

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

January 21, 2020

At 6:00 PM Mayor Siddiqui announced that Anthony Wilson, City Clerk will administer the Oath of Office to new School Committee Member Elect, David Weinstein then Committee Member Weinstein made a short statement thanking everyone stating he is ready to get to work.

Called for 6:00 PM 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: Mayor Siddiqui, Vice-Chair Bowman, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Rachel, Mr. Rojas, Mr. Weinstein, Ms. Wilson

Student School Committee Members: Sophia Green, Hersh Kanner

Also Present: Superintendent Salim, Dr. Turk, Mr. Maloney, Ms. MacDonald, Ms. Spinner, Ms. Allen, Dr. Madeira, Mr. Monahan

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair. A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM and read the call of the meeting.

1. Public Comment – Mayor Siddiqui explained that citizens who wish to speak to the Committee during Public Comment may sign up to speak for 3 minutes on any item listed on the Agenda.

Mr. Monahan, Lexington Ave. CEA President: Supports **#20-12**. Does not support **#20-14** (on file in the School Committee office) this recommendation for outside legal services because it is very broad. I am troubled with the number of grievances that have come to the School Committee at Level III, but these issues are real. If this is to negotiate the upcoming CEA contract for teachers and administrators, it is even more unsettling and unnecessary. We want to negotiate with the Superintendent and CPS administration, not an outside law firm. We believe those closest to the students should have a strong voice. We have begun to assemble our proposals. The CEA members drive the bargaining. The District does not have a good history of hiring and supervising outside law firms. Students are at the center of our work. I am surprised that there is no dollar amount attached to this recommendation. The taxpayers should know how much tax money is being spent for this.

Daniel Coplon-Newfield. Head of Vassal Lane Upper School speaking for all Upper School Heads and Damon Smith. We Support **#20-12** (on file in the School Committee office) the Building Equity Bridges (BEB) proposal has put together a framework of core commitments of creating healing spaces, elevating student voice, supports our social/emotional work and racial issues.

Wendy McDowell, Dudley Street, Parent Supports **#20-12**. Children learn from what they see and hear. Social justice is touted while black and brown children are disserved and sometimes harmed. Hopefully everyone will see this as an exciting opportunity to roll up our sleeves and get to work on designing new types of schools with innovative learning opportunities.

Shannon Finley, Perry Street, Parent Supports **#20-12** (on file in School Committee office) I have witnessed good work being done at PAUS and Morse School regarding racism. It should not be hard to learn simply because of the color of a student's skin. Look deep and question the old ways of doing things and make painful decisions to improve so there is accountability at all levels at our schools.

Daniel Michaud-Weinstock, Coolidge Hill Road, Parent, **#20-12**, I have been a student, a teacher and an administrator in CPS and now a parent. I am hopeful that this motion is a start for us to rethink how the district holds our students and educators. We need to shift power and resources to the people that have

been harmed. This is just a start of whose voice we hear and how we hear them. It is your job as a Committee to hold the administration accountable.

Mercedes Soto, Harvard St. Parent Supports **#20-12** I participated in the BEB as a parent. This initiative has been different because it has centered the voices of students and parents.

Kenneth Reeves, Harvard Street Supports **#20-12** is here as the President of the Cambridge NAACP. We have been approached by high school faculty who are concerned about school climate issues. Certain student behaviors should not be tolerated. I don't want to talk about it I want to see some action. The NAACP is the oldest multicultural organization and we want to be a help to CPS.

Tina Lieu, Parent Water Street, wanted to speak on a subject that was not on the Agenda. Mayor Siddiqui informed her that the subject must be on the Agenda or she could not speak but will talk to her after the meeting.

Emmanuel Antunes and Amara Donovan, Cambridge Street Parents Support **#20-12**. Mr. Antunes read a quote from M.L. King. Ms. Donovan stated we are a new family and learned that Cambridge is all talk and no action and it is incredibly disappointing. It is time to ask ourselves how am I conflicted in upholding systems of oppression, how am I insuring my activism is anti-racist, how am I dismantling white supremacy in my everyday life?

On a motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Ms. Weinstein to close public comment, on a voice vote public comment was closed.

2. Student School Committee Member Report Ms. Green reported that today is the 1st day of 2nd semester with a new schedule and teachers. Student Government is having a skating event this week. Mr. Kanner stated that Student Government is reaching out to students to attend the budget meeting on Saturday.

3. Presentation of the Records

On a Motion by Ms. Bowman, seconded by Ms. Wilson, on a voice vote it was voted to accept the January 6, 2020 and January 7, 2020 Minutes as presented.

4. Reconsiderations – None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar Motion by Vice Chair Bowman, Whereas the Cambridge Public School District works to create a school climate that fosters respect and collaboration with community members and residents that live adjacent to CPSD facilities, and

Whereas there have been multiple reports of incidents at various levels within CPSD regarding challenging interactions between some Cambridge Rindge & Latin School students and abutters, and

Whereas CPSD leaders need to collaborate with community members and city staff to find solutions to issues that involve CPSD students that impact the broader community,

Therefore be it resolved that CPSD and CRLS staff hold a meeting with CRLS abutters and city staff to address ongoing issues involving CRLS students and abutters,

Be it further resolved that CPSD and CRLS leadership provide a report to the School Committee outlining a plan that will address these issues by April 30, 2019, as well as provide ongoing updates on the plan of action to the School Climate Subcommittee to ensure progress is being made toward the goals identified to resolve these current issues. (Bowman C20-020)

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7. Superintendent's Agenda:

7a. Presentation: None

7b. CPS District Plan: The Superintendent presented an update on SY19-20 Priorities (on file in School Committee office) and that the District Plan is in its third year and our vision of Rigorous, Joyful and Culturally Responsive Learning and 7 measurable outcomes. We have a set of definitions for equity and racial equity. There are five strategic initiatives so every student has a sense of belonging, and success at CPS. We focused on 5 areas so students are engaged in the least restrictive environment. We have changed the SIP to two year plans so we have more information to look at our progress. This year with the BEB and the CEA we engaged the nine Barriers to Equity for the District. The 2019-20 priorities are 1. Deliver culturally responsive instruction to all students, 2. Foster trust and relationships that support a positive student centered culture. 3. Build capacity and accountability at all levels to address systemic barriers to racial equity, 4. Improve district wide systems and processes to be more transparent, inclusive, evidence-based and equitable. The Superintendent reviewed the three Initial Anti-Racist Actions that are in progress. We will be preparing a monthly newsletter with updates.

Mayor Siddiqui asked the pleasure of the Committee, any questions? There were none.

7c. Superintendent's Consent Agenda:

Motion by Ms. Bowman seconded by Mr. Weinstein to bring the Superintendent's Consent Agenda forward. On a voice vote the Superintendent's Consent Agenda was brought forward for discussion and adoption.

Mr. Weinstein pulled **#20-14** to be considered separately.

On the following roll call vote **Items #20-05 through #20-11** of the Superintendent's Agenda were adopted, Ms. Bowman (YEA), Mr. Weinstein (YEA), Mr. Fantini (YEA), Mr. Rojas (YEA), Ms. Rachel (YEA), Ms. Wilson (YEA), Mayor Siddiqui (YEA)

#20-05 State School Building Authority Authorization for the Superintendent to submit a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for the replacement of the Cambridgeport School Building Windows

#20-06 Contract Award The Resource Connection: Temporary Clerical Services-Amendment

#20-07 Contract Award Center for Youth and Community Leadership in Education CYCLE: Educational Support Services-Change in End Date

#20-08 Accept Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts

#20-09 Grant Award: FY20 Early Literacy Intervention (SC20632) - Increase

#20-10 Grant Award FY20 Mass Cultural Council STARRS (SC20894)

#20-11 Grant Award FY20 Financial Literacy (SC20164)

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#20-14 Retain Law Firm of Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP: to provide legal services for labor and employment matters

Mr. Weinstein abstained from voting to avoid any conflict because he received a donation from a partner in the firm.

Mr. Fantini stated he is supporting **#20-14** to provide support to our legal team. Ms. Bowman agrees to move the process forward and supports **#20-14** especially since we are going to start bargaining.

Mr. Rojas asked the difference between the attorney at that law firm negotiating for us and getting advice from them. Superintendent Salim responded there are different ways outside counsel is used to advise the School Committee with issues of labor and employment.

Ms. Siddiqui supports **#20-14** is also committed to the process, as an attorney herself, retaining counsel is very common practice, this is the first part of the recommendation and we will be very transparent with what we are doing.

On the following roll call vote item **#20-14** to retain the Law Firm of Morgan, Brown & Joy, LLP was adopted: Ms. Bowman (YEA), Mr. Weinstein (abstained), Mr. Fantini (YEA), Mr. Rojas (YEA), Ms. Rachel (YEA), Ms. Wilson (YEA), Mayor Siddiqui (YEA)

9. School Committee Agenda:

Ms. Rachel pulled **#20-12** and **#20-13** and explained why she wants to be called Ms. Rachel rather than Ms. Weinstein, so there is no confusion since there are two Weinstein's on the Committee.

#20-12 Motion by Ms. Rachel and Ms. Wilson: That the Chair and Vice Chair will call for a School Committee retreat with district administrators and the Building Equity Bridges leadership team by March 31, 2020 to build shared understanding of the work and coordinate which subcommittees or other venues will advance particular commitments; and That throughout the 2020-21 term, School Committee Members will partner closely with the Cambridge Public Schools Administration, BEB, CEA as well as other interested students, families, educators and community partners to recommend policies that strengthen our district's racial equity and anti-racist work.

Ms. Rachel stated I want every young person to have the same experience I had in CPS. We are not doing that, particularly for black and brown students. The problems of institutional and interpersonal racism are real. What are we going to do to address them? We urge the Committee to go on record to say we will prioritize anti-racist work this term. We want to acknowledge the community process that the Building Equity Bridges (BEB) movement has been different and is powerful and hopeful. We want to make haste to act upon the commitments that are appropriate for the School Committee to address. That is why we requested the Chair and Vice Chair to convene a meeting by the end of March to build a common understanding and which sub-committees will address which issues. I realize it overlaps a busy budget cycle, which is a map of the system. Start to incorporate them in to the SY21 Budget. We believe in a district wide shift for all to take accountability if we are going to close the Achievement Gap and students are able to read by 3rd grade. She thanked all involved in the BEB (students, parents, staff and community members). Please hold us accountable.

Ms. Wilson added we need to set the tone for our district and work collaboratively as a community, partnering with the CEA, BEB, students, family and community; knowing it is not going to be perfect but have clear intention we can get to where we need to be.

Ms. Bowman is supportive of **#20-12**. The BEB initiative is happening because last year the Nellie Mae grant ended the previous Committee voted it in the Budget and administration funded it in the budget. All people of color don't think alike. I don't want it to be us vs. them.

Mr. Weinstein supports **#20-12** and thanked Ms. Rachel and Ms. Wilson for bringing this forward to hold ourselves accountable and as a new Committee to set the course moving forward.

Mr. Rojas would like to add going forward to the Motion **#20-12** not just for this term.

Mr. Fantini is supporting **#20-12** because it is in line with our district initiatives.

Ms. Rachel added moving forward it will take all of us and the community. She told Mr. Rojas she thought about the language but thought she couldn't tell future Committee Members what to do but let's start here.

Mr. Kanner stated this represent's student voices and the length the BEB went to include student voices.

Ms. Green has been reading through the BEB recommendation and it is interesting that last June the BSU listed the same things as the BEB but their demands were not acknowledged.

Ms. Siddiqui stated she is 100% committed and is excited to work on this. She is working to set up dates with the Vice Chair to have a retreat by March 31, 2020. The Mayor thanked the Motion makers this is going to be the hardest work we are going to do but we need to be bold and brave.

On a voice vote **#20-12** was adopted.

#20-13 Motion by Vice Chair Bowman: Vice Chair Bowman stated this Motion is to combine the Communication and Community Relations Subcommittee's to make our process more effective and efficient. And to dissolve the Ad-hoc Sub-Committee on Attendance Violation Policy and the Civic Unity Sub-Committee so the School Committee can be move focused and effective in meeting the needs of families, students and the public.

On a voice vote **#20-13** was adopted.

10. Resolutions: None

11. Announcements: Superintendent Salim announced that there will be a Community Meeting on Saturday at 10:00 a.m. at the City Senior Center.

Mr. Fantini reported that Hult University started an undergraduate program in business, located across from the Science Museum, has generously offered six scholarships to our students. It is an unbelievable opportunity for CPS.

12. Late Orders: Motion by Ms. Bowman submitted on the floor because there have been multiple reports of incidents at various levels within CPSD regarding challenging interactions between some CRLS students and abutters. CPSD and CRLS leadership will hold a meeting with CRLS abutters to find solutions and submit a plan to the School Committee that will address these issues by April 30, 2020 to ensure goals are identified. Ms. Bowman placed the Motion on the Calendar for the next meeting.

13. Communications from City Officials: None

On a Motion by Ms. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Fantini., on a voice vote the Meeting adjourned at 7:32 PM.

Attest:

Terry Gist
Interim Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Documents on file in the School Committee office:

- Agenda
- Presentation: Updates on the 2019-20 Budget Priorities
- Comments from Mr. Monahan, CEA President Supports #20-12 Does not support #20-14
- Comments from Mr. Coplion-Newfield (Ms. Bartels-Marrero, Mr. Chardin, Ms. Craven, Mr. Fernandez, Mr. Smith) Supports #20-12
- Comments from Shannon Finlay Supports #20-12
- Email from Tina Lieu Supports #20-12