



**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

January 23, 2024

Called for a 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a budget workshop to discuss FY25 Enrollment and Budget Projections.

Members Present: Vice-Chair Hunter, Member Harding, Member Hudson (Remote), Member Rojas, Member Rachel, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Ivy Washington, Interim Chief Financial Officer; Dr. Madera, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools; Dr. Carolyn Turk, Director of Educational Policy (Mayor's Office); Mr. Fernandez, Chief Equity Officer

Mayor Simmons 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 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 Harding; PRESENT; Member Hudson PRESENT; Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Vice Chair Hunter PRESENT; Mayor Simmons PRESENT.

Mayor Simmons turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who along with Interim CFO Washington, gave an overview of the proposed FY25 budget which included:

- Current enrollment projections
- General Fund estimates (salaries and benefits, facilities and energy, materials/services, food services subsidy, and technology)
- Known FY25 increases (cost of living adjustments, transportation costs, contract increases)
- Funding sources for the budget

The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, Mayor Simmons opened the floor to the Committee members for questions, discussion, and feedback based on the presentation:

Member Hudson inquired about the attribution of the year-over-year increase in general funding from FY21 to FY24. Ms. Washington shared that the increases were mainly for salaries but they were more balanced with other aspects including transportation.

Vice Chair Hunter asked about staffing and the new positions that were added due to ESSER funding and contracts. Ms. Washington shared that all of the listed positions in the presentation were added by ESSER funding. Not all contracts were new due to ESSER funding, some contracts were already in the General Fund but were expanded due to ESSER funding including Early College, the Benjamin Franklin Institute, etc. **Vice Chair Hunter** asked what will be replaced since the district no longer has ESSER funding and the Superintendent shared that no decisions have been made regarding replacements.

Member Rachel discussed her surprise to see the list of positions that were funded by ESSER that may be eliminated in FY25 and how will some of those positions be transferred into the General Fund. Superintendent Greer shared that she and the district have been transparent about ESSER funding, and some positions made and supported by ESSER funding were decided before she arrived in the district. The goal to address the biggest cliff was to remove some short-term ESSER positions into the General Fund that included positions in strategic tutoring. Dr. Greer shared that data will be a major drive in decision-making to determine if things align with the district's strategic plan. **Member Rachel** shared that she anticipates the Superintendent will come back with ESSER positions aligned with the district's strategic plan.

Member Weinstein asked for clarity about the ESSER position expenditures and the district's process of decision-making for their positions. Dr. Greer highlighted the district's approach which included analyzing, dissecting, and reviewing goals, etc. She shared that there are decisions that need to be made to continue certain initiatives that were previously funded with ESSER funding that the district will not have in the FY25 budget.

Member Rojas discussed the significant increase in English language learners and asked about the impact of ELL students in the past year. Dr. Greer shared that there are a lot of variables as Cambridge is a sanctuary city. There is a shelter for migrants and after five days, children are enrolled in the district. **Member Rojas** asked if the projected school budget had been approved by the City Manager. Dr. Greer shared that the budget has been approved by the City Manager.

Member Harding asked the Superintendent and Ms. Washington if they anticipate any surprise budget expenses, what are the values of the curriculum, and what the district thinks is the biggest investment of the budget. He shared there are some changes to the MCAS structures in science and social studies for the next years that may require some additional professional development learning components and if there will be dedicated funding in the FY25 budget for that. Dr. Greer shared that there are some curriculum investments that the district has made in recent years and during the past budget cycle.

Member Harding inquired about Social-Emotional Learning and if there are some strategic student supports that will be recognized as a result of the pandemic. Dr. Greer shared that one of the recent initiatives that CPSD has supported in Social Emotional Learning includes additional social workers and a Director of SEL. The struggle the district and families are facing is additional SEL support beyond the school day and building out mental health support with partners.

Mayor Simmons discussed the current shelter for migrants and whether the FY25 budget enrollment projections reflect that there will be an increase in migrants in the upcoming months. Dr. Greer mentioned that the district is still determining the best support for the influx of migrant children including placements,

resources, etc., and they will have better insight in the upcoming weeks. **Mayor Simmons** expressed that CPD has a commitment to ensure that these children are supported.

Member Hudson inquired about the strategic initiatives and if there is anything the district may not achieve in this budget due to potential budget cuts. Dr. Greer shared that at the moment, it is still too early to determine as all of the data has not been reviewed and all departments have not submitted their reflections. **Member Hudson** inquired about the feedback the district is anticipating from all of the departments and the anticipated date on when the district and School Committee expect the analysis and outcomes of the data.

Mayor Simmons discussed the importance of having a vision to ensure the district is having the best interests and supports in mind for the children and families in the budget.

Ms. Washington highlighted that the Community Budget Meeting will be on Thursday, February 1st at 6:00 p.m. at CRLS. Attendees are also welcome to join via Zoom. Staff community budget meetings will be announced in the upcoming week.

Mayor Simmons concluded the meeting by thanking Ms. Washington and Dr. Greer for their presentation for the evening.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Harding on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned: Member Harding YEA; Member Hudson YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA. (7:56 p.m.)

Attest:



Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee