



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

June 23, 2020

Called for 5:00 p.m. broadcast from the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing the School Committee summer calendar.

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

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Ms. Allen, Executive Director of Human Resources

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, no votes will be taken except to adjourn and there will not be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman ABSENT; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui stated she is prepared for questions from the Members, she then turned the floor over to Dr. Salim. who informed the Committee that there will be dates for the taskforce meetings and special meetings for the School Committee, they will be mostly on the operational models for the return to school, the safety plan and the academic, Social Emotional Students, and the Faculty needs that must be laid out for our students. There are Student Task Force dates that need to be set and numerous other meetings. He shared a calendar with the body going to the end of August. There will be a June 30th Special Meeting July, 14th Special Meeting and July 15th School Climate Sub-Committee, July 21st possibly more contract voting, July 28th Special Meeting. The Superintendent shared a slide of an operational plan which has a lot to do with transportation, staffing, cleaning and screeners for students for the beginning of the year. The Superintendent is still finalizing the dates for the working groups.

Vice Chair Bowman joined the meeting at 5:17 p.m.

Member Weinstein wants to make sure this info is shared on the website. Member Weinstein shared the dates on the Curriculum & Achievement Sub-Committee, with the goals of making sure families and other Task Force members can benefit from these conversations, he plans for June 30th, July 6, 17th, and 30th.

Communications and Community Relations – On July 9, 20th

Member Weinstein wants to make sure he doesn't overburden Sub-Committee meetings with public comment. There will be many presentations, draft plans will be the starting point and unfortunately, the plans need additional work.

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Mayor Siddiqui asked who provides the presentations, Member Weinstein answered that they come from experts and Task Force members.

Vice Chair Bowman commented that she is concerned how the meetings are set up. The Sub-Committee system is set up to accommodate the public and connect that work to the Administration. She wonders why are we having so many Special Meetings. It is a radical problem of adding extra meetings and expect Ms. Beard and Ms. Dever Wood to keep up under the existing backlog. She feels less is more.

Member Rojas asked when are we going to have teacher surveys re: what went well and not so well?

Dr. Salim responded that over the past several days, educators have been engaged in reflections, planning, and identifying success. The principals are learning how the distance learning plan was operationalized and by July 17th they should have all of the data from the distance learning reports. The administration is also launching a survey for families related to how they are thinking about the fall, assuming things are the same as today, and then there are the questions on transportation that need to be attended to.

Dr. Salim added as it relates to the Sub-Committees, he is slightly concerned about the function of the Task Force and what feedback and ideas can be shared with the Committee of the Whole.

Member Rojas also asked where the school and staff expectations are and where will working with the Teachers Union fit into all of this.

Dr. Salim responded that they have been having ongoing with CEA Union meetings for Covid-19 closure issues with Mr. Fantini and Vice Chair Bowman being the School Committee representatives at those meetings. Specific target related issues still need to be found.

Member Fantini commented this schedule is a bit overwhelming, normally we do not have summer Sub-Committee meetings, they burn out of the Administrative staff. Member Fantini wants to know what will happen at the Special Meetings, can we combine the Sub-Committees with the Specials Meetings? He suggested having public comment at every other special meeting. At some point, the value of having too many meetings to reach a goal doesn't work.

Mayor Siddiqui shared that there is more detail in the slide with the list of meetings than what was shared with the Task Force team. She does not want to be in a situation where people are asking why there was no conversation about some of these meetings.

Member Rojas suggested emerging models be discussed at the June 30th Special Meeting. Dr. Salim added that he was also hoping that the June 30th meeting would also include voting on some additional contract recommendations.

Member Rachel informed the assembly that the Families of Color Coalition has a space for healing and grieving during this time, they are going to be busy with engagements focusing on this topic. Member Rachel also suggested the shared google calendar have all of these dates added to it.

Member Wilson is overwhelmed also, however as we discuss and describe the events that are happening she realizes they are important considering our crisis. What is presented for the Student Special Education and Support Sub-Committee meeting is not an ideal date, maybe earlier in July like the 16th or 18th and early August.

Vice Chair Bowman reiterated that we do not have Sub-Committee meetings in the afternoon without having conversations with the Chairs of the Sub-Committees. She wants to streamline some of these meetings if at all possible.

Member Fantini wants to know what the Superintendent Town Hall meetings are, there are two of them listed for the 11th and the 25th of August. These meetings may be a good way to hear from the parents.

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Mayor Siddiqui respectfully disagrees, she wants to adopt and propose models on the 21st and the 23rd. It will be too late to consider public comment after we have voted.

Superintendent Salim returned to the question of answering and clarifying models for the public, if there is a model for students being in class for one week and remote for the following week, we need to find out what thoughts there are on that. Scheduling the Sub-Committee meetings will not be sustainable during the evenings because of the burden on the Administration.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that we cannot tell families we want to hear from them and then schedule meetings during times they may not be able to attend. The Chairs of the Sub-Committees schedule these meetings, not the administration. We need to agree on diversity of time to accommodate both our administration and the community and families.

Member Rachel spoke to the same issue the Vice Chair. Sub-Committee meetings are recorded so that the public has access to them after the fact. She is also wondering if the Town Hall meetings and the Special meetings are at night.

Dr. Salim responded that the Town Hall meetings can be structured so that the community submits questions and the Administration and the Committee respond to the questions.

Member Rojas commented that the number of Sub-Committee meetings being too much or too few depends on the topics to be discussed. For an example, Mr. Maloney has encouraged the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee to have multiple meetings as long as necessary.

Member Wilson wants to accommodate the proposed meetings and asked for flexibility on July 14th and/or the 21st, acknowledging it is a burden to try and accomplish these dates without prior notice.

Dr. Salim made it clear that these are proposed dates, nothing is in stone, his intention is to present proposed dates on which decisions and information will be shared on school and educator expectations in order to see the sequence. Dr. Salim emphasized we don't typically have summer or remote Sub-Committee meetings, not much is done in the usual manner during this crisis.

Mayor Siddiqui suggested that if Members get in touch with Dr. Salim, it would be helpful.

Vice Chair Bowman returned to the Norms, explaining the Sub-Committee Chairs set their meeting dates and the Administration works with the Chairs, not the other way around. The School Committee passed a motion last term ruling that the body cannot hold meetings at times when Members cannot be expected to attend. This proposed calendar is not the way the Committee functions.

Member Weinstein appreciates the conversation on the timing of meetings, he can meet during the day; he has to remember to take into consideration the public and Members that have day jobs, so he is going to consider day and evening meeting times.

Member Rachel, in an effort to make sure she understands, she asked for a point of information on how this proposal gets processed. Does the Sub-Committee Chair first communicate with the Administration assigned to that particular Sub-Committee, then the Administration communicates to the School Committee office staff and then the Committee of the Whole votes on it?

Vice Chair Bowman does not want Members to believe they have to check with the Superintendent, Administration or the Committee of the Whole for permission to call a meeting.

Mayor Siddiqui understands Dr. Salim's intention is to give everyone something to refer to and possibly work around so that we can produce a more finalized version without an overlap.

Member Rojas asked if we are approving the proposed calendar in front of us.

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Mayor Siddiqui answered in the negative. Hopefully we can agree on a more finalized version at some point, but no vote is necessary.

Member Rojas wants these meetings nailed down so that everyone can plan around them.

Member Rachel suggested that all email communications on meetings that go to Dr. Salim also go to Ms. Beard.

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

Adjourned 6:15 pm.

Attest: 

Dosha Beard

Executive Secretary to the School Committee