



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Regular Meeting**

**March 15, 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: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent, 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 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 with a roll call vote for the purpose of a soundcheck: Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Member Bhambi PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

### **1. Public Comment:**

The following individuals were heard:

- Dan Monahan, Lexington Street, spoke in support of #22-37 and the Superintendent's presentation surrounding COVID-19 updates.
- Amanda Beatty, spoke about the Superintendent's COVID-19 presentation and quieter air filters in the classrooms.

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

### **2. Student School Committee Report:**

**Student Member Vera-DeGraff** reported on the student perspective surrounding the current optional mask mandate that went into effect on March 14<sup>th</sup>. 75% percent of students at CRLS are continuing to wear their masks as of this week.

**Student Member Killian** shared her experience this week since the lift in the mask mandate. She reported that her teachers and classmates continue to wear their masks on in the classroom despite the masks being optional. **Student Member Killian** also reported that students are also inquiring about other covid mitigation strategies and lifts in COVID-related rules that are currently in effect. Spring sports begin this month.

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

- March 1, 2022, Regular Meeting

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

**4. Reconsiderations: None**

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

**6. Awaiting Reports: None**

**7. Superintendent's Agenda:**

**7a. Presentations:**

Mayor Siddiqui passed the floor to the Superintendent who led the first presentation of the evening that focused on COVID-19 updates. Deputy Superintendent Dr. Turk also presented. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

Key highlights of the presentation included goals and metrics from the Health and Safety Working Group on the best practices and mitigation strategies to update the current COVID policies and protocols which include:

- Guess access and parent meetings
- Before/after school events
- In school staff and student events
- Spectators/audiences
- Field trips
- Meals/snacks
- Booster/vaccination status

Dr. Brown was also on hand for the presentation and reported on the next steps the Health and Safety Working Group will take to update the COVID-19 Policy Manual. The Group will meet on Wednesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> for a robust discussion surrounding the update to current mitigation strategies.

Dr. Turk also highlighted the criteria the Health and Safety Working Group uses to make recommendations which include, guiding principles and goals, metrics, and mitigation strategies.

At the end of the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the Committee members for questions and discussions.

**Member Rojas** inquired about the case rates in Cambridge and the differentiation between case numbers in higher education and the community case numbers and if there will still be updated metrics on current COVID cases in the district since contract tracing will no longer be implemented. Dr. Brown provided a brief response and mentioned that data provided by CPS is data delivered by the City's health department and that the district and Health and Safety Working Group are currently working on the best ways to provide data in place of universal contract tracing.

**Member Wilson** inquired about the school-based infection control teams and how are they utilized in assisting in recommendations and conversations with the Health and Safety Working Group. Dr. Turk responded that teachers in the working group serve as representatives for the school along with conversations between the Health and Safety Working Group and school principals.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** inquired if all goals listed in the presentation can be adopted and the reasons why Suffolk County pediatric data was included in the presentation but not Middlesex County data. Dr. Dobbleteen responded that the reason for the data at Suffolk County is because the city of Cambridge does not have pediatric hospitalization and children in the city most likely visit hospitals in Suffolk County.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** mentioned the importance of hospitalization for all levels including adult hospitalizations. Dr. Litchensen added that Suffolk County data is more relevant to the city based on location but Middlesex County data was also looked into and added further clarification on how the Health and Safety Working Group will use other metrics to monitor COVID data instead of contact tracing.

**Member Weinstein** inquired about student participation and staff/student vaccination rates in the testing program and if they will be used as criteria for the recommendations set by the Health and Safety Working Group in place of metrics. Dr. Turk responded that recommendations are made through metrics but based on Member Weinstein's questions, the Health and Safety Working Group should look into things to encourage vaccinations and support for testing. **Member Weinstein** also discussed ventilation and the current air scrubbers and the noise they provide. Dr. Turk responded that Facilities has been working hard to test and purchase "quieter" but effective air scrubbers for the district.

**Member Fantini** asked about community expectations regarding the timeline and process for recommendations made by the Health and Safety Working Group and any of the mitigation items specified in the presentation will be actionable soon. Dr. Turk clarified that the items listed in the presentation are more focus-based rather than action-based. She clarified that the Health and Safety Working Group's purpose is to make recommendations. They do not make decisions.

**Mayor Siddiqui** clarified that any recommendations from the Health and Safety Working Group will be shared with the community through the Superintendent.

The floor was turned over to Dr. Greer who introduced the *English Language Learner Presentation*, which was led by Ms. Beth Kershner. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, Mayor Siddiqui opened the floor to the Committee for questions and discussion.

**Member Bhambi** inquired about the breakdown of top languages listed in the presentation and if those languages were at the top based on population size and the growth/proficiency numbers of the ACCESS test. Ms. Kershner responded that most students are either level one or two in proficiency and generally gain a level of proficiency each year.

**Member Rojas** inquired about what is being done by the district to value bilingual education and the importance of ensuring students utilize their native language. Ms. Kershner mentioned that the district can make more of an effort to promote dual language for ELL students at schools and in the district. **Member Rojas** also inquired about the bilingual immersion programs in the district. Ms. Kershner responded that the question can create more opportunities for creating more immersion programs but mentioned that education materials are hard to obtain for languages that aren't frequently used in the state.

**Vice-Chair Rachel** inquired about the dual language programs and the trend that seems to be that it is popular amongst English native speakers learning a new language, versus native foreign-language speakers learning English. Ms. Kershner mentioned that trend is more aligned with the OLA program and the reasoning behind the trend. Vice-Chair Rachel also inquired about ELPAC and suggestions the Committee can do to assist in community awareness.

**Member Weinstein** inquired if the district has greater demand for a bilingual program that cannot be met by the district. Ms. Kershner responded that there is a current waiting list so there is a demand. Member Weinstein also discussed the Look Act and the Seal of Biliteracy. Ms. Kershner briefly discussed the updates to the current Seal of Biliteracy program and the current challenges the district is facing regarding awarding eligible students a Seal of Biliteracy on their diplomas.

**Member Fantini** inquired about the demographics of current ELL students, the OLA program, opportunities for increasing foreign language classes/travel programs, and the district obtaining bilingual educators/teachers. Ms. Kershner will obtain more data on demographics to distribute to the members,

**Student Member Killian** discussed the CRLS extension school and its current hybrid format. Dr. Turk provided the history of the extension school model and implementation which started through a grant. Dr. Greer also mentioned that the data is extremely favorable for the CRLS Extension School.

**Member Wilson** asked for clarification and background on the ACCESS test and if the test is a standardized test. Ms. Kershner provided more context on the ACCESS test and clarified that it is a standardized test in forty-two states for English language learners. The test assesses the academic English language across content areas in four domains –reading, writing, speaking, and listening. ELL students in K-12 take the test annually. The result of the test will assist the district in the proficiency levels of the students. Students who score 4.2 in proficiency are eligible to leave the ELL program. **Member Wilson** asked if the students who take the ACCESS test still have to take the MCAS. Students take both tests in a school year - the ACCESS test takes place in the Winter and MCAS in the spring. First-year students, new to the country do not take the ELA MCAS.

**Mayor Siddiqui** requested for any data surrounding the ELL program asked by Member Fantini, to be forwarded to the Superintendent, so she can share in the weekly.

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

**7c. Consent Agenda:**

Mayor Siddiqui removed **#22-37**.

On the following roll call vote, items **#22-38 through #22-42** were adopted: Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas ABSENT; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

**#22-38, Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School**

**Department**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee 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:

| Program             | #        | Amount              |
|---------------------|----------|---------------------|
| Day Program         | 3        | \$131,380.28        |
| Residential Program |          |                     |
| 45 Day Program      |          |                     |
| Total               | <u>3</u> | <u>\$131,380.28</u> |

**#22-39, Contract Award**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for fresh produce, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

Guaranteed Fresh Produce, Inc., 35 Iyannough Road, Hyannis, for the period of March 16, 2022, to April 30, 2022, in the amount of \$35,303.75.

**#22-40, Contract Award**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for Special Education Staffing Services, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

The Stepping Stones Group, 2568 Trailridge Drive East, Suite 100, Lafayette, Co for the period of March 15, 2022, to June 30, 2022, in the amount of \$38,760.00.

**#22-41, Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following donation as described:

1. An in-kind donation of a Sharway standard violin made by an individual donor to the Visual & Performing Arts Department.

**#22-42, Contract Award**, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for Materials & Software, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

NCS Pearson Inc., PO Box 599700, San Antonio, TX, for the period of September 1, 2021, to June 30, 2022, in the revised amount of \$33,382.18.

**8. Non-Consent Agenda:**

**#22-37, Approval of Agreement Regarding Cambridge Education Association Unit E Educational Stipend for School Years 2019-2020 & 2020-2021**, be adopted as follows: That the School Committee ratify and approve the Agreement regarding the Cambridge Education Association Unit E Educational Stipend for Schools Years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021

A brief discussion followed on **#22-37**.

**Member Wilson** inquired about the funds for the recommendation and wherein the budget (accounts) will the stipend funds come out. Ms. Spinner responded that based on projections, these funds can be out of the district salary line. **Member Wilson** also inquired if the stipend will be paid for upcoming years. Ms. Spinner clarified that the funds are for previous years (due to being missed on the payroll side). The stipend for the current school year was paid in December 2021.

On the following roll call vote, **#22-37** was adopted: Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Member Rojas requested a suspension of the rules to be included in the roll call on the vote of the Contract Awards **#22-38** through **#22-42**.

On the following roll call vote, the rules were suspended for the purpose of adding Member Rojas to the Contract Awards **#22-38 through #22-42**: Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

On the following roll call vote, Member Rojas was added to the vote **#22-38 through #22-42**: Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA, Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

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

**#22-43 Report of March 7, 2022, Special Education and Student Supports Sub-Committee**

A brief discussion followed on **#22-43**

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Weinstein, **#22-43** was adopted via voice vote.

**10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolence):**

**#22-44 Motion by Member Fantini**

WHEREAS: Mike Ananis, Executive Director of RSTA since 2004, will be retiring after eighteen years of exemplary service to our students; and

WHEREAS: Mike's career in education has spanned over fifty-one years in several school districts concluding in Cambridge, the city in which he was born and raised, growing up on Fayette Street and attending Longfellow school when it was a K-8 school and the city where his father also attended Cambridge Public Schools and graduated from Rindge Technical in 1933; and

WHEREAS: Mike is a distinguished graduate of Harvard College, where he was a senior on the undefeated football team that played Yale in 1968 in which Yale was heavily favored to win and led the game 29-13 in the last seconds, Harvard, tied the game scoring 16 points in the final 42 seconds; and

WHEREAS: [The Harvard Crimson](#) declared victory with the headline, "Harvard Beats Yale 29-29" and this game would come to be known as "the most famous football game in Ivy League history"; and

WHEREAS: Mike was a 3-time All-Ivy and 2-time All-American lacrosse player for Harvard; and  
WHEREAS: Mike has actively supported the Rindge Alumni Association, the oldest public-school alumni association in the United States, by welcoming graduates to RSTA and sharing student accomplishments and awards with the Association, and being named an Honorary Member of the Rindge Tech Class of 1964; and

WHEREAS: During his tenure as the Executive Director of RSTA, Mike brought an impressive ability to strategically build community partnerships; and

WHEREAS: Mike has worked tirelessly to implement RSTA's mission and vision, and secured DESE approval of all 12 RSTA Chapter 74 programs, allowing students to explore potential careers and the twelve career pathways for students; and

WHEREAS: Mike has hired excellent staff and supported their development as professional teachers by his supervision and his providing of needed tools and materials to ensure their effective and efficient practice as educators; and

WHEREAS: Mike was instrumental in building not only the Biotechnology program at RSTA, bringing together a Program Advisory Committee with members of the Harvard, MIT, and the Cambridge biotech community, but also every one of the Program Advisory Committees for all 12 Chapter 74 programs whose job it was to support and guide the RSTA staff in keeping both equipment and curriculum up-to-date; and

WHEREAS: Furthermore, Mike played an instrumental role in expanding Cooperative Education and other workplace learning activities which connected our students with practical opportunities in their chosen field especially in Health Assisting, Carpentry, Engineering, Early Education, and Creative Design; and

WHEREAS: Mike has earned the respect, admiration, and gratitude of so many throughout the Cambridge community and has made a lasting impact on our students by providing them with the knowledge of their chosen field with an emphasis on the development of future-oriented skills; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee extend its congratulations, thanks, and appreciation to Mike Ananis for his service to Cambridge Public Schools and wish him a joyful retirement; and be it further

RESOLVED: That a formal copy of this Resolution be prepared by the Executive Secretary to the School Committee to be presented to Mike Ananis.

A brief discussion followed on **#22-44**.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, **#22-44** was adopted via a voice vote.

**#22-45 Joint Motion by Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui, Vice-Chair Rachel in collaboration with Student Member Killian and Member Vera-DeGraff**

WHEREAS: The Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) provides a set of post-secondary scholarships that are open for any student to apply to; and

WHEREAS: There have often been access barriers regarding students' abilities to apply for said scholarships, such as lack of dedicated time, Wi-Fi access, and more; and

WHEREAS: For the past six years, community partners have united to run a scholarship workshop for CRLS seniors to alleviate some of these accessibility barriers; and

WHEREAS: Over fifty students attended the past scholarship workshop, held over the course of five weeks virtually; and

WHEREAS: This year and last year's workshop required extra coordination due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and was presented with all of the complications that come with hosting an event on Zoom; and

WHEREAS: Multiple students were able to explore scholarship options, receive help editing their essays, and successfully submit their applications; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge School Committee and Superintendent go on record extending their deepest gratitude to the community partners who assisted in creating a successful scholarship workshop, including The Work Force Program, EnRoot Education, Cambridge School Volunteers, uAspire, Breakthrough Greater Boston, and The Office of Workforce Development; and be it further

RESOLVED: That a formal copy of this resolution be prepared by the Executive Secretary of the School Committee and be forwarded to each of the community partners listed above.

A brief discussion followed on **#22-45**.

**Member Wilson** provided context about the resolution and thanked all of the community partners (The Work Force Program, EnRoot Education, Cambridge School Volunteers, uAspire, Breakthrough Greater Boston, and The Office of Workforce Development) for their continued support in scholarship workshops over the past six years. Over the five-week workshop, fifty scholars submitted applications. Scholarship night will be held in May.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Weinstein, **#22-45** was adopted via a voice vote.

**11. Announcements:**

**Member Weinstein** announced that the Young Artist Exhibit for grades nine through twelve is open on Third Street. There is an opening celebration on March 24<sup>th</sup>. More information can be found on Multicultural Arts Center's website.

**Mayor Siddiqui** announced that the Mayor's Office is hosting a Women's History Month Art contest this month for students in grades six through eight.

**12. Late Orders: None**

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

**Email communications:**

✓ **Dan Monahan**

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Vice-Chair Rachel, it was voted, on a voice vote, to adjourn the meeting (8:31 p.m.)

Attest:

*Ariel B. Kennebrew*

Ariel B. Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee