



**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**

**January 4, 2022**

Called for 6:00 p.m. 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 Rachel, Member Bhambi, Member Fantini, 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 6:01 p.m.

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.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business by going directly into Public Comment.

**1. Public Comment:**

The following individuals were heard:

- **Dan Monahan**, 229 Lexington Street, spoke in support of recommendation **#22-01**.
- **Sarah Figge Hussain**, 3335 Washington Avenue, spoke about the district's strategies to mitigate the COVID process and the "test and stay" program.
- **Kate Skubecz**, 158 Thorndike Street, spoke about the closure of schools on Monday, January 3, and Tuesday, January 4.
- **Sam Murphy**, 158 Thorndike Street, about the school closures on Monday, January 3 and Tuesday, January 4 for COVID testing following the holiday and winter break.
- **Catherine Reilly**, 13 Story Street, spoke about the school closures on Monday, January 3, and Tuesday, January 4.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Weinstein, it was voted to close public comment on a voice vote.

Upon conclusion of Public Comment, Mayor Siddiqui recommended a suspension of rules to bring the Superintendent's Agenda forward. On a motion by Vice-Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Wilson to

suspend the rules to bring the Superintendent's Agenda forward, it was voted to suspend the rules on a voice vote.

Before turning the meeting over to Dr. Greer, Mayor Siddiqui provided a brief statement on the COVID testing wait times, particularly at the Peabody school on January 3 and January 4 following the winter break.

Mayor Siddiqui then turned the meeting to Dr. Greer, who presented her presentation virtually. Dr. Greer's full presentation can be found on the School Committee webpage [here](#).

Dr. Greer's presentation included key takeaways that explained the school closures' reasoning on Monday, January 3, and Tuesday, January 4. There were 3,500 students tested on-site, with many student testers being first-time testers and 129 student-facing roles that included teachers and paraprofessionals. Dr. Greer also reported that the district is still awaiting the individual PCR test results, but schools will reopen on Wednesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>. Upon return, students must keep masks on as much as feasible. Dr. Dobbleteen also provided insight on the current pandemic and the reasoning and plan the Cambridge Health Alliance and the district had in regards to mitigating the virus after the holiday winter break.

**Member Rojas** inquired about tests being a snapshot of where the state is regarding the virus cases. If staff and students are tested on Sunday, they can still have COVID, so why aren't they tested again. Dr. Dobbleteen responded that it is mainly due to the rise in testing numbers following the winter break.

**Member Weinstein** asked if the safety measures currently in place are adequate. Dr. Dobbleteen responded that the current measures are both adequate and inadequate enough. Masks, social distancing, etc., are adequate in preventing the spread of the virus. However, the vaccination rates can be higher, and Dr. Dobbleteen encouraged those who need booster shots or are not vaccinated to do so.

**Member Weinstein** asked if there is a percentage/number where the district needs to feel safe. Dr. Dobbleteen responded that DESE used to have an 80% goal, but that has changed due to the rise in the Omicron variant.

**Member Rojas** responded to **Member Weinstein's** comments regarding safety in school buildings by reporting that safety measures are in place and have been since students returned to in-person learning and before vaccines were available to them. Schools are safe, but vaccines make them safer and add extra security and reassurance from families.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** asked Dr. Greer if the email correspondence regarding positive cases is insufficient and if the district could potentially use a robocall to ensure families check their emails. Dr. Greer mentioned that if the numbers exceed the high 100s and 1000s, it can become difficult for the district to make phone calls to all families with positive cases. Dr. Brown added that an email/text system could work in place of robocalls if the calls go into the late evening. **Vice-Chair Rachel** also asked about the quarantine guidelines and when the quarantine starts. Dr. Dobbleteen responded that if a child is symptomatic, the quarantine begins at Day 0, and Day 1 will be the day after the child shows symptoms. If a child is asymptomatic, then Day 0 begins the day they are tested positive, and Day 1 is the day following the diagnosis date.

**Member Fantini** thanked the Department of Health and Superintendent for ensuring safety for the students and committee and requested clarity on the 1000 potential positive cases and whether children need to stay home if tested positive. Dr. Dobbleteen clarified that anyone who tested positive should remain at home. **Member Fantini** inquired if there would be temperature checks or additional procedures at schools when they reopen after the winter break and if Dr. Greer met with the Health and Safety Committee before determining the school closures. Dr. Dobbleteen mentioned that temperature checks have been done and have not been very effective. Dr. Greer responded that she did not meet with Health and Safety Committee, but she did speak with Dr. Dobbleteen, Nurse Mackenzie, and the Health Department before deciding on the school closures. January 3 and January 4 will be used as snow days and made up at the end of the year. **Member Fantini** also inquired if there was any way to meet families' daycare and childcare needs when schools are closed. Dr. Greer responded that this is an ongoing topic that will continue to be explored.

**Member Wilson** asked about the timing of the test results as it seems results are taking a little longer than usual to get results. Mackenzie Shubert responded by explaining the testing process, PCR, and pool testing per student on Day 1 just in case a pool is positive. There is a significant delay in labs with test results turnaround times.

**Member Wilson** inquired about the remote options for students who must quarantine. Dr. Greer responded that currently, DESE does not allow districts to have a virtual schooling option. However, students in quarantine will receive instructional materials from their teachers. Dr. Turk clarified how instruction would happen for students who will be out of school due to quarantining, including Google Classroom. **Member Wilson** asked how does quarantine affect student attendance. Dr. Greer responded that quarantined students would be marked as absent, but the absence qualifies as an excused absence. **Member Wilson** asked if the district could consider options for consent forms on the spot for students who need to be tested but have not submitted consent forms. Dr. Brown provided some clarity on the issues, and the district has been doing clean-up with consent forms and collecting new forms but mentioned that consent forms could be available.

**Member Bhambi** asked two questions on supplemental learning for students during quarantine which centered around how are the supplemental learning plans communicated to parents and how can the district confirm that students at home can do the work? Dr. Turk clarified how plans are communicated to caregivers via phone, newsletters (both classroom and school-based) class syllabuses (at the upper levels). Teachers should check in with quarantined families to ensure they have the digital needs, and, if needed, ITCS can help distribute loaner Chromebooks and hotspots to families.

**Mayor Siddiqui** asked Dr. Greer to discuss the district's quarantine guidelines. Dr. Greer reported that the district Health and Safety Working Group is meeting tomorrow, and discussions are currently in the works with quarantine guidelines and an agenda item. Communications will go out after the Health and Safety Working Group, but for the next few days, the guidelines will be for 10-days as that is the current quarantine policy.

**Mayor Siddiqui** asked Dr. Greer to clarify and explain the District's strategy on combatting staff absences during the COVID spike. Dr. Turk, Dr. Madera, Dr. Gittens, and principals have been leading the work to deploy coverage in place of the absences of student-facing positions due to COVID.

**Member Wilson** asked how retired teachers and volunteers can sub for the district. Dr. Greer responded that they should refer to Human Resources for substitute opportunities.

**Member Rojas** commented that he is glad that this topic has led the Committee to talk about quarantine effects for children and consider the well-being of children during the pandemic.

**Student Member Killian** asked if the student being quarantined could be allowed to Zoom into the classroom. Dr. Turk responded that some teachers had done so during the pandemic, but it is not a district requirement, so it is not always available.

**Mayor Siddiqui** summarized the following steps on Dr. Greer's action plan. Families will be hearing from the district this evening regarding the testing update, and there may be a School Committee meeting before the next Regular meeting with a recommendation.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** asked about non-profits and if the districts should connect with them regarding childcare coverage. **Mayor Siddiqui** responded that it was feasible.

**Member Rojas** suggested that the Committee agree tonight on allowing the district to make changes to the quarantine policies after meeting with the Health and Safety Working Group. **Mayor Siddiqui** responded that if the district makes simple changes to the quarantine guideline (i.e., 5 to 10 days), she is okay with those being made. If the district comes back with additional recommendations for the Committee, she can potentially call a Special Meeting. **Member Weinstein** thinks that improvements for safety can be made without the vote of the School Committee at a meeting. **Member Fantini** mentioned that he is happy with communications between the Mayor, Vice-Chair, Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee, and the Interim Superintendent of quarantined guidelines.

**Member Wilson** inquired about testing throughout the week once school reopens. Dr. Greer responded that the district would implement their regular surveillance testing protocols.

## 2. Student School Committee Report:

**Student Member Killian** reported some confusion from students regarding the school closures this week. Notifications from the district were only sent out to parents, and students are encouraging the district to be included in all COVID notifications and communications sent out to parents. **Student Member Killian** also updated CRLS seniors and their college application status.

**Student Member Vera-DeGraff** reported on the student concerns that the school will return to being fully remote due to the spike in COVID numbers. He recommended that the district send out communications to students to ensure that remote instruction is not a feasible option due to DESE not allowing virtual learning options.

**Member Fantini** asked if there was still is a daily morning video update. Both Student Members, Killian, and Vera-DeGraff reported that the daily morning video update was frequent at the beginning of the school year, but there are none lately.

**Member Wilson** expressed her gratitude to the Student School Committee Members.

**Member Bhambi** asked if CRLS was doing contingency planning. Dr. Turk responded that the guidance department has ensured that this is in effect and the young people will not be missing critical deadlines that will assist them in their future life planning. Dr, Turk also referred to the Workforce Group and the Cambridge Housing Authority.

**Student Member Vera-DeGraff** mentioned that colleges are aware of what is going on and are flexible with deadlines.

**3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:**

- **December 21, 2021, Regular Meeting**

On a motion by Vice-Chair Rachel, seconded by Member Weinstein, it was voted to accept the Minutes as written on a voice vote.

**4. Reconsiderations: None**

**5. Unfinished Business/Calendar: None**

**6. Awaiting Reports: None**

**7. Superintendent's Agenda:**

**7a. Presentations:** Superintendent's Update  
The full presentation can be found [here](#).

**7b. CPS District Plan:** None

**7c. Consent Agenda:**

**#22-01, Approval of the Memorandum of Agreement between The Cambridge School Committee (the "Committee") and Cambridge Education Association, Units A & B (CEA) on Conducting the Family Listening Conferences During the 2021-2022 School Year** be adopted as follows: That the School Committee ratify and approve the Agreement between the Cambridge School Committee (the "Committee) and Cambridge Education Associations, Units A & B (the "CEA") on conducting the family listening conferences during the 2021-2022 school year.

**#22-02, 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, funds to be provided from the General Fund and/or Grant Fund Budget, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

<u>Program</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Day	1	\$34,715.10

Residential  
45 Day

1

\$34,715.10

**#22-03, Contract Award**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for, Instructional Materials, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

CDW Government LLC, 230 N. Milwaukee Ave., Vernon Hills, IL, for the period of February 1, 2022 through January 31, 2023 in the amount of \$75,000.00.

**#22-05, 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 Massachusetts Cultural Council-STARS for the period of December 3, 2021 to June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$5,500.00. Grant SC22894.

**Description:** This MCC Stars grant will support a theater experience for third grade students at the Cambridgeport School. Through a theater residency program with Central Square Theater, students will write and perform a play about ecosystems and environmental preservation using the Charles River Basin as a case study.

Member Wilson removed **#22- 07**, Member Fantini removed **#22-04** and **#22-06** and Member Weinstein removed **#22- 08** .

On the following roll call vote, items **#22-01** through **#22-03** and **#22-05** were adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

#### **8. Non-Consent Agenda:**

**#22-04, Contract Award**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for, Instructional Materials, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Sal's Production dba Sal's Pizza, 83 N. Broadway Ave, Salem, NH for the periods of January 3, 2022 to January 1, 2023 in the amount of \$128,700.00; January 3, 2023 to January 2, 2024 in the amount of \$128,700.00; and January 3, 2024 to January 2, 2025 in the amount of \$128,700.00.

Discussion followed on **#22-04. Member Fantini** inquired about the district using a vendor for New Hampshire and noted that he had done some research. Some districts such as Andover are making pizza for school lunches in-house and recommend the district try the in-house option upon the conclusion of the contract award. **Member Wilson** asked the reasoning for a three-year contract vs. a one-year contract. Ms. Spinner responded that the District is not obligated to continue the additional years and opt-out after year one. **Vice-Chair Rachel** inquired if the district looked into local vendors. Ms. Spinner responded that because the contract award is over \$10,000, the district had to go into a procurement process and become the total contract award is over \$50,000. a bidding process was through the city's Purchasing Department. Since there was a bidding process, the district is unaware if local vendors were included. **Member Fantini** mentioned that he looked into potentially securing a local vendor five years ago and could not find one.

On the following roll call vote, item **#22-04** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

**#22-06, 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 Early College Support Grant for the period of January 4, 2022 to June 30, 2022 in the amount of \$30,000.00.

**Description:** This grant will support the planning process to complete the district's application for the MA Early College Program Designation. The costs will include stipends for CRLS staff to work with the Early College Coordinator and a consultant to complete the district's Plan B application, including planning for internship opportunities, on-ramping programs, and accessibilities plans. The grant will also fund Early College promotional materials and events:

A brief discussion followed on **#22-06**.

**Member Fantini** provided context on the contract award and gave recognition to everyone involved in the initiative. The district recently submitted B of the application. To become designated in the Early College Program. The Department of Higher Education will interview the district to determine if the District meets the standards of the Early College Program. **Member Wilson** inquired about the timeline of their acceptance. Dr. Gittens responded that students would know of their acceptance either late this week or early next week.

On the following roll call vote, item **#22-06** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

**#22-07, 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.

CSUS 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Cambridge Housing Workforce Program for the period of January 1, 2022 to August 31, 2022 in the amount of \$32,000.00.

**Description:** This is a sub-award from the Massachusetts 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) grant to the Cambridge Housing Authority's Workforce Program at the Cambridge Street Upper School. Grant funds will be used to pay teachers and paraprofessionals at the contractual rate for collaborating with Workforce staff to provide CSUS students with academic support and enrichment opportunities during after school hours.

A brief discussion followed on **#22-07**.

**Member Wilson** mentioned that she would abstain from voting on **#22-07** due to being an employee of the Cambridge Housing Authority and Cambridge Housing Workforce Program. **Member Fantini** asked for more background on **#22-07**. Dr. Gittens gave the context of the program by reporting that the program is a year-round program that combines academics and extracurricular. Approximately forty students from Cambridge Street Upper School will participate in the program after school from 3:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., including homework. Self-advocacy strength skills, and STEM activities. This grant award covers the cost of staffing for the program.

On the following roll call vote, item **#22-07** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson ABSTAINED; Member Bhambi YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

**#22-08, 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 Nellie Mae Education Foundation-Youth Equity Summit for the period of September 1, 2021 to February 1, 2022 in the amount of \$7,500.00.

**Description:** This grant will reimburse the district for partial costs of the Youth Equity Leadership Summit held at CRLS on September 25, 2021. Costs to be covered include stipends for alumni participation (\$230), project consultation (\$1,500), and Target Gift Cards (\$5,770) for youth participation

A brief discussion followed **#22-08**.

**Member Weinstein** inquired about the next steps regarding the Youth Equity Leadership Summit. Mr. Fernandez responded recommendations made by students during the summit were presented to the Superintendent and school leaders. The grant came after the summit was held. However, Mr. Fernandez noted that another summit would be happening soon.

On the following roll call vote, item **#22-08** was adopted: Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

**9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information): None**

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

**11. Announcements:**

Member Wilson thanked the Executive Secretary and the Confidential Secretary of the School Committee for planning the School Committee inauguration on January 3, 2022. Member Wilson also announced that CRLS scholarships would be out soon.

Member Rachel thanked Member Wilson for her efforts in planning the School Committee inauguration and volunteering to be the School Committee member liaison in planning the event.

Member Fantini announced that his family has distributed a scholarship for CRLS students who will be attending Bentley University for the past twenty-five years.

**12. Late Orders:** None

**13. Communications from City Officers:** None

On a motion by Member Bhambi, seconded by Vice-Chair Rachel, it was voted on a voice vote to adjourn the meeting. (8:14 p.m.)

Attest:

*Ariel B. Kennebrew*

Ariel Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee