



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Special Meeting**

**March 17, 2022**

Called for 7:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a presentation of the FY23 Superintendent's Proposed Budget and ESSER III Plan.

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer; Anais Killian, Student School Committee Representative; Nuriel Vera-DeGraff, Student School Committee Representative

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 not be taken and there will be no public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call of members present: Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Bhambi PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor over to the Superintendent and Ms. Claire Spinner who presented the FY23 Proposed Budget and ESSER III Plan. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui turned the floor to the Committee for questions and discussions.

**Member Bhambi** inquired about the implementation of a Program Manager for COVID-response and if it is a permanent position. Dr. Greer responded that the position is not permanent due to it being paid out of ESSER III funds.

**Member Rojas** asked for clarification on the sources of funds, budget, and the ESSER funds as the ESSER Funds weren't presented in the budget as sources of funds. Ms. Spinner clarified that the general funds differ from the ESSER funds. The proposed budget has an increase of \$8.7 million in the General Funds budget and \$5.6 million in federal COVID relief grant money (ESSER). ESSER funds are federal grants funds to be spent by June 30, 2025.

**Member Weinstein** discussed the importance of a priority on racial, economic, and gender opportunity gaps and inquired how investments in the proposed budget can assist in closing some of those gaps. He also expressed interest in learning how the proposed budget supports level up and other heterogeneous, initiatives and educator collaboratives.

**Member Fantini** inquired about reorganization and if the Superintendent can provide an organizational chart to highlight her proposed reorganization. He also inquired about the number of out-of-placement

students in the district, interventionist positions from last year's ESSER funds, and discussions about the reduction of classes at the Kennedy Longfellow that was presented as part of the proposed budget. Ms. Spinner responded to Member Fantini's questions, reporting that in the past few years, out-of-placement tuition funds have been overbudgeted and overtime enrollment has gone down, however she feels comfortable reducing the out-of-placement tuition funds in the General Budget since there are adequate funds in the district's Circuit Breaker account. Ms. Spinner also reported that Interventionalists acquired last year through ESSER funding will continue to work in elementary schools this upcoming year. Dr. Greer is open to discussions surrounding reorganization.

**Member Wilson** echoed comments made by Dr. Greer surrounding reorganization. She inquired about the proposed Chief Academics and Schools position and asked about how this new position will create the alignment goals the Superintendent is hoping to achieve. Dr. Greer gave a brief response on how this position will support her alignment goals and mentioned that other districts on the larger side - similar to Cambridge have similar roles to support the district and longevity of the Superintendent. She will provide more information for the Committee at the Budget Workshop on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**Member Wilson** inquired about the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the proposed budget and community resources that are involved with the OEIB office. Dr. Greer responded that the Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging has remained the same, Manuel Fernandez will be appointed as the permanent Officer of Equity, Inclusion and Belonging and the reduction of the two FTEs (from 11.5 to 9.5). The SEL FTEs were incorporated into the OEIB office in the previous budget, and they were moved to another department in the current proposed budget. **Member Wilson** also asked about mental health support initiatives for students that include additional partnerships and more social workers.

**Member Bhambi** inquired about SEL professional development for educators, career readiness, and mental health resource awareness for students.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** praised the district for prioritizing youth leadership, listening to students, and peer mediation at CRLS. She inquired about more clarification on what "enhanced coordination of workplace learning" looks like in the school year 2022-23, more detail about the \$499,000 budget in the Academics in Schools department, and the correlation between Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and SEL. She also highlighted the importance and need for support for LGBTQ+ families in the district. Dr. Greer reported that the \$499,000 budget in the Academics in Schools department is the standard budget for Curriculum Coordinators throughout the district which is used for numerous reasons such as materials, professional development, etc.

**Mayor Siddiqui** inquired about technical support for students outside of school (i.e. hotspots for homework, etc.). universal Pre-K, early college acknowledgment in the budget, and themes from the community. Ms. Spinner reported that community feedback has been recorded and compiled. This year's schedule was a bit tight to have a presentation to Committee but feedback from the community will be made public and be on the website. Dr. Greer reported that there were 504 survey responses and 269 comments given to the district from the community.

**Member Rojas** inquired about the increase in professional development in the budget, recommendations from the Health and Safety Working Group in regards to cleaning supplies and custodial funds in the budget, and slides from the presentation that included the inflation, implementation of the Chief Academics of Schools). Dr. Greer provided more background on peer mediation and Ms. Spinner

provided context on inflation in the proposed budget and how the district projected cleaning funds in the proposed budget.

**Member Wilson** inquired about school choice, mathematics projects, and educator collaboratives – are the collaboratives for both the elementary and middle school levels? Dr. Gittens provided more context on the mathematics project (calculus project) that the district implemented.

**Member Weinstein** inquired about the continued use of tents in the proposed budget – whether the district will purchase them, continue to rent them, etc., and what steps is the district doing to ensure there is wi-fi access outside of the school buildings. Ms. Spinner confirmed that the district has implemented outdoor wi-fi. Dr. Greer confirmed that tents are still being rented and due to storage issues purchasing them would be a challenge.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.: Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee