



**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**(Official Minutes)**

**Special Meeting**

**March 18, 2021**

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, there will be a Virtual Roundtable Meeting of the School Committee for the purpose of a presentation of the FY 22 Superintendent's Proposed Budget.

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

District Present: Superintendent Kenneth Salim; Dr. Carolyn Turk, Claire Spinner, CFO, Dr. Michelle Madera, B. Kimmerman, Dr. Lyndsey Pinkus Brown, Dr. Alexis Morgan, Dr. Nicole Gittens, Lisa Richardson, Jim Maloney

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

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

Mayor Siddiqui yielded the floor to Vice-Chair Bowman and Co-Chair Fantini for a word to begin the presentation. Chair Fantini commented that consisted with district goals on the outcome and about recovery and thriving. Our educational leaders are driving the budget, and it's a balanced budget.

Vice-Chair Bowman yielded the floor to Superintendent Salim, and he began with the framework of the evening's meeting.

The plan is as follows for tonight's meeting:

- Context
- Enrollment & Student Demographics
- FY 2022 General Fund Budget
- Proposed FY22 Budget Initiatives
- Discussion

2021.03.18\_Presentation of Supt's Proposed

Superintendent Salim ends the presentation with thanks beginning the City Manager and his staff for working closely with the District and the Chief Financial Officer Claire Spinner. The finance team and acknowledging the process and all the work that goes into submitting the FY22 budget. As well as thanking the staff for providing input.

Member Rojas asked about enrollment recovery and wondering what happens if enrollment increases? What will happen to the positions? How are the FTE year-to-year positions going to be built in going forward?

- Superintendent Salim answered there are reserve positions in the budget that will address that issue if needed.
- Claire Spinner clarified that no staff had been taken out of the system. There is an equal number of staff as last year. There has been no classroom reduction, except for an extra Kindergarten room; there is a lot of capacity for this scenario.
- Superintendent Salim answered that General Fund concerning the additional funds, ESSR, and stimulus funds are part of the two to three-year transition in more staffing, health, and safety mitigation side, academic and mental health education. What is presented is how the budget reflects moving forward. Some could be a one-year position to promote social distancing, or some could be a multi-year. The increases are part of the General Fund.

Member Weinstein thanked the co-chairs and the finance staff. How does an expansion for Junior Kindergarten fit into the track? That birth to JK program would fall under CPSD, correct? I wanted to elaborate on the communications team expansion. Who would be in the leadership role, and that is their central focus?

- Superintendent Salim replied that before the pandemic, there were conversations about universal kindergarten and enrollment projects that informed the panel that they have recently hired Lisa Grant as Director working with birth to grade three partnerships. This work will continue with the District. As committee members know that there will be moving pieces because of the delay to the Tobin project, it still is an important priority.

Mayor Siddiqui spoke of her meeting with DHSP, specifically Ellen Semenoff and Lisa Grant, to discuss this topic's general update.

- Superintendent Salim replied that it could happen, but capacity and space and various community providers weigh in. The recommendation to have a mixed delivery model shows that expansion would not be just a school-based decision.
- Superintendent Salim answered that there is a vacancy in FY22, and they have been rewriting the job description, and that position falls under Dr. Pinkus Brown and her team; the job had been advertised. In the interim, some contract work has been used to support their efforts.
- Dr. Pinkus Brown added a clarifying point that the Director of Communications and Public Information is a new and higher-level position than was previously established.

Member Wilson thanked the Budget team for the presentation. Acknowledged the seriousness of the year and the anguish that it has caused. He asked Superintendent Salim to speak of how we assess the students to talk about the learning loss, mental health needs, and rebuilding community trust. Was hoping for bolder and innovative initiatives. Where is the learning loss?

- Superintendent answered that screeners are being used to assess how scholars are doing with learning loss and will be used till the close of the school year. Students are being identified for summer programming. Some federal money can be utilized for summer models that remote and in-person options. Pre pandemic, the District was looking to expand the Title 1 summer school model, having that partner with DHSP. In the upcoming school year, we are looking to extend the school day for students who need it. It is a tiered approach to have students meet grade-level expectations. On the SEL side, they were looking at how SEL screeners can be utilized.

Superintendent Salim referenced the school climate subcommittee, and they will address the mental health subject.

- Dr. Turk continued to expand on a couple of points, noted there would be challenges here, and acknowledged that there were challenges pre-pandemic. This an opportunity for the District to do some rethinking and make adjustments as needed. There needs to be a focus on a few programs and doing them well, which will allow for a balance and help students catch up with learning loss.

Dr. Turk spoke about three elements to focus on for implementation: how the schools and District look at data review, power standards and willingness, ability, and drive to make adjustments. Making the plan and through the data cycle review, review where students are and if seeming not working it is the district responsibility to make adjustments.

She finished her thoughts by speaking about creating new habits in an educational environment that will be different. Those new habits have to be accepted and practiced to be recognized and learned.

Member Wilson thanked Dr. Turk for her follow-up and asked about Restorative Justice and mental health. Where is that in our training and curriculum? How are we going to become a community that will heal together?

- Superintendent Salim responded that the Sub Committee meeting would focus on mental health, which ties into the questions. References Dr. Turk's work with the tier one piece and wellness. Preliminary inquiry with Manual Fernandez and the OEIB. Brings up screeners and their crucial element to the needs of students. There needs to be coherence with all as to the support of the student. They remarked that social workers supported other teachers in the building and needed a team to be organized and mobilized. The District, in partnership with OEIB, along with Chandra Banks, will be looking into how to have a multi-year plan along with advisories.
- Dr. Turk mentioned the feedback that they have received from teachers and expressing their needs.

Member Rachel offered appreciation and thanks for their efforts and the budget. Asked for clarity with the ESSER funds and the breakdown of distribution? She followed up her segment by asking about the RSTA program review and if it will happen?

- Superintendent Salim answered no to the ESSR funds for this FY. The ESSR funds will be on. A parallel track with the General Funds, and there will be periodic updates.
- Claire Spinner added that the District received the funds in July, and through the additional supplemental funding, there was not a need to tap into those extra funds. There is some money in the General Fund for COVID mitigation. The funds will be there for future consideration.
- Dr. Pinkus Brown answered on behalf of Superintendent Salim with a yes. There will be pursuing multiple elements of the RSTA program that will be an ongoing program review.
- Dr. Nicole Gittens added there is a meeting with the sister program as well as an expanded partnership.

Member Fantini remarked that the pandemic had shown us the value of the out-of-school partners. He is hopeful of keeping the engagement post-pandemic.

Mayor Siddiqui echoed much of her colleague's sentiments. Asked about the funding for the budget software? What is it? Meaningful connections with a piece are essential - it is helpful to add this information for acknowledgment purposes. Remarked on Member Fantini's work with college courses for seniors.

- Claire Spinner clarified that it had not been procured; what they are looking at is OpenGov. It is a very user-friendly application. Would like something interactive for the community.

Vice-Chair Bowman remarked that she is elated that the District budget's reflected a gain of 4% for the past four years. Thanked and acknowledged the leadership of the city for their assistance as well as our resources. Spoke of the challenges of the student spending ratio without the academic result that goes

with it—asked how do we genuinely leverage data as a tool? Mentioned the School Committee Office funding.

Member Wilson asked about the recovery team for OSS, keeping in mind the review's evaluation process and a lag.

- Dr. Alexis Morgan responded that the students were prioritized on the needs of the most affected student. It was clarified that the recovery team was only in place for a year but will continue through the next school year. Will get Member Wilson's the numbers she asked for.

Member Weinstein appreciated Member Fantini's point about engaging students. Wants clarity on Level funding?

- Superintendent Salim responded that a lot of the work with Level Up funding has been with educator collaboration, working with the OSS Team, and is structured to support students in all grade levels. Many resources are high school-based, and there are opportunities around to have these efforts supported.

In conclusion, Vice-Chair Bowman asked how the public comment and meetings have shaped the budget process.

Superintendent Salim thanked the community for their participation and thoughts.

On a motion to adjourn by Mayor Siddiqui, seconded by Member Wilson, On the following roll call vote, Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA Vice-Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. 8:00pm.

NB-There will be a Budget Workshop Review meeting on March 23, and the next regular meeting is April 6, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

Attest:

Jennifer Dever Wood  
Cambridge School Committee