



**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)

Special Meeting

March 28, 2023

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a budget workshop to review the FY24 Proposed Budget

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 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 a roll call of members present: Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson ~~ABSENT~~; Member Fantini PRESENT; Member Hunter PRESENT; Vice-Chair Rachel PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Member Wilson joined the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

Mayor Siddiqui turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who gave a brief overview of adjustments made to the budget based on School Committee feedback from the Budget Workshop on March 23rd.

Adjustments included:

- Continued Extended Learning Time program at the FMA & M.L.K schools. The state will no longer fund the grant for the program and to continue this the Superintendent is reallocating the \$700K funds she initially budgeted for universal free lunch. The Governor's supplemental budget bill includes continued funding for a universal free lunch pilot in the state.
- Reinstating the Design Lab Coach Position. This was made by reducing temporary salaries in the Curriculum and Instruction Budget.
- Funding Summer Program Scholarships. The funding source is unexpended FY23 balances in the ESSER II and ESSER III grants.

The full presentation can be found on the website.

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

Member Fantini expressed his concerns for the Kennedy-Longfellow School support notably advocating for the option of co-teachers for the 3rd-grade class and the renewal of some first-year non-renewal of teacher contracts. Dr. Greer responded that those non-renewals are due to licensing issues as DESE is no longer supporting educators with emergency licenses as educators will need to be fully licensed going forward. **Member Fantini** inquired about the \$600,000 in new positions and was interested in reducing the number of new positions and modifying titles to some, notably the Executive Director of College and Career Pathways to a lower-level title. He is undecided regarding the budget and the framework. The district uses federal funds to implement positions and now that grant funds are coming to an end, some of those implemented positions are being eliminated in this budget. There are no general fund reductions but some of the valued positions implemented with ESSER funding are needed as they are impactful to the Cambridge Public School community. **Mayor Siddiqui** clarified that ESSER funding was not meant to be permanent. Dr. Greer responded that the district would hold a career fair for those who are impacted by positions that were implemented under ESSER funding to allow them the opportunity to apply for open positions in the district. The goal of the ESSER hiring was initially for one year but was extended due to the reopening of schools. The district is trying to create structures and avoid a funding cliff to ensure high academic and social outcomes for students. **Member Fantini** inquired about more support for Math Circle and if there will be a position dedicated to internship assistance.

Member Weinstein discussed the reduction of some staffing hired with ESSER funding and expressed concern for the supports in place from the student perspective. Dr. Greer responded that each elementary school has a minimum of two interventionists and 5 general paraprofessionals that can be dispersed based on need. There are additional paras in the general fund for all the elementary schools. **Member Weinstein** inquired about additional support for high-need students. Claire Spinner responded that the district annually plans and allocates additional support for the schools. **Member Weinstein** asked how the district ensures there is no over-enrollment of students in classrooms. CFO Spinner responded that the district does well with predictions so it has not experienced over-enrollment but in the event that does happen, the ELT team will get together to determine what additional supports are needed.

Member Hunter expressed her agreement with Member Fantini regarding the renaming of positions and supports a delay of the budget and is interested in the allocation of the budget in terms of schools that have programs for students with higher needs receiving less funding than schools that do not have as much programming. Dr. Greer responded that the administration is preparing a document for the Committee and will have an explanation very soon that will be a part of the addendum to the proposed budget.

Member Wilson discussed the co-teacher proposal at the Kennedy-Longfellow School. Going back to the Covid responses there was a lot of collaborative spaces for educators to come together. Co-teaching is a benefit not only to the staff but to the students as well. **Member Wilson** also expressed support and the need for Math Circle and more equitable Global studies opportunities for students in the district. **Member Wilson** also inquired about the implementation of more administrative positions in the district although some positions were made through ESSER funding were being eliminated.

Mayor Siddiqui discussed the timing of the delay of the budget vote as the timeline to delay the budget is very tight as it needs to go before the City Council on May 10th and a school vacation week makes it a challenge to delay the vote. Although there are concerns about budget translations, it is noted to be included in the next year's budget planning.

Member Rojas expressed his appreciation for the changes in the budget, but the consensus is that there is enough support for the budget and based on the discussion tonight, it seems like the district may need an Executive Director position and not just a direct-level position, the employee and labor personnel position, and discussed cost-effectiveness with hiring. Given that the district has a different infrastructure than the city and based on feedback, he supports the implementation of a cybersecurity personnel position. Dr. Greer will follow up regarding the reassessing of the director position. She also clarified the reasoning for the implementation of an employee and labor position.

Vice Chair Rachel inquired about the district's efforts in retaining staff of color and thanked the administration for the adjustments made in the budget based on community and committee feedback. Dr. Greer stated that the HR department has engaged in a lot of recruitment efforts for the retention of staff of color along with pathway programs for professional development. She also requested a list of educators hired with ESEER funding that have professional teacher status and still have a position in the district.

Member Hunter inquired about school improvement plans and how they are distributed to the school communities and the deadline for schools to submit their improvement plans and if they are given to the Superintendent before the budget process. Dr. Greer provided additional clarity on the student Improvement process. The school improvement plans are currently on a two-year cycle, so she did not receive a plan during this budget process.

Mayor Siddiqui discussed the importance of the district having synergy with the Office of Early Education and the implementation of early college initiatives. Although it is a strong budget, she agrees with her Committee colleagues regarding some of the comments and concerns they have brought up during the meeting.

Member Wilson inquired about the overall look at outcomes and how the district accessed its investments, particularly with in-house positions. Dr. Greer responded that the district plan is the driver regarding assessments based on its goals and targets in the plan. In terms of personnel, evaluations are made, and their evaluation goals are tied into the district plan.

On a motion by Member Fantini, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Hunter YEA; Vice Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA. (7:52 p.m.)

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee