



Special Meeting  
May 7, 2020

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
(Official Minutes)

Called for 6:00 P.M. A virtual special meeting of the School Committee with Public Comment was held for the purposes of engaging the community in a conversation about a COVID-19 plan, in light of the extended school closures and updated remote learning guidance provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on Friday, April 24th.

Members Present: Mayor Siddiqui, Vice-Chair Bowman, Member Fantini, Member Rojas, Member Weistein, Member Rachel, Member Wilson.

Also Present: Superintendent Kenneth Salim, Dr. Carolyn Turk, Claire Spinner, James Maloney, Maureen MacFalane, Barbara Allen, Lindsay Rinkus, Dr. Alexis Morgan, Dr. Michelle Madera, Steve Smith

Student School Committee representatives present: Sophie Green, Hersh Kanner,

A quorum of the School Committee being present, Mayor Siddiqui called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and read the call of the meeting. She also read the Open Meeting Law that has been approved for remote participation.

- Roll Call vote was taken to start the meeting:

Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Chair Bowman, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Rojas, Mr. David Weinstein, Ms. Rachel, Ms. Wilson

The Public Comment portion of tonight's meeting was opened after the introduction and discussion of the appeal letter to DESE.

The following citizens spoke on behalf of tonight's meeting:

Karen	Dobak	Allston Street	Cambridge	remote learning
Tony	Clark	PO Box	Cambridge	Remote Learning
Lisa	Downing	Clay St	Cambridge	COVID response
Daria	Johnson	Leighton St	Cambridge	Virtual learning
Ena	Valenzuela	South Normandy Avenue	Cambridge	There are none
Rosalie	Rippey	Washington Street, Unit B	Cambridge	Distance Learning Plan

Daria	Johnson	Leighton St	Cambridge	Virtual learning
Caitlin	O'Donnell	Gold Star Rd.	Cambridge	The district's COVID-19 plan, in light of the extended school closures and updated remote learning guidance provided by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on Friday, April 24th.
Dan	Monahan	Lexington Ave	Cambridge, MA 02138	COVID-19 Response
Allison	Wade	Business Terrace	Hyde Park	School closures and educator expectations.
Andrea	Parker	Huron Ave	Cambridge	Transition from emergency to distance learning
Frank	Barnes Jr.	Clark Street	Cambridge	Remote Learning
Safrya	Browne-Chrisme	Third street apt604,	Cambridge	My daughter is a middle school student and she is required to maintain the same schedule as if she was present in the school building. She has 8 classes and every morning she is required to go online and check her email for posted assignments. The problem that I am running into is that assignments are posted after 10 am. Sometimes, some classes don't post until 2 p.m. Now anyone who has a middle school age child, knows that it can be difficult to motivate your child to finish school work, especially when you have to wait that long for assignments to be posted. I have come to the understanding that teachers are meeting in the morning. Would it not make sense to put the meetings off the end of the school day and make sure all assignments are posted for the day by 10 a.m.?
Tim	Ogino	Lowell St.	Somerville	CRLS math educator with comments on Distance Learning.
Misha	Rosenberg	Jefferson Street	Cambridge	Covid-19 plan and remote learning
Ruth	Ryan Allen	Fenno Street	Cambridge	Remote learning recovery plan
Rachel	Otty	Robinson St	Somerville	Proposal to increase demands on teachers during the remainder of the 20/21 school year.
Betsy	Vizcaino	Sidney	Cambridge	Remote learning and recovery
Ruth	Ryan Allen	Fenno Street	Cambridge	Remote learning and recovery plan
Jamie	Lichtenstein	Harvard St	Cambridge	Covid 19 planning
Lisette	Williams	River Street	Cambridge	Remote learning
Paula	Caruso	York St.	Cambridge	Remote Learning

On a motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Member Rojas, the following roll call vote was taken to close public comment: Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui introduced Superintendent Salim to speak on the COVID 19 and the School Closure Update Plan.

Superintendent starts the presentation with thanks to all the staff, parents, caregivers who spoke during public comment and who are in attendance this evening.

- [COVID 19 UPDATE and SCHOOL CLOSURES](#)

Which will entail the following:

Part 1: Planning for the short-, mid-, and long-term

- Short, mid-, and long-term planning
- Critical Domains for planning and decision-making
- Leveraging School Committee subcommittees
- Leveraging Community Perspectives & Expert Advice

Part 2: Learning & Improving

- Preliminary Themes from Family Needs Survey
- Key Successes & Challenges

Part 3: Implementing Distance Learning & Support Plan (short-term)

- School Examples

Part 4: Preview

- Summer 2020 (mid-term)
- Emerging Vision for School Year 2021 and Summer 2021 (long-term)

**Superintendent Salim**, introduces the Principals, teachers, staff from the lower and upper schools as well as the CRLS administration to speak on behalf of the presentation.

Upon completion of the presentation, questions and commentary come from the members.

**Mayor Siddiqui** - Expresses thanks for presentation but would like data and numbers to support what is being presented and seen across the district.

Have the focus not be on the examples presented tonight but have information for planning for short, mid and long term goals.

**Vice Chair Bowman** affirms the work being done by the educators and staff across the district that the majority is going above and beyond the scope of their work. Would like to elevate the conversation and have the public be part of it. Thanks to the District for its transparency.

Goes on to say that she appreciates the transparency of our administration and our educators, but acknowledging their heart, they put in a lot of hard work. And as with perspective, there is an openness and willingness to be transparent and hear critical feedback which will be needed. Points out that a speaker wanted clarification, what is the role of the school committee?

Remind the audience what the roles of the School Committee are: Budget, Oversight and Policy making.

Recommends that the Sub Committee meetings may be a way to fully address all the vastly different issues.

**Member Wilson** -thanks all who participated this evening. Expresses support and gratitude for Teacher Appreciation Week.

Would like to know how we are building on or leveraging the opportunities to continue to work with and enhance what services are looking like for our kids with special needs? Utilizing the Colleges and Universities to help our students. District Learning models? What schools are offering Town Halls and what is the feedback?

**Superintendent Salim**, answers about the OSS piece, that staff have been using different tools, even during this period of being able to document and create remote learning plans for individual students as part of the work, figuring out how to look at ways of providing services and supports in this remote learning environment, many of those services were not designed certainly with this type of modality in mind. This is going to be an area that is going to need to be really examined closely and looked at as supporting our educators, with the colleges and universities in mind. There has been contact with the liaisons of the different universities. One of their reports was on student success plans and how they can be used as a real central tool for collaboration across different stakeholders and sectors in our school time. City partners, other services, as well as in the city.

**Member Weinstein** begins his portions of this evening's meeting by thanking and expressing his deep appreciation for the educators and staff of the CPSD as well as acknowledging Teacher Appreciation Week.

Speaks on the preliminary survey data as part of this idea of making sure we have systems to collect data about student engagement and about student learning, that it should be compared across the district. Another concern, has been making sure we have consistency across the schools in between teachers, even within schools. So how do we capture knowledge of what's going on?

Want to talk about preparedness and the value of being over prepared for the short, mid, long term planning. Digital Literacy, Student learning and engagement, how can we get the data?

The District should be clear if we are achieving and responding and supporting when the public asks.

**Member Rojas**, begins with his thanks to all who have participated. Would like to know what the Budget is going to look like? With specific anticipated savings from transportation and the potential of the appeal being granted. Speaks about the safety of the facilities How is summer camp going to look?

He also remarks from the presentation that the District focuses on opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

How are we going to review and approve the new curriculum? Will there be a chance? Concerned with students continuing engagement. Making remote learning more dynamic.

**Superintendent Salim**, answers and clarifies the \$2-million-dollar cost associated with the additional days are not part of FY 21 budget and will expand on Member Rojas questions at the next meeting.

**Member Rachel**, continues the discussion, with the following, adding thanks and gratitude to all the educators and senior administration. Comments on a posting. Without teachers, there are no other professionals. Remarking about this new profession of emergency remote teaching.

Would like to work with Epidemiologist, Bill Hannich (sp) again for his clinical thoughts on coming back for the Fall.

Worst case scenario planning must be on the forefront of thinking.

Wants to ensure that the Students and Educators of Color are part of the conversation and team.

Summer, what will that look like, engagement? I Want to understand more about the timeline of what are the answers for each of those scenarios. Rolling closures? What happens if everything's virtual?

To echo Member Weinstein, the district needs to over prepare.

**Superintendent Salim**, In respects to Summer programming, there will not be district wide summer school for every student as in years past. - What are ways we can break down some of the silos across different programs with stronger collaboration with DHSP and OST partners.

Social Distancing will be key - there will be some sort of blend - pilot.

Sub Committees will have opportunities to dive deeper into these issues. Different scenarios get complicated very fast.

**Member Fantini** began by thanking all who participated and commenting on all the great work that is to be done throughout the district during remote learning. How challenging it has been for the educators - very helpful for the citizens to hear the hard work that has been done.

Had a webinar today and some points and takeaways -education loss for math will be six month. Loss. This is an opportunity to redefine how the education system works. Customization is the trend for every child. Shift from factory model to individual success plans. Intensive tutoring and flexing scheduling.

Continue the work with The Children's Cabinet. It is essential that we're partners with everybody. Including engaging with the teacher's unions.

Capitalize on our Summer programs. Can we leverage them to do better things?

Remarks about the concept of special education reporting directly to the Superintendent. That should start sooner than later.

**Student School Committee Member Green** - thanks the Superintendent for his and the district's presentation. Would like to hear more about the drop in stations for mental health check ins.

Remarks what a great idea the student roundtable is.

**Superintendent Salim** answers, at the high school and some of the learning communities have opportunities for dropping so the district is looking at that model and seeing what other other ways to expand on that in terms of having specific counseling or mental health support.

**Student School Committee Member Kanner**, starts with thanking everyone in the presentation. How it was all useful information. Special thanks to all the teachers, teachers are amazing.

Highlights focus groups and to include students in those focus groups especially the Black Student Union.

The inconsistency with teaching a specific subject across the board -was a constant pre Covid. Is there specific standards for proving competency?

**Superintendent Salim**, follows up with prerequisite standards that have been identified by DESE that identify what is necessary for the next grade level. And that exists for basically the four core content

areas. And those frameworks are what are used by teachers in those areas to be able to do planning, and how assessments are designed, as well as their lessons.

**Mayor Siddiqui**, would like to organize questions around the budget, echoing what Member Rojas said, getting clarity on these onetime costs and what they could be is really relevant. We know it's going to be adequate. So how much are we planning and what will we need and to underscore that, and the second piece is the input from the families is pretty important. Requests a timeline for staff and students survey.

**Superintendent Salim**, The survey was launched over April vacation. And the window will have been three weeks. And then in terms of the staff and students survey, that is something still being mapped out. Do not want to over saturate with surveys.

**Mayor Siddiqui**, the more Data we can bring into the picture is critical. Case management. We do have some best practices and we know the testing piece is critical, Cambridge Health Alliance is offering pre testing for ages eight and up for the community, and the City has that capability to test all our residents.

Wants to know what the thinking and collaboration is with the Health Department. Hot spots? How long to use?

What are the practical realities? Need to think about the solutions and how we are getting there?

**Vice Chair Bowman**, clarifies for the public that this year's budget is \$213 million and the city manager has spoken about additional resources however, are a onetime cost. Once this plan is solidified a bit more. Having that forward thinking and planning is really critical. There will be substantial costs. Looking at all the components associated with social distancing, ie transportation costs. Also, scenario planning will be crucial.

**Superintendent Salim**, - these cost associated with COVID response will be one time fund, ie. CARES ACT. Costs that are not going into the general operating budget.

**Mayor Siddiqui**, reiterates that you can make adjustments and have flexibility within a budget. Talks about the City budget changing because of the pandemic.

**Superintendent Salim**, reminds that budgets also reflect collective bargaining units and there may be some limitations.

**Member Weinstein** brought up the Vassal Lane and Tobin School project moving forward.

**Member Wilson** would like some clarity on the survey that was sent out. Its demographics. Can any information be shared - will there be any additional measures to reach families?

**Superintendent Salim** answers that they worked with several liaisons with additional outreach in this past week, to be able to try to increase the response rate. And then with the final analysis, there will be some demographic breakdown.

**Superintendent Salim**, speaks on the State's task force and will be coming out with recommendations probably in early June. Some of those decisions are going to certainly have cost implications for every community. Will have an impact in terms of social distancing measures and other steps.

**Mayor Siddiqui** - Reiterates Member Rachel saying the DESE guidelines should be the floor not the ceiling. Thanks to the Community, Committee, and Administration for their comments, commentary and discussion. Will be working with the Superintendent on the school closure process, Budget process,

DESE guidelines and the appeal, COVID 19 response, the State's Task Force and future meetings. Please email Superintendent your comments and questions for the next meeting.

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Motion to adjourn by Member Wilson seconded by Mr. Weinstein, and subsequent vote was taken, Mayor Siddiqui (YEA), Ms. Bowman (YEA), Mr. Fantini (YEA), Mr. Rojas (YEA), Mr. David Weinstein (YEA), Ms. Rachel (YEA), Ms. Wilson (YEA). Meeting adjourned at 10:18pm.

Next meeting scheduled will be a virtual special meeting on **Tuesday, May 12th, 2020, 6PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Dever Wood  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee (temporary)