



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

November 12, 2020

Called for 7:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing proposed updated metrics for CPS re-opening plan and consider the Calendared motion from Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee on updated metrics.

Members Present: Vice Chair Bowman (~~ABSENT~~), Member Fantini (~~ABSENT~~), Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Jill Crittenden
Dr. Lisa Dobberteen
Dr. Helen Jenkins
Dr. Jamie Lichtenstein
Dr. Brad Bernstein
Ms. Tracy Rose-Tynes
Mr. Claude Jacob
Ms. Bernette Dawson
Dr. Keith Marzilli Ericson

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will be taken and there will be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a sound check: Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Vice Chair Bowman ABSENT; Member Fantini ABSENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT. With the Committee of the Whole present and clearly audible, the floor was opened for Public Comment. The following individuals were heard given a two minute limit.

- Elinor Actipis, Whittemore Ave. in favor of keeping schools open
- Min Zeng, Franklin Street, in support of keeping schools open
- Sonali Duggal, Norfolk Street, in support of keeping schools open
- Lynn Li, Chestnut Street,
- Ruth Erickson, Jay Street, supports keeping schools open
- Peter Lubetsky, Chestnut Street, thanked all, worried about families without school supplies
- Alex Yu, Eighth Street, supports both, not one or the other
- Dan Monahan, wants to know more about testing, opposed to changing the metrics
- Grace Nicolette, Pearl Street, supports changing the metrics
- Siyu Huang, Eighth Street, supports in-person learning
- Marco Curnen, Upton Street, opposes changing the metrics
- Michelle Trivedi, Jay Street, supports the new metrics

- Mary Kuang, Windsor Street, supports the new metrics to keep schools open
- Abigail Klima, Reed Street, supports keeping the schools open
- Shirley Kuhlmann, Franklin Street, supports the new metrics to keep schools open
- Yi-An Huang, Worcester Street, supports revised metrics to keep schools open
- Sarah Figge Hussain, Harvey Street, advocates accommodations for staff, teachers and students
- Courtney Tuttle, Old Sudbury Road, Sudbury, advocates for staff, teachers and students' safety
- Shane Bussmann, Henry Street, supports changing the metrics to Cambridge only
- Ajayprasad Padmaprasad, Cambridge Park Drive, supports Cambridge only metrics
- Jenny Andre-Jean, Concord Avenue, supports remote learning until safety is guaranteed
- Derek Van Bever, Francis Avenue, supports the new metrics, offered his help
- Al-Karim Dhanji, William Street, supports the new metrics
- Hiu-Fai Fong, Pleasant Street, supports updated metrics and keeping schools open
- Lynette Sholl, Surrey Street,
- Nazgol Shifteh, Newport Road, supports updated metrics
- Amanda Beatty, Franklin Street, relationship building is important, supports keeping school open
- Susie Flynn, Sidney Street, supports in person learning
- Caitlin O'Donnell, Gold Star Road, concerned about the staff, faculty and students
- Rafael Jaramillo, Reservoir Street, looking for pragmatic leadership, keeping schools open safely
- Wesley Wong, Amory Street, supports the revised metrics
- Patrick Barrett, Pleasant Street, supports updating the metrics
- Ying Dong, Buena Vista Park, supports updating the metrics
- Elena Fagotto, Bigelow Street, supports updating the metrics
- Edward Rivera, Holden Green, supports changing the metrics
- Alain Ondias-Souna, Pemberton Street, supports adopting the metrics
- Gianna Ericson, Concord Avenue, supports changing the metrics
- Evelyn Aviles, Putnam Avenue, supports changing the metrics to Cambridge only
- Christine Pace, Forest Court., Malden, wants to trust collaboration and inclusive process
- Jenny Chung, Washington Street, wants to hear the risks from educators, outreach efforts
- Jo Quest-Neubert, Alpine Street, concerns of the staff, faculty and students
- Tony Clark, Cambridge, supports equal education for all students
- Sam Cohen, Erie Street, supports the revised metrics to keep schools open
- Leslie Nilsen, opposed to changing the metrics to keep schools open, staff is important too
- Li Xiong, Broadway, we all love our children and this is challenging for all
- Mary Shillue-Goldberg, Clifton Street, supports metrics to keep schools open
- Philip Minervino, Frost Street, supports keeping the schools open
- Amara Donovaon, Cambridge Street, opposed to changing the metrics
- Nandini Mani, Rindge Avenue, supports revised metrics

With no one else signed up to speak, on a motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Member Rojas, with the following roll call vote, Public Comment was closed: Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui stated that we will be voting on the metrics to keep schools open tonight. She addressed stakeholders input from the Cambridge Community and explained that there are many voices from educators and families that are not able to participate and she will continue to try to hear from the entire Cambridge community. The Chair offered the panelists a chance to speak, asking them to keep it terse.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Salim who acknowledged there are different and very strong points of view on this difficult subject, we are all trying to do the best thing for everyone. He presented

the following PowerPoint presentation and informed the assembly that there are a couple of updates from the last meeting.

The presentation can be viewed online.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ynWgS5pfQVtM35xRvvfrvMMplMTdvR0G79KiW6dXzf0/edit?usp=gmail&ts=5fadf740>

Dr. Salim also acknowledged the stakeholders.

Mayor Siddiqui introduced the following stakeholders:

Bernette Dawson, CFCC, read a statement regarding the facts that the virus impacts people of color in higher rates. The metrics standards need to be lowered.

Melissa Rico, a Mental Health Counselor and a Baldwin parent, spoke about her children and trying to keep them in school as long as the metrics are being monitored correctly. The pandemic is having a huge effect on our children's mental health. The virus is not going away anytime soon and we need to update the data and keep the metrics up to date.

Betsy Preval, EOCC Leadership Team Representative, reported the concerns of changing the metrics and they have been voicing these same concerns at many other meetings with working groups and School Committee Meetings. Painfully, it has come down to what parents want vs. what educators want. The EOCC wants open forums with robust conversations between educators, staff, parents, stakeholders and families so that all can come together and communicate. There is no clear rationale for this change. She questioned the "not specified" area of slide (7) at the November 5, 2020 meeting. This is what leads to distrust in the system and needs to stop. She also thanked Members Rachel and Wilson who have been the only two Members that have kept open continuous and honest communications with the EOCC and their transparency continues even when there is disagreement.

Dr. Alisa Khan pediatrician, understands everyone's fear. She wants School Committee to be consistent and prioritize children, our kids are at risk for more than just Covid, if we move to a fully remote model, they are going to suffer more and the children of color will suffer the most. Families will be at risk of evictions. The number of children that are suffering from psychiatric trauma outweighs respiratory illness. Punishing children needs to be avoided. She loved the community forum idea from Betsy Preval. She advocates for mandatory testing. Continued outreach with families of color is important and to be frank, closing commercial venues before schools is the better solution.

Ty Bellitti thanked Members Wilson and Weinstein for bringing so many people of color together. The same comments were made; the same sentiments were heard again. He heard references to the absence of people of color in the decision making process. School Committee failed in the process of inclusion. Representation matters. School Committee claims people of color are important and then do not show it. The Committee is going to have to walk their talk.

Ken Reeves, NAACP President, was honest enough to admit he is glad he is not a member of the School Committee at this time, no one has the right answer. He gave Mayor Siddiqui credit for being able to publicly admit a mistake. Where is the communication amongst the Committee? The kind of teamwork that should go on in the Committee of the Whole is not occurring. This is wasting time, energy and also delays solutions. NAACP is hoping to help the School Committee to go forward from this phase to the next.

Gardite Fougy SE-PAC representative – asked questions about what other metrics are being considered during decision making, what are the implications if there is no evidence of in-school transmissions? She asked for more clarity on what concrete measures are being taken to ensure that preventative factors are

in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. She hopes that schools will not need to close, there are risks in closing schools also. Including families in weekly school based meetings will help them to trust the district. These are unique challenges.

Dr. Mauricio Santillana stated that he would like to continue the conversations with the community, he knows the metrics, although scientific, are not precise. We are still learning and calibrating our resources, the results are still alarming.

Mayor Siddiqui stated that she appreciates all of the feedback from the stakeholders and for the questions from SE-PAC and EOCC, she will look to the scientific experts to answer.

Dr. Jenkins stated that she was very happy to hear from so many different people their views are valuable to guide decisions. She also answered that back in the summer they had less data, now they have a lot more. We know how to reduce the transmission now and bring down the risk. Outside of Cambridge, they are learning from the experiences of communities with higher Covid-19 rates. Closing schools will not control transmission in Cambridge. Schools should be the first to open and the last to close.

Mayor Siddiqui asked Dr. Salim to speak to the message he sent to the community today about possible school closings.

- Dr. Salim responded that the daily dashboard should be considered as a tool to be viewed on a regular basis. Social Media will also be used, the message from this morning was complicated and he is listening to other folks for different ideas on how to communicate. Texting is a favored form of communication.

Mayor Siddiqui brought up the fact that there are questions on the numbers of tests and the frequency.

- Nurse Tracy Rose-Tynes stated that the rates of testing have been increasing week by week. They first started the week of October 15th. We are up to 3,407 tests for a total of 931 individuals. 3,371 staff members have been tested. Zero students have tested positive; three staff have tested positive. Staff are participating more and more each week. Contact tracing is working. The goal is to quarantine as quickly as possible. Our low positivity rate is showing that teachers and students are safe in the buildings.
- Dr. Salim is working with Cambridge Public Health to keep slides visible to the public.
- Dr. Danielle Allen was part of the group over the summer to decide which schools would be open etc. They have all learned a lot over the past months, they are going to recommend education as an essential function "last to close, first to open" and treat them as we treat hospitals, i.e. as rates go up hospitals certainly do not close and neither should schools. They carry the same level of function, but not the same level of risk. Educators need to be essential workers, not in name only. Scientists and Doctors need to look at the families that are not able to tele commute. We are going to look at transportation to see how people are getting to work, and examine tiers of infection control in transportation. Hospitals have different levels of infection control i.e. intensive care vs. the cafeteria and the reception area. We need to do the same thing in schools and encourage tiers of infection control in schools and be last to close and first to open. The educator piece is the most important piece, we ask a lot of them and it is not enough to give them a manual. They need professional development for mental health supports and how to deal with new teaching styles. This is a really serious thing we are asking of them and we need to invest significantly in it. There are resources to support educators and their response to Covid-19.

The floor was turned over to the Chair who asked for the pleasure of the Committee.

Member Wilson stated that she is grateful for the opportunity to hear from all of these different voices and it needs to be an ongoing commitment to elevate these various voices. She realizes all of the work that everyone is doing. Member Wilson made it clear that tabling this motion was not because she does not want the students in school, she wants that very much; she wants it to be a regular practice that all voices are heard. She is extremely grateful to all of the scientific experts and emphasized that the burden is not on the experts and scientists to open the dialogues to people of color, that burden is on the district. She values process. She asked Superintendent Salim about the dashboard in Cambridge and including Middlesex and Suffolk counties.

- Dr. Salim replied that the most recent data online is regional.

Member Wilson asked about the thought process on mental health needs and partnering with programs and organizations

- Dr. Salim answered that having support for both students and staff is a clear theme and area of concern for the district.

Member Wilson asked what the timeline is for a task force meeting on mental health.

- Salim answered that they are working on the timeline for sub-committees and task force meetings they are planning for mental health and advisory groups. They will be launching listening sessions for staff and family.

Vice Chair Bowman acknowledged both the Superintendent and the Mayor, indicating sometimes we need to take a step back and thanks to Member Wilson and Member Rachel we did so. Process is very important. We need to recognize that all of our different meetings are for the community not for us. These are key decisions for our community and none of her colleagues takes it lightly. When we vote tonight, don't walk away, please stay with us and work collaboratively with us so we can continue to move forward.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Weinstein, the Rules were suspended to vote on extending the meeting. On the following roll call vote, the meeting was extended to 11:00 p.m.: Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

The meeting returned to the regular order of business.

Member Rojas pledged to continue to work and consider the metrics as it impacts our community. He asked how quickly we would close the district if need be?

- Dr. Salim answered that exceeding a threshold on one given day does not create an emergency. We determine after two or three days as striking that balance to close the schools for in person learning and transition to remote learning.

Member Rojas asked how much it will cost to hire a consultant for evaluating the risk non-Cambridge educators bring to the district

- Dr. Jenkins responded that it will depend on who you get to do the work and how long it will take, what the hourly rate will be. She is happy to have those discussions

Member Weinstein appreciates everything that happened tonight. What can we do to support and increase staff being tested?

- Nurse Tracy Rose-Tynes replied that once we get fully staffed, it will help to get staff in place all day instead of during a two or three-hour window.

Member Fantini was happy to hear the congratulations that went to the in person teachers. We are a learning institution. He believes we have more of a learning issue rather than a trust issue. Going forward communication and transparency is very important. School Committee needs to send out a weekly communication.

Member Fantini asked if we vote for these new metrics, what is the sense that these will need to be updated also?

- Dr. Jenkins answered that if things keep going in the wrong direction we will have to close down.
- Anna Kaplan responded that we are seeing a lot of asymptomatic cases. In the beginning most cases were in older people, now they are in younger cases also. They are still looking for more details – all she has now are age groups and neighborhood and regional data.
- Dr. Mauricio Santillana added that he has seen an increase in the Boston area due to surrounding communities. It took a month to see the cases doubled and then it doubled even faster over a few weeks. We will break the record no matter how far we move the goal post. This happens once every hundred years. The mental health of our students is a huge concern and we need to be creative in looking for educational spaces. Other countries have closed parks, making them available as safe spaces for schools. Of course the weather is going to get colder, outside

venues can still be used at times. This is an effort that Governor Baker must be involved with to keep the schools open as long as possible.

Member Fantini stated that the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee will be meeting every week going forward.

Member Rachel stated we need to revisit investing in tents. She asked Dr. Allen what should we be thinking about to balance sections of risk.

- Dr. Allen answered that you structure in tiers of risk. There need to be rules deciding on three-foot distancing in certain tiers as opposed to six-foot distancing in other tiers. It creates different layers of intervention to keep everyone safe. We are all learning how to keep safety at the forefront and it is challenging.

Member Vera-Degraff asked at what level will surveillance testing be offered to older students?

- Dr. Jamie Lichtenstein recommends higher than 12 cases per 100,000 per day the surveillance testing be offered to older in-person students. A plan will be worked out with CPH & Nurse Tracy Tynes to make this available. Dr. Lichtenstein added she is considering what a pilot may look like.

Member Killian asked Dr. Allen what the timeline will be to change the metrics.

Dr. Allen responded that working independently from the district, they are looking to understand the data from July, 2020 and release new guidance.

Vice Chair Bowman suggested that the body call the question.

Mayor Siddiqui stated the Committee will have to reconcile a few things.

School Committee Agenda

#20-270 Motion by the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

Metric 1: Daily reported incidence. Fewer than 25 new cases per day per 100,000 people *in Cambridge* (7-day average)

Metric 2: Test positivity. Less than 5% of COVID-19 tests are positive *in Cambridge* (7-day average)

Metric 3: Wastewater Monitoring. COVID-19 detected at <100 copies of viral genomes/ML from Deer Island/MWRA (discuss switch after 7-day averages of Cambridge data are available)
If two metrics exceed the threshold, CPSD switches to full remote learning (same as with prior metrics).
Rationale: The shift from wider geographic area to Cambridge-specific metric is justified by the availability of surveillance testing for teachers and staff.

Additional Recommendations:

- Surveillance testing offered to older students when prevalence is high.
Rationale: Universities with surveillance testing have been able to effectively control the spread of the virus.
- In the event of a closure of in-person education due to these metrics being exceeded, schools would remain closed for at least 1 week. In-person education should resume when either one or no metrics are exceeded for 7 consecutive days.
Rationale: In person learning can resume when reduced prevalence indicates that it is safe.

We are proud that Cambridge is using evidence-based metrics to guide its decisions, and that our city has been responsive to the latest scientific developments. We propose to reevaluate these metrics again in January in the context of new scientific developments, community health updates and new guidance from the district.

References

1. Macartney, Kristine, Helen E Quinn, Alexis J Pillsbury, Archana Koirala, Lucy Deng, Noni Winkler, Anthea L Katelaris, et al. 2020. "Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Australian Educational Settings: A Prospective Cohort Study." *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 4 (11): 807–16. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642\(20\)30251-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(20)30251-0) .
2. Ehrhardt, J., A. Ekinci, H. Krehl, M. Meincke, I. Finci, J. Klein, B. Geisel, C. Wagner-Wiening, M. Eichner, and S. O. Brockmann. 2020. "Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in Children Aged 0 to 19 Years in Childcare Facilities and Schools after Their Reopening in May 2020, Baden-Württemberg, Germany." *Eurosurveillance* 25 (36): 2001587. <https://doi.org/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.25.36.2001587> .
3. Viner RM, Mytton OT, Bonell C, et al. Susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Children and Adolescents Compared With Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatr*. Published online September 25, 2020. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.4573
4. Gandhi, Monica, Chris Beyrer, and Eric Goosby. 2020. "Masks Do More Than Protect Others During COVID-19: Reducing the Inoculum of SARS-CoV-2 to Protect the Wearer." *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 35 (10): 3063–66. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-06067-8> .
5. Reiner, Robert C., Ryan M. Barber, James K. Collins, Peng Zheng, Christopher Adolph, James Albright, Catherine M. Antony, et al. 2020. "Modeling COVID-19 Scenarios for the United States." *Nature Medicine* , October, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-020-1132-9> .

On the following roll call vote, **#20-270** was adopted: Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Vice Chair Bowman, it was voted to suspend the Rules for the purpose of moving reconsideration of the foregoing vote.: Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

The Rules having been suspended for the purpose stated, hoping the same would not prevail, motion **#20-270** failed of adoption: Member Rachel NAY; Member Weinstein NAY; Member Wilson NAY; Vice Chair Bowman NAY; Member Fantini NAY; Member Rojas NAY; Mayor Siddiqui NAY.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned 10:50 p.m.: Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

E-Mail Communications:

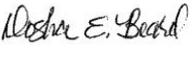
Cameron, Lee, supports reopening guidelines
Martin Udengaard, supports reopening guidelines
Alice Kung, supports changing to Cambridge metrics
Jennifer Britton-Colonnese, supports new metrics
Lynn Li, supports new metrics
Jennie Dapiece, opposes changing to new metrics
Michele Fry, supports testing in the building for staff
Elena Fagotto, supports metrics revisions
Sofia Devine, supports revised metrics
Alex Gourevitch, supports Cambridge specific metrics

Karma Paoletti, supports reopening guidelines
Jeff Van Dreason, support keeping schools open
Donielle Buie, supports keeping schools open
Nicole Gastineau, supports Camb. only metrics
Alice Kung, supports new metrics
Sarah Johnstone, supports revised metrics
Samuel Murphy, supports metrics revision
Katherine Miller, supports remote learning
Bilge Yildiz, supports updated metrics
Alissa Coggins, supports new metrics

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Karen Tili, opposes changing the metrics
Laura Iozano, consider special ed. apart from gen ed.
Anne Rachupka, support changing the metrics
Rene Chen, supports adoption of new metrics
Naeem Yusuff, supports new metrics
Liz Castro, supports keeping schools open
Damnath De Tissera, supports keeping schools open
Heidi Samojuk, supports hybrid model for older kids
SooJin Chu, supports changing the metrics
Robin Rowdsworth, supports keeping schools open
Sarah O'Neill, supports revising the metrics
Elizabeth Pizzi-Evans, opposes changing the metrics

Ariana Johnson, supports changing the metrics
Maggie Schulz, supports changing the metrics
Gavin Kleepsies, supports changing the metrics
Gabriel Robinson, supports updated metrics
Caroline Lowenthal, supports new metrics
Jason Marshall, supports updated metrics
Amber Moulton, supports shifting metrics
Andrea Love, supports new Cambridge metrics
Marcelo Montorzi, supports changing the metrics
Thomas Serwold, opposes changing the metrics
Emily Beth Chanb supports changing metrics

Attest: 
Doshia Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee