



**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)

Regular Meeting

November 16, 2021

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

Also Present: Nuriel Vera-Degraff, Anais Killian; Student School Committee Representatives

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

The Chair provided a statement to the public regarding governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order on guidelines for remote participation and then read the call of the meeting.

1. Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Jim Kang – in support of motion **C21-311**.
- Tony Clark – Elm St, spoke virtually in support of motion **C21-311** and support of the Math & Literacy presentation for the evening,
- Dan Monahan - Lexington Ave, in support of #21-332, encourages the Committee to vote in support of the recommendation.

On a motion by Member Rachel seconded by Member Fantini, on a voice vote, it was voted to close public comment:

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Member Vera-DeGraff began his report by recognizing that this was the first regular meeting after the election. He provided details on happenings at CRLS, which included the end of semester one and fall sports. The boys' soccer team made it to the playoffs but lost in the second round. There has been a concern with students surrounding outdoor lunches during inclement weather. Due to social distancing, this is not much space. Dr. Greer is organizing a student focus group where CRLS students can participate in a conversation regarding district improvement.

Student Member Killian reported that on the week of December 5, there was a mental and physical health poster challenge organized by the CRLS social workers. The challenge's objective is to create an image and message for the school community that communicates the importance of mental health and self-care. Students with winning posters will receive cash prizes. CRLS has created a new hall pass system that includes color-coded passes that students can be in the halls for ten minutes at a time. Student Member Killian also addressed the issue of some parents' support regarding student vaccinations. Some parents are unwilling of their children to be vaccinated. Parents and caregivers can now upload their children's vaccination status for extracurricular activities and sports. MIT Splash week occurs this weekend, and CRLS students can attend the program for free. MIT is offering over eighty courses during the weekend Splash program.

Member Wilson inquired about recruiting students for Dr. Greer's focus groups. **Student Member Vera-DeGraff** responded that student government emails and social media posts had led the recruitment efforts. **Student Member Killian** responded that any student could participate in the focus groups and sign up via Google. **Member Wilson** also inquired about how the district can gather information on students whose parents disagree to be vaccinated. **Student Member Killian** responded that she heard about the parental vaccination hesitancy via word of mouth. Due to this, students are dropping out of extracurricular because they are not vaccinated. **Student Member Vera-DeGraff** noted that the topic's main issue is that anyone under 18 cannot be vaccinated without parental consent. **Member Wilson** asked Dr. Greer about her communication and outreach regarding the student vaccination numbers of students who do not have parental consent. Dr. Greer replied that obtaining the numbers and information of those students is a bit difficult as that information is only received if the parent chooses to expose that information.

Member Rojas followed up on Dr. Greer's answer and mentioned that he would be interested in viewing the student vaccination data. Dr. Greer – a week since the portal launch, and the student vaccination numbers look good, and the district will try to get the information and preliminary numbers in Friday's weekly. If the dashboard can be updated within the next week, it may go public.

Member Rojas inquired about the student's reactions to hot meals. Both Student Member Vera-DeGraff and Student Member Killian mentioned that student reception is well and shared their enthusiasm regarding hot meals in schools.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- October 5, 2021, Regular Meeting
- October 19, 2021, Regular Meeting

Member Rojas proposed some minor changes he mentioned in the October 5 meeting minutes that he would like to modify. He read aloud his proposed changes to be added to the minutes. All of the proposed changes were on page 5 of the minutes.

On a motion by Member Rojas seconded by Vice-Chair Bowman, on a voice vote, it was voted to accept the proposed amendments to the records for approval for the October 5, 2021 Regular Meeting.

On a motion by Member Wilson seconded by Member Rachel to accept the records for approval for the October 5, 2021, Regular Meeting, as amended, and October 19, 2021, Regular Meeting.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None

6. Awaiting Reports:

C21-311 Joint Order by Member Fantini, Member Wilson and Mayor Siddiqui

That the School Department work with the City to develop a plan to support transporting students attending after school programs given the issues that DHSP has with after school this year

Mayor Siddiqui mentioned that a written report for a solution for the motion for C21-311 would be available soon, so this item remains an awaiting report.

7. Superintendent's Agenda:

Member Fantini motioned to suspend the rules and bring recommendation #21-332 forward.

#21-332 Approval of the Tentative Agreement Between the Cambridge School Committee and the Cambridge Education Association Clerical Unit C for a Successor Collective

Bargaining agreement for the Period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2024, be adopted as follows: that the School committee ratify and approve the Tentative Agreement between the Cambridge School Committee and the Cambridge Education Association Clerical Unit C for a successor collective bargaining agreement for the period of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2024, as detailed in the document.

On the following roll call vote, #21-332 was adopted. Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA, Sheila Keady-Rawson (behalf of the City Manager) YEA.

Member Wilson thanked the Clerks for their hard work for their service. **Vice-Chair Bowman** thanked Member Wilson for her efforts and representation of the School Committee

7a. Presentations:

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Greer, who introduced the first presentation for the night, a presentation from the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Several presenters included members of the OEIB office Manuel Fernandez, Dr. Leslie Jimenez, Jenny Chung, Kini Udovicki, Robin Harris, and student guest speakers Adelina Escamilla-Salomon and Grace Clemente.

The full presentation can be found [here](#).

A lengthy discussion followed the presentation.

Member Rojas thanked the student guest speakers for the eloquent presentation. He inquired how the district can leverage other student-led efforts like the student councils regarding work in the OEIB office. Ms. Clemente responded that she believes equity should be introduced before high school and expressed the difference in quality and equity, along with the importance of students feeling comfortable talking to teachers about inequitable situations. Ms. Escamilla-Salmon also responded to reiterate the importance of collaboration and facilitation of mentoring for younger students.

Member Rojas posed the same question to Ms. Harris regarding how the district can leverage other community-led efforts, i.e., school councils, after-school councils, to make them more inclusive. Ms. Harris reported that the OIEB has leveraged parent participation by creating guidelines of equitable student councils, which will be implemented in September 2022.

Member Rojas asked Mr. Fernandez how the School Committee can participate in goal setting, coaching, professional learning, and implementation in the goals of the OEIB. Member Rojas mentioned he is personally willing to participate in these efforts. Mr. Fernandez responded that he welcomes Member Rojas and the rest of the Committee to join in on the ongoing work of the OEIB.

Student Member Vera-DeGraff shared his excitement for the equity dashboard and inquired about the dashboard metrics. Ms. Jimenez responded that the dashboard is still in development, and research is currently being done in other districts with equity dashboards. Ms. Jimenez also reported that the OEIB plans to engage in a community engagement process to discuss specific measures/indicators in the dashboard. The three categories in consideration are Social-Emotional Learning, Community, and Academics.

Student Member Vera De-DeGraff inquired about the incident reporting system. Mr. Fernandez responded that the incident reporting systems are still in development but expects to be implemented in early 2022. The office is looking into enabling a text-notification system where students can text incidents to a number, and the text goes to the Superintendent's office and OEIB office. It will be anonymous, but the name option is available, and the incident reporting will act accordingly for all reported incidents promptly. Dr. Greer mentioned that one of the objectives for the incident reporting system was to address systemic issues within the district along with individual issues. **Student Member Vera-DeGraff** mentioned that a text notification system would be conducive to students reporting incidents to the OEIB office.

Member Rachel expressed gratitude to the presenters and praised Ms. Escamilla-Salomon and Ms. Clemente for their efforts on student mental health and offered to join the School Climate Survey Subcommittee held on November 30 to review the Teen Health Survey results. **Member Rachel** asked Ms. Harris about the caregiver summit and the goals and structure. Ms. Harris responded that there would be an opportunity for a caregiver summit where caregivers can give feedback, and the OEIB office will host that summit in the spring. Mr., Fernandez also responded to Member Rachel's questions and discussed the success of the Student Summit. Ms. Harris mentioned that the Cambridge Families of Color Coalition have been in conversations with OEIB to have also been to partner with the summit. Member Rachel asked Ms. Udovicki about the global organization the OEIB office is utilizing regarding equity practices and school implementation. Ms. Udovicki responded that the organization's name is Narrative4.

Member Weinstein thanked the presenters for bringing this work forward. He mentioned his appreciation of the emphasis on equity needs and mental health support for Cambridge youth. He asked Ms. Harris about caregiver university and how that process fits into the district's equity efforts. Ms. Harris responded that Caregiver University is now called the Village, and the OEIB office had a caregiver council meeting. Pilot design teams have begun creating a roadmap in work and courses of equity work that is being done. Design projects will run for the next couple of months and will be piloted in the spring, with a full rollout in September 2022. **Member Weinstein** shared his excitement for the incident reporting system and expressed the importance of confidential reporting for the new incident reporting system.

Vice-Chair Bowman inquired for more information on the equity dashboard, particularly the through-line for academic achievement. Dr. Greer responded that the OEIB office has a plan, but the work is not their responsibility or work entirety. Mr. Fernandez reported that a significant objective of the OEIB office is academic achievement and academic excellence. Training is centered around how the district can improve, and the purpose of the OEIB office is to support students to achieve. **Vice-Chair Bowman** expressed the importance of finding courage within yourself and creating systems for children to believe in themselves when their affirmatory is tested. She reiterated that in order to create an inclusive, robust environment, these practices should be implemented inside their classroom with the students and the teachers. **Vice-Chair Bowman** discussed her "departing wish" is for the OEIB to showcase and highlight the excellence of BIPOC children and ensure to address the challenges they face.

Student Member Killian reported on her experience in teaching assistance class regarding a video with Dr. Love and Dr. Simmons on "Abolitionist Teaching in Our Schools." Student Member Killian mentioned that the video was well perceived by students and mentioned that students, even younger ones, are fully capable of having inclusive conversations. She expressed her interest in how the district can implement DEI conversations within our schools. Mr. Fernandez responded by sharing his experience as a principal at the Cambridge Street Upper School and said affinity groups are going on at the upper schools.

Member Fantini expressed that the incident reporting system has to transition to empower students to deal with issues; anonymous reporting "does not last the test of time," and the School Committee needs to find a way to assist with the incident reporting system. **Member Fantini** also requested that Ms. Escamilla-Salomon and Ms. Clemente review the Teen Health Center to see if other services it can provide become a robust place for students to utilize and improve. Dr. Greer responded to the request by saying trust has to be built first, and once it is built, the district can utilize it in the change and transition. Ms. Clemente followed up on Member Fantini's comments. She shared her experience in incident reporting, which led to her telling her story numerous times, tons of meetings regarding the incident, which resulted in missed classes. She noted that the importance of the incident reporting system is to ensure students are supported both mentally and academically. Ms. Escamilla-Salomon followed up on the Teen Health Center question and mentioned the importance of student support to become a robust and resourceful place.

Member Wilson expressed her appreciation for the presentations and presenters. She inquired about how the OEIB department and its work assist in other students not feeling like their story is being heard repeatedly and "falling on death's ears." Ms. Escamilla-Salomon replied that implementing more student resources, including listening and utilizing the incident reporting system, will encourage the student experience once proven effective. **Member Wilson** also questioned the accountability piece in equity work and asked for more information regarding the process, timeline, efforts, supports, etc. Mr.,

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Fernandez responded that the timeline for this work is a lot longer than anticipated. Member Wilson is super excited about the upcoming equity audit work.

Mayor Siddiqui mentioned that she had two questions to follow up with Dr. Harris after the meeting.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to Dr. Greer, who introduced the second presentation for the night, which focused on Math & Literacy. Dr. Turk led the presentation and was joined alongside Dr. Gittens, Dean Mulligan, Emily Bryan, Dr. Madera, Heidi Fessenden, and Katisha John.

The entire presentation for the evening can be found on the website [here](#).

Mayor Siddiqui paused the presentation to open the floor to the Committee for questions regarding the first half of the presentation.

Member Rachel inquired about how the Cambridge Public Schools are working with/collaborating with the Algebra Project. Dr. Turk responded that in the last six years, the district had moved away from strictly utilizing the Algebra Project and transitioned into implementing the principles of the Bob Moses projects at various grade levels in math classes. The district has also worked closely with YPP and Myesha Moses, and the National Consensus Project about mathematics inequity. **Member Rachel** asked Dean Mulligan about virtual meetings at the high schools and elaborated on the Cambridge program. Dean Mulligan responded that the Cambridge program was piloted last spring to assist gaps between 8th and 9th graders. This year, the program will start at the end of the school year as a self-paced summer program, meets weekly with a facilitator who keeps a conversation going regarding a student's math skills. Successful completion of the program would be for students to go straight to Geometry and skip Algebra I. **Member Rachel** discussed the basis of her previous questions: what support is the district giving math to teach heterogeneous groups.

Member Weinstein echoed Member Rachel's comments on heterogeneous math for all students. Is curious to know how a heterogeneous math program will affect overachieving students and what is being done to access families whose children are struggling.

Member Rojas asked Mayor Siddiqui about the Mayor's Program and inequities regarding age. He also asked for more elaboration on the math sequence flow chart and the sequence of options included in the presentation.

Vice-Chair Bowman asked about the heterogeneous aspect of math and engaging with parents and families regarding report cards. Is curious about how report cards are structured and if there is a policy to get more information on these report cards about where the children are developing. Dr. Greer responded that the elementary report cards are hard to produce but mentioned that the district is changing how report cards are distributed and made for families to incorporate child development.

Member Fantini discussed the importance of transparency of the schools and district with parents on their child's academic progress and development. He mentioned his goal regarding the achievement gap is for every child to be able to produce high-quality work at the high school level

Member Wilson inquired about the financial literacy classes implemented last year and whether or not there will be similar courses offered in the future. Dean Mulligan answered that the class was offered through RSTA but was not offered this year due to insufficient seat capacity. **Member Wilson** mentioned that student feedback on who took the financial literacy course was positive and suggested the district could make these classes a required course and perhaps an abbreviated course at the upper schools.

Mayor Siddiqui resumed the second half of the presentation began focusing on Literacy. Once the second half of the presentation concluded, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the Committee for questions.

Vice-Chair Bowman about the positives and outcomes of heterogeneous learning in literacy of math Ms. Bryan responded that in addition to heterogeneous, every student needs access to the complex text and

literature at their grade level. **Vice-Chair Bowman** commented that their School Committee had to make some significant changes during the pandemic, and those decisions are ideal and critical. She also followed up on her comments regarding report cards and asked for clarification on the district's standards and when teachers are aligning them. Ms. Bryan mentioned a standard in Cambridge, but there are no standards on what time of year teachers can implement and use them.

Member Weinstein asked about heterogeneous classes at the high school and the upper schools and what opportunities for ELA and literacy are being offered. Ms. Bryan responded that the district needs to continue focusing on what is best for the students. If the district is implementing culturally responsive instruction and has students who are not achieving equitable outcomes, then the district has to readdress their culturally responsive instruction and will do so with urgency.

Member Wilson asked about how literacy screeners are working for children and their families with their needs and the science of reading. Ms. Bryan replied that the screening point is the first step. The complex part comes at the next step when it has to be determined what to do with the screening results.

7b. CPS District Plan: None

7c. Consent Agenda:

Member Fantini moved seconded by Member Rachel on a voice vote to bring the Superintendent's Agenda forward for discussion and adoption.

Member Weinstein removed **#21-320 and #21-233.**

On the following roll call vote, items **#21-321** through **#21-322**, **#21-324** through **#21-329** were adopted: Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#21-321, Day & Residential Program Services not available from the Cambridge School

Department be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions as detailed in the list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget and Grant Fund Budget:

<u>Programs</u>	<u>Active Contracts</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Day	8	\$579,002.32
Residential	0	0
45	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<u>Total</u>	8	\$579,002.32

#21-322, Contract Award, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor for Custodial Supplies & Equipment, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

WB Mason, 647 Summer Street, Boston, for the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$100,000.00

#21-324, Grant Award, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

New England Foods, for the period December 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$200,000.00. Project/SC00402/Food Service Revolving Fund.

Description: This contract is for groceries for the school breakfast and lunch program.

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#21-325 , Contract Award, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor for Computer Network Supplies, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Integration Partners Group, 12 Hartwell Avenue, Lexington, MA 02421 for the period of October 25, 2021, to June 30, 2022, in the amount of \$26,772.20.

#21-326, Contract Award, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor for Fresh Produce, funds to be provided from the School Revolving Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Guaranteed Fresh Produce, Inc., 35 Iyannough Road, Hyannis, MA 02601 for the period of November 15, 2021, to December 23, 2021, in the amount of \$42,880.06.

#21-327, Contract Award, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor for Security Upgrades, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

BCM Controls Corporation, 30 Commerce Way, Woburn, MA 01801 for the period of October 19, 2021, to June 30, 2022, in the amount of \$28,721.57

#21-328, Contract Award, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor for Computer Hardware, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget Chapter 30B of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Apple, Inc. 5409 Stevens Creek Blvd. Cupertino, CA 95104 for the period of December 1, 2021, to December 31, 2022, in the amount of \$500,000.00.

#21-329, Grant Award, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

FY22 ESSER III for the period October 4, 2021 to June 30, 2023 in the amount of \$7,957.907.00. Grant SC22216.

Description: This grant will be used to support implementation of the district's efforts to support students to recover from the pandemic and thrive as part of the return to full-time in-person learning. This grant supports funding in the three ESSER categories: Operations, Academics and Social-Emotional Learning. In the category of operations, this includes FY22 funding for COVID-related costs for tents, rentals, health aides, custodians, and chromebooks. In the categories of Academics and Social Emotional Learning, budgeted items will be refined as part of the FY23 professional development and family engagement outside the school day; summer program and scholarship costs; and continued staffing for the Social-Emotional Learning department, including a Director of Social Emotional Learning and an SEL coach at the high school.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#21-320, Approval of Amendment of Section 19 of Chapter 11 of the Rules of the School Committee to Allow Execution of Contracts Pursuant to Emergency Procurement Authorizations, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the amendment of Section 19 of Chapter 11 of the Rules of the School Committee to allow contracts over twenty-five thousand (\$25,000.00) to be executed without a School Committee vote when the City's Purchasing Director authorizes an emergency procurement under the provisions of MGL c. 30B, Section 8. The School Committee would be notified of any such emergency procurements by the Superintendent or designee

Discussion followed on **#21-320**.

Member Weinstein asked for clarification and information on the types of emergency situations in which the district would need to purchase without the School Committee approval. Dr Greer responded by giving further clarification. The district has been having some procurement issues – primarily in Food Services. This recommendation is also because sometime departments would have to wait weeks for another School Committee meeting to get contracts approved. **Member Rachel** asked questions about the perimeters of what is considered "emergency procurement". Dr, Greer and Ms. Spinner both clarified that any emergency procurement must be under the provisions of **MGL c. 30B, Section 8** and specified when emergency procurement would be necessary. The School Committee will be notified every time there is a need for emergency procurement.

Mayor Siddiqui announced that due to recommendation **#21-320** being a policy change, a second reading would be needed or the Committee would need to vote waive the second reading.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson to move **#21-320** for consideration and waive the second reading: Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Member Fantini mentioned that he may possibility add a motion for 7d. "Emergency Procurement" for the public to be aware of the any emergency procurements the district has made.

On the following roll call vote, **#21-320** was adopted: Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Per the Rules of the School Committee, due to the meeting approaching 10:00pm, on a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Weinstein, the Committee voted to extend the meeting for fifteen additional minutes on a voice vote.

#21-323, Contract Award, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

Sunbelt Rentals, for the period November 15, 2021 to November 15, 2022 in the amount of \$521,829.99. Project SC22216/ESSER III Grant

Discussion followed on **#21-323**

Member Weinstein inquired if a cost comparison has been made to purchase the tents versus just continuing to rent them. Dr. Greer responded that a cost comparison had not been made, but she will refer this to the operations team. **Mayor Siddiqui** asked Ms. Spinner for more information regarding Member Weinstein's question. Ms. Spinner responded that the cost comparison had not been made; however, the current contract expires in the upcoming days, so there is an urgent need to extend the rental contract.

On the following roll call vote, **#21-323** was adopted: Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):

#21-330, Joint Motion by Vice-Chair Bowman and Mayor Siddiqui

Whereas: That the School Committee conduct the swearing-in and inauguration of the 2022 School Committee elects at Cambridge City Hall on January 3, 2022.

Whereas: That the Vice-Chair appoints a representative to work with the Executive Secretary to execute planning of the January 3, 2022 inauguration and swearing-in of new Committee elects.

Vice-Chair Bowman pulled **#21-330** and amended it to read as follows:

"Whereas: That the School Committee conduct the swearing-in and inauguration of the 2022 School Committee elects at Cambridge City on January 3, 2022.

Whereas: That the Vice-Chair appoints a representative to work with the Executive Secretary to execute planning of the January 3, 2022 inauguration and organizational meeting of new Committee elects."

Member Wilson mentioned the reasoning at City Hall versus the inauguration at City Hall. **Vice-Chair Bowman** mentioned that City Hall is already set up for the inauguration. If the Committee continues to have it at an additional venue, an ad-hoc Subcommittee would need to be formed for planning. **Mayor Siddiqui** proposed to amend the motion to include "or other mutually decided location."

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Fantini, the amendments for **#21-330** were adopted on a voice vote.

Member Wilson volunteered to be the School Committee liaison.

On a motion by Vice-Chair Bowman seconded by Member Wilson **#21-330** was adopted on a voice vote.

#21-331 Report of the October 12, 2021 Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

October 12, 2021	BUILDING AND GROUNDS SUB-COMMITTEE	#21-331
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Virtual Building and Grounds Sub-Committee Report
Tuesday, October 12, 2021
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA

Called for the purpose of discussing the special state senate primary and election, the scope of the RFP for long-range building study whose costs were approved by the city this summer and how the safety protocols have been working since the start of the school year.

Members Present: Chair José Luis Rojas, Member Fantini, Vice Chair Bowman (~~ABSENT~~)

Also Present: Member Weinstein; Mr. James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer; Ms. Mary Elizabeth Cranton, CEA Member of the Working Group; Dr. Alisa Khan, member of the Health and Safety Committee; Ms. Tanya Ford Crump, Executive Director of the Cambridge Election Commission; Commissioner Larry Ward of the Election Commission; Commissioner Victoria Harris of the Election Commission; Mr. Rowan Marcus, ICTS; Ms. Ena Valenzuela, parent and member of CPAC; Ms. Elinor Actipis; Ms. Amatul Mahmud, Coordinator of Sisters for a Dream, an after-school program and parent; Mr. Dan Monahan, CEA President; Mr. Matt Larue, parent; Ms. Catherine Reilly, parent.

Chair Rojas called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and gave a synopsis and context around the meeting:

- to discuss the Cambridge Election Commission request related to a special election
- discuss requests for proposal (RFP) for a long-range building study
- discuss how the safety policies have been working since the start of the year
- provide an opportunity for community members to ask questions and ideas on these topics

Chair Rojas turned the floor to Mr. Maloney.

- Mr. Maloney spoke about the request to hold special elections (not the municipal elections), in a few CPSD schools. There have been at least two or three prolonged discussions on this matter in the past. This request is not generally welcomed by the principals, but they also recognize that there may be no other recourse. The administration also recognizes the intrusion to the normal flow of a school day.

Chair Rojas asked Ms. Ford-Crump if there are any restrictions related to this request and what are the safety protocols for this election.

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- Ms. Crump explained that this election has not been planned for, as it is due to the resignation of Senator Boncore. The primary is December 14 and the election is January 11; the voting effects seven wards and precincts. The only two schools that would be needed are the Martin Luther King, Jr. School and the Morse School. There are no other schools requested. The same safety and security used in the past and this November, will be used for the special December and January elections. There will be a security officer and two police officers on the sites.

Ms. Bowman entered the meeting at 6:15 pm.

Member Fantini asked if there would be any early voting at this special election and will there be any private sites used?

- Ms. Ford-Crump answered that they do not know yet for early voting, they are waiting to hear from the state, and, for private sites, they are using MIT at Kresge Auditorium, the Cambridge Community Center, and the LBJ apartments.

Vice Chair Bowman apologized, explained a conflict due to the double booking of duties, for the beginning of this meeting. The Vice Chair asked if there have been any conversations with the principals at the two schools in question.

- Ms. Ford-Crump explained that the Election Commission was in conversation with Mr. Maloney and was informed that they needed to come before the School Committee which lead to this meeting today.
- Mr. Maloney answered that he has only had a conversation with Principal Leith at the Morse so far. The Martin Luther King Jr. School houses two campuses, two Principals and about 750 students. Principal Yung has had issues in the past, with opening his building for voting and would prefer that an alternate site be sought. It has been pointed out that the December election will be the second time in thirty days that a school has been asked to change the normal function of a school day to accommodate voting. That being said, Principal Yung is prepared to make his school safe and accessible for all (which includes administration, faculty, students, and voters), if need be, for the day of voting.

Vice Chair Bowman asked how would indoor eating, during the winter, be impacted.

- Mr. Maloney answered that there will be a challenge, since we no longer have the option of outdoor dining. The schools will need to try to meet the challenge, as they have in the past, of arranging safe indoor dining within the guidelines, *without* the option of using the gym. The gyms, having high quality ventilation for air and outdoor doors access, are currently being used for indoor physical education.

Chair Rojas asked to re-confirm that voters will be using different entrances than the general school population.

- Commissioner Ward, in relation to the special election, answered in the affirmative, depending on the configuration of the school. As it relates to the Morse School, everyone enters the same way and then separates.
- Ms. Ford Crump answered for the Martin Luther King, Jr. school. There is a playground/gym entrance, therefore the voters do not have to come in contact with the students. She admits to being between a rock and a hard place. If anyone knows of any other buildings within the vicinity, please let her know. They are already using vote by mail and early voting. Ms. Ford Crump welcomes all suggestions.
- Mr. Maloney reiterated for at least the third time that safety and security is under control; the largest issue is the disruption to the learning day, the staff will, as always, do their best to minimize the disruption.

Chair Rojas stated that they have enough information to bring a recommendation forward to the Committee of the Whole.

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Member Fantini suggested a favorable recommendation to the Committee of the Whole to support this request adding that this can be a learning day for civic engagement to involve students with the voting process.

Vice Chair Bowman suggested an Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee using the City Council, Election Commission and School Committee for pro-active ideas for polling locations going forward.

Chair Rojas suggested a Roundtable.

- Commissioner Ward volunteered to organize bringing the three bodies together.

Motion from the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Election Commission needs to hold special elections in December and January around a vacated state senate seat, in addition to the already scheduled municipal elections, and WHEREAS The Cambridge Election Commission continues to face challenges securing election-compliant polling places, now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge School Committee allow the Cambridge Election Commission to use the Martin Luther King and the Morse school for the special election, following the same health & safety protocols used in the municipal elections, and be it further

RESOLVED: That the School Committee will request a roundtable discussion with the City Council and the Cambridge Election Commission to discuss the challenges of using school buildings as polling sites and what other options are available for the Election Commission

The meeting proceeded to the next topic on the Agenda, the RFP.

Mr. Maloney provided an update stating that the RFP process has been ongoing for quite some time. There is an active construction site building a new Tobin/Vassal Lane school building. There was a general consensus that the firm look at schools in need, consider renovations and in some cases, build new schools. CPSD is trying to identify a firm that will prepare a complete review of all aspects of our buildings, ranking them, improving, and, in some cases, expanding these buildings. Parking is a big issue. He would like the RFP to develop some online drawings that will show growth potential. There is a meeting scheduled with Councillor Nolan tomorrow to continue these conversations.

Vice Chair Bowman stated she is excited to know this is moving forward. Since there are many inequities in our school facilities, there is a strong need for this study.

Member Fantini spoke about the process to get the city to prioritize new schools and renovations. Zoning is an important part of this. He would like for CPS to pay some attention to where futuristic schools are headed nationally. Member Fantini asked what the state does in relation to this topic.

- Mr. Maloney responded that the state has an aggressive school capital funding program, ranking buildings across the state. Most of our buildings don't fall in the required categories when put up against poor communities. By contrast we have award winning buildings.

The meeting progressed to the third item on the Agenda, The Health and Safety Working Group update.

Mr. Maloney gave an update on the start of this new academic year, stating that they are off to a good start with our protocols. They are looking at expanding opportunities for attendance in athletics, and performing arts.

There have been twenty confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our schools; fifteen were students and five were staff. None were identified by Cambridge Public Health as in school transmissions. The steps that have been taken have shown value.

Today was the first day of mandated testing for unvaccinated CEA members, Mr. Maloney does not have any numbers on this right now. It is a pretty massive undertaking, we are still waiting to know what the numbers are on those vaccinated and the exemptions.

Dr. Dobberteen agreed that the twenty cases have been shown to be out of school transmissions.

Mr. Fantini asked what will CPS do differently as we approach winter.

- Mr. Maloney responded that the challenges will become larger. Tents will come down on November 15, 2021, per our contract, and will go back up April 1, 2022. We are going to try to get through the winter with a mix of indoor and outdoor dining.

Vice Chair Bowman asked how are we partnering with the CEA and the CPHD.

- Dan Monahan replied that the CEA has been encouraging all staff to get vaccinated and upload their vaccination information to the district. He does not know how many members have uploaded their information yet, once he does have that information, he will target the needed areas of concern, if any.
- Mr. Maloney referred to the MOU which details the importance of vaccinations. All units, A through E, are heavily vaccinated. As of noon today, the number of uploaded vaccination cards has reached 1,266. It is possible this number is a mix of both union and non-union members.

Chair Rojas asked when wind instruments will be played indoors, wonders what has been done for educating our teenaged students on the benefits of getting vaccinated, and lastly for vaccinations for children under age 12.

- Mr. Maloney answered that the Health and Safety Taskforce has approved the use of wind and brass instruments indoors. There was a brief explanation of the use of the music-slip masks and bell covers for the masks that fit over instruments. CPS is following what the health and scientific advisors are recommending.
- Dr. Dobberteen responded that vaccinations are the single most important factor in defeating COVID-19. They are looking at a number of venues to ask questions, i.e. forums, outreach on social media, and discussing with CRLS leadership and Dr. Greer for conversations with students on all teen concerns. The recommendation from the Superintendent was focused on children under age 12 and teenagers. They expect something to come through for 5 to 11-year old children. They are hoping for a mandate to mirror the same mandate for the older children. There should be no question as to whether this pandemic is real. Humans of all ages can contact COVID-19 and sadly die from it.

The remainder of the meeting was opened for public comment. The following individuals were heard and responded to.

Ms. Amatul Mahmud asked why CPS after-school programs are not allowed inside our schools. They are required to pay for space elsewhere.

- Mr. Maloney responded that the prohibitions were made because some of the outside user programs did not meet the protocols set in place. These protocols are in place until the end of January. There seems to be some discrepancy as to whether some of these programs are internal for outside users. The reconsideration for this prohibition in January is not certain. The DHSP put these rules in place and CPSD is following them as best they can. He offered that Ms. Mahmud email him and they can take a closer look at her particular situation.

Ms. Elinor Actipis stated that the vaccination mandate is an overreach of power and has been done illegally and unethically without community involvement. Where does the School Committee get the authority to issue this vaccine mandate? She does not believe that School Committees anywhere have this authority. She wants to know what the proper venue is to have this conversation about coercion in detail.

- Mr. Maloney replied that the mandates are designed to meet legal compliance. It is not looked at as coercion. The risks of not being vaccinated are greater than the risks of being vaccinated. As with all things pandemic related, there will never be 100% agreement on every step that the district and the state take.
- Dr. Dobberteen agrees that the mandate is designed to encourage families to get vaccinated against a serious, life threatening disease that has implications for the children themselves, and to avoid spreading the illness to the community and other vulnerable family members. In order

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to achieve herd immunity, we are going to need a high rate of vaccination among everyone. The vaccination mandate does not exclude students from school, therefore, parents do have the right to refuse it. There is no coercion.

Mr. Monahan spoke about the ventilation numbers, CO2 monitoring, masking, and was happy to report that there are very few problematic rooms for ventilation and they are still working on the few that exist.


Dr. Khan amplified Dr. Dobberteen's response to the vaccine. There is a national mandate. Autonomy is not appropriate in a health crisis as it can harm others.

Matthew Nehs stated that over the summer there was a discussion that mask mandates are not effective. This disease is a seasonal respiratory illness. He would like to know what the limiting principle is for when the "emergency" is over? In other words, when can we take off the masks? He also stated that he is pro vaccine, but not for the mandating of a vaccine to a healthy child.

The debate continued, resulting with the following discrepancies:

- Whether or not children spread the disease. Some data shows that they do.
- It was stated that it can appear selfish to categorize healthy children as being punished for looking out for unhealthy children. We should be very cautious when we go in that direction.
- We all hope the state of emergency does not last forever
- CPS was applauded for their hard word on this once in a lifetime pandemic
- The reason people die of COVID-19 is because of poor metabolic health – it is not killing everyone
- We can all do a better job of communicating with students and parents

Adjourned 7:30 pm.

Attest: 
Doshia E. Beard
Cambridge School Committee

#21-331 was adopted as written on a voice vote.

10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolence): None

11. Announcements:

Member Weinstein announced that there had been a lot of students recognized for the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and the application period is still ongoing. He encourages students and students to look into these for scholarships and recognitions. He thinks CPS students are great contenders.

Member Weinstein also announced Brandeis University is offering a free academic emersion program for high school students. The program is a two/three hour per week program for ten weeks in which students can culminate a capstone. that will be suitable for a college application.

12. Late Orders: None

13. Communications from City Officers: None

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Vice-Chair Bowman, it was voted to enter executive session following the adjournment of the open meeting on the following roll call vote: Vice-Chair Bowman YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA, Member Wilson YEA, Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

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On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Vice-Chair Bowman, it was voted, on a voice vote, to adjourn the open meeting. (10:14 pm)

Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew

Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee