

Friday August 21, 2021 at 12:30 PM
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio

Called for the purpose of discussing the COVID 19 Safety and Facilities manual and the ventilation audit/recommendations in particular.

Members Present: Chair José Luis Rojas Villarreal, Member Fantini

Also Present: Mayor Siddiqui, Member Rachel James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer, Joanne Johnson, Operations Assistant, Vedad Konjic, Facilities Director, Maisha Rounds, Fletcher Maynard Principal, Chris Gerber, Kennedy Longfellow Principal (standing in for Principal Sarah Marrero of Amigos), Robin Harris, Family Engagement and Partnerships, Rowan Marcus, IT, Maureen MacFarlane, Legal Counsel, Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer, B Kim, Educational Liaison & Policy Advisor to Mayor's Office, Tracy Rose-Tynes, Nurse Manager for School Health Services, Interim Associate Chief, Dr. Allen (author of Pandemic resilient teaching & learning spaces), Dr. Jill Crittenden and Dr. Jaime Liechtenstein, Dan Monahan

Chair Rojas began the meeting at 12:30pm with reading the notice to participate as well as going over the agenda.

He proceeded to give a synopsis and context around the meeting: That Adoption of the Safety & Facilities Manual is a key component of the contingencies for the approved reopening model to move forward. A central component of this analysis is agreeing on clean air standards for each room and only using rooms that meet those criteria.

Review topics to discuss and community questions

- Review COVID-19 Safety & Facilities Manual
 - and first impressions by Dr. Allen.
 - Key takeaways by the Administration
 - Other questions on Safety & Facilities Manual
- Community questions:
 - Is the room ventilation data being gathered through in-person assessments?
 - Ideas on how to bring anxieties down?
 - Invite small groups of staff, family representatives, health experts and the engineering firm to do walk-thru of each school building before it opens to ask/answer questions about measurements and mitigations?
 - Other?

Chair Rojas introduced Carlos DeSousa, principal from GARCIA • GALUSKA • DESOUSA Consulting Engineers and Jim Maloney introduced Caitlin Taylor from Mass Design, who had previously done an evaluation of two Cambridge Buildings in developing pandemic resilient infrastructure.

Carlos DeSousa presented on ventilation assessments and recommendations. Fifteen schools were evaluated for their HVAC systems and after the initial review, they were deemed were very well maintained and operational a procedure was put in place after review to have the most effective ventilation system.

Carlos DeSousa introduced an executive summary and explained in depth to the audience the breakdown of all the schools in the district and detailed every school's capabilities and the recommendations of the consulting engineers.



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Dr. Danielle Allen wanted clarification on the Ashrae (ASHRAE guidelines provide specific details on ventilation for acceptable indoor environmental quality) standard for classrooms, is that a COVID specific for classrooms.

- Carlos Sousa answered yes that was the standard for classrooms, two air changes per hours are a typical for facilities that are non COVID emergency facilities.

Chair Rojas asked for Dr. Allen's first impressions.

- Dr. Allen acknowledged the importance of the work and the variability and equity across the buildings and ventilation challenges and the collateral that goes with it. Questioned about noise and the potential for learning. Wonders about the spaces with the ventilation issues and possibly be proactive with outdoor learning spaces. The issues of equity across the schools regarding the standards of health and outdoor activity to be brought into the picture.

Jim Maloney followed up after Dr. Allen's assessment with letting the participants know that the district has purchased 550 HEPA filters, there are 650 classrooms at the max. Wondered to Dr. Allen if that were enough?

- Dr. Allen Wanted to know what that learning space looked like and then deferred to Dr. Lichtenstein. Schools do not need to be the same standards as hospitals.
- Dr. Jill answered It depends on the architecture on each individual classroom. Remarked on the air moving through the classes and their averages are insufficient. ACH is a very general measurement to what is needed.
- Dr. Jaime Lichtenstein spoke about 5-6 air changes per hours range, with opening windows and spoke of supplementing what else could be utilized.
- Caitlyn emphasizes the size layout of the room, HEPA filter, opening the window and the direction of the air are all important considerations. They are midway through analysis for a couple of schools.

Jim Maloney spoke to the lack of size and the mitigation that is in place to have a limited numbers of scholars in the building. Outdoor learning is not a cost issue but a safety and security issue. What is a sufficient replace if HEPA filters are not suitable?

Dr. Danielle Allen clarified that she does not know what the rooms looks like with said filters.

Carlos DeSousa remarked the about the ventilation effectiveness. Systems are not all the same. The use of a HEPA filter within the space is vital and in the report.

Chair Jose summarized that the numbers that are seen are based on current ventilation system and that there is need for HEPA filters and opening windows with the need for future mitigates.

Jim Maloney spoke of the completed safety and facilities manual and the time and efforts of all involved for the reopening and all that it entailed, which he then listed. Broke down the student population that will be returning on October 13. Compared other districts and what Cambridge has succeeded in doing for COVID mitigation.

Dr. Lichtenstein wanted clarification on the Amigos air quality numbers.

- Jim Maloney answered that the typical Amigos classroom is 2.1

Chair Rojas asked for an explanation what the balancing contractor would be doing.

- The Balancing Contractor replied with the column of ventilation air and would be measuring the quantity of outside air coming into the space through the duct work and filter. Determines the air changes per hour. Sited King Open as an example.

What is the feasibility of the implementing the recommendation of the report?

- Jim Maloney answered that it is very high.

Member Fantini wanted to know what the next steps were and deferred to Dr. Crittenden and Lichtenstein?

Dr. Jill Crittenden inquired about ceiling height and was that factored in to the analysis? Referenced the ACH numbers. Could they be increased? A room by room evaluation needs to be accomplished.

- Carlos DeSousa answered that yes and went into deep discussion to all the factors and calculations involved. Sited the King Open as an example. That is called natural ventilation and the system may overcome that. An open window would increase the effectiveness of what has been calculated. Windows can be opened during the winter. Room by room evaluation, typical classroom does not change the standard. It is based on the design and what is needed.

Dr. Lichtenstein clarified that Mass Design is doing a room by room examination in two buildings. Could there be a waver to modify the opening the windows by inches.

- Jim Maloney answered that would be a complicated ask as it is a regulatory issue.

Jim Maloney reflected on what is the mitigation? As you go up it is a less efficient return. The current level of 4 air exchanges and the potential of level 6 and that it is untenable goal. Reminded that there will be buildings who will not get to said level.

Chair Rojas commented on the need to introduce the mitigations recommendations and the calculations from the engineering firm and present what the adjusted equivalent is for the air changes.

Principal Gerber wanted to know about the noise level of the HEPA filters and it especially matters with the scholars coming in?

- Carlos DeSousa and Jim Maloney answered that it is 45 decibels which is equal to an air conditioning unit. Vedad Konjic simplified that there is a variable speed that can be adjusted.

Member Rachel thanked all for their information and reflected that regardless of the money spent, safety is the priority. Commented that there needs to be a room by room assessment for a transparency and trust of the process.

Jim Maloney asked the engineering firm how a room by room assessment would be done.

- Carlos DeSousa replied that it is a tremendous amount of time and effort to have that work done, normally a percentage of the rooms not all would be accomplished.

Dr. Lichtenstein stated that she has a comfort level of 3 to 4 air changes per hour for the school buildings.

Jim Maloney concurred that was their goal and then spoke to the bid process and stated that it would be a couple of more months.

Sarah Rosenberg asked if it was a possibility to focus on the rooms being used now for the grades coming back. From a public health point of view does 3 or 4 air changes work if COVID is present.

- Dr. Lichtenstein stated that they can't say the risk is zero, however brought up the value of masks and air exchanges and other safety protocols.
- Tracey Rose Tynes followed up with classroom will be move all day and keeping in mind looking at obvious symptoms it may not be possible when COVID could be present.

Principal Gerber asked about the samples of the smaller offices with no windows?

- Carlos DeSousa answered, there was no natural ventilation taken into effect, they are all mechanical system, the CFM was looked at for the rooms.

- Jim Maloney followed up with remarking about the additional staff that has been added and the space that has been taken.

Dr. Lichtenstein asked the engineering firm, when preparing the report, the exclusion of rooms from the report did that help or hurt the report?

- Carlos DeSousa replied that those spaces have high ventilation rates. If those were kept in the report it would not be a true number.

Member Fantini asked about the get well rooms and have they been identified and if the additional sinks are installed. Member Fantini, Vice Chair Bowman's behalf asked about drinking fountains also is there a mandate for children's masks.

- Jim Maloney replied that in theory yes, there is probably two get well rooms left that need to be identified and all rooms ID's are based on the recommendation by the engineers. The additional sinks have a completion date by Labor Day. The water filling stations will be left open, the drinking fountains have been covered. Masks are mandated and the district has purchased 30K.
- Dr. Lichtenstein stated the water filling station are theoretically touchless and they are asking children to bring their own water in.

Chair Rojas asked about the building closure policy, has it been determined?

- Jim Maloney stated there had been much discussion from various stakeholders and advisory groups. In the end it was determined that it would be a case by case basis.
- Dr. Lichtenstein followed up with the background for cases by case for the classroom. A single case based on the latest CDC guidance would not close a school, just quarantine the class. A wider exposure would shut the school down. Each case could be very nuanced.
- Dr. Jill Crittenden echoed want her colleague impressed. Clarified contact transmission is does not seem to be the major mode of transmission. The City has thresholds set for benchmarks and information to make determinations.

Mary Elizabeth Cranton asked about eating in the classroom and if the floor should be washed daily and what if the thought process?

- Jim Maloney referred to the manual that cleaning will be done a regular basis.
- Dr. Lichtenstein weighed in on the cleanliness thought or a viral transmission issue.

Principal Gerber wanted definition around the pod and its overreaching aspect because of the many teachers that have access to the pod, keeping in mind specialists.

- Jim Maloney remarked that Supt. Salim addressed this issue at the previous school committee meeting. There will be more information to follow.

Chair Rojas reviewed next steps: Consider recommending adoption of Safety & Facilities Manual to the School Committee, acknowledging that it is a living document. It will be amended as time goes on and more information is available.

Adjourned 2:15pm

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood
Cambridge School Committee