

May 24, 2023

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Virtual Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee Report
Wednesday, May 24, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media
Studio 454 Broadway,
Cambridge, MA**

Called for the purpose of discussing the ongoing long-range Facilities Condition Assessment and Master Planning project, for sharing any post-COVID protocol transitions being undertaken in light of the conclusion of the federal government's declaration of a public health emergency related to COVID-19 and for the district's new Chief Operating Officer to provide comments and a summary of findings following the completion of three months with the Cambridge Public Schools.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Rojas, (Chair), Member Fantini

Other School Committee Members Present: Vice Chair Rachel, Member Hunter

Others Present: Vedad Konjic, Facilities Director, David Murphy, Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Carolyn L. Turk, Deputy Superintendent

Chair Rojas started the meeting at 6:02 p.m. and read the call of the meeting. He outlined the meeting's agenda and goals for the discussion which included:

- Discussing the ongoing long-range Facilities Condition Assessment and Master Planning project
- Sharing any post-COVID protocol transitions being undertaken in light of the conclusion of the federal government's declaration of a public health emergency related to COVID-19
- For the district's new Chief Operating Officer to provide comments and a summary of findings following the completion of three months with the Cambridge Public Schools.

Chair Rojas highlighted the agreements of the meeting (below):

- Speak and listen from the heart (respect)
- Step up/step back (watch air time)
- Expect and accept non-closure (work in progress)
- Bike rack (list of things that are important but should be addressed another time)
- Public comment would be limited to 3 minutes to allow for a broader discussion.

Chair Rojas led round robin introductions and participants to share their favorite spring activities.

Chair Rojas turned the meeting over to Mr. Murphy and Dr. Turk to share agenda-related updates. Mr. Murphy shared the following slides which can be found on this [website](#). He discussed the Facilities Condition Assessment and the Master Planning Project. CPS is undergoing a comprehensive analysis of long-term infrastructure issues and challenges. The analysis was commissioned in spring 2022. CPSD is partnering with the DLR Group, an architectural firm with a history of working with CPSD, which is a benefit to his team. Potential projects include: systems modernization, summer projects, expansion (short of full rebuild) and rebuild. Following his remarks, Mr. Murphy opened the floor for questions. **Member Fantini** agreed that the historical partnership with a colleague from the DLR Group is very helpful to CPSD and highlighted her involvement with the highly positive MLK and Putnam Ave projects. **Member Fantini** asked when the report would be completed. Mr. Murphy shared that the report would be publicly available in the 2023 calendar year. **Member Fantini** asked about the ventilation issues post-COVID. Mr. Murphy shared that current discussions have covered the environmental quality of CPS buildings and it is

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a high-priority issue in the short and long term. **Member Fantini** asked about the possibility of state reimbursements. Mr. Murphy confirmed that the DLR Group will identify possible partnerships and no options will be eliminated.

Member Fantini asked if current discussions included expanded space for RSTA and the new pre-K program. Mr. Murphy acknowledged that RSTA is always top-of-mind as vocational programs are expected to increase in the future. Currently, there are no plans for CRLS given its somewhat recent upgrades. As the team looks at elementary schools, early learning spaces for pre-K are part of these conversations. The primary focus of the report are buildings that have not been built or rebuilt in the last 10 years. **Chair Rojas** inquired about the timing of the School Committee's access to the report. Mr. Murphy is hopeful for the early fall and acknowledged that the School Committee's meeting schedule and availability will impact the report's availability and discussions. Mr. Murphy is unable to determine how long the public dialogue will take place. The report's analysis outlines long-term pathways that could unfold over decades. **Chair Rojas** noted that a fall discussion should be scheduled in the very near future. Mr. Murphy concurred that there is an urgency to the discussions as CPSD wants to implement action items on the heels of the report. He emphasized the community needs to understand the long-term investment, financial and otherwise, and that the vision will impact future generations. Dr. Turk agreed with Mr. Murphy's sentiments and that there is a tendency to think about the "right now" but the CPSD community should be planning for 20-30 years forward. **Chair Rojas** asked about the increased costs and if the team was planning to go back to the city. Mr. Murphy will follow up with this information. **Member Hunter** inquired if the report would prioritize immediate needs, noting the issues with the Longfellow building. Mr. Murphy confirmed this was the case. **Member Fantini** asked if the planning was tied to the city's bond issue and stressed the importance of CPSD timing aligning with the city's budget planning for capital projects. He also highlighted that CPSD enrollment could have an impact.

The conversation turned to the COVID transition protocols. Dr. Turk gave an update outlining the gradual rollback of COVID protocols and highlighting the ending of the federal emergency status. She feels positive about CPSD's current state. They are archiving CPSD's COVID manual but are prepared to pivot should the landscape warrant. She highlighted the commitment of the Health & Safety Working Group and the members of the Situation Room. Next year, students will receive 7 testing kits and staff will receive 3 kits. Testing will not be mandated but encouraged. CPSD will continue to encourage masking in the school nurse offices.

Member Fantini asked if CPSD would continue to track data such as ventilation and air quality. Dr. Turk highlighted that these data points were tracked pre-COVID and CPSD will continue to do so. The working groups will meet less regularly but will continue to have touchpoints throughout the year. More specific COVID-related data was housed at Johns Hopkins and funneled to CPSD. Since the federal mandate was lifted, this data is no longer tracked by Johns Hopkins. Families report COVID cases voluntarily. **Vice Chair Rachel** expressed her gratitude to Dr. Turk and her team and asked why staff will be receiving only 3 testing kits next year as opposed to 7. Dr. Turk highlighted that staff members have easier access to testing kits and CPSD chose to focus on families who have more of a hardship. **Vice Chair Rachel** suggested that lower-paid CPSD staff should have access to surplus kits. **Chair Rojas** echoed his appreciation for Dr. Turk and her team and hopes to formally recognize them in an upcoming School Committee resolution. **Chair Rojas** asked if there are lessons from COVID that CPSD will keep as best practices. Dr. Turk highlighted that the practice of keeping windows open would be maintained. Mr. Murphy emphasized that refillable water stations and sanitizers would also become the norm. Additionally, he stressed that the pandemic clearly illustrated the critical importance of in-person instruction.

The discussion turned to Mr. Murphy's reflections after 3 months in his role. He expressed appreciation for the strong team he inherited and their institutional knowledge. His role is reliant on building relationships and navigating the CPSD landscape. He hopes to empower school communities to serve students well. He intends to identify barriers and chip away at them. **Chair Rojas** asked for more details

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regarding specific barriers. Mr. Murphy shared the immediate issue of pest control in some aging buildings and providing support for the role of human capital managers. **Member Hunter** shared her experiences visiting CPSD schools and the array of check-in systems throughout the district. Mr. Murphy agreed that visitor management systems are a priority for his team. He also identified the Communications Response System as a priority. **Member Fantini** inquired about the departments under Mr. Murphy's leadership, and he replied that he had 5 direct reports – safety, transportation, facilities, food services, and student registration.

Chair Rojas thanked Dr. Turk and Mr. Murphy and highlighted the continued support of the School Committee for their work. The meeting concluded at 7:31 p.m.