m.)

Attest:



Katherine Christo
Executive Secretary to the School Committee