



## CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

**Regular Meeting**

**February 4, 2025**

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: Member Harding, Member Hudson, Vice Chair Hunter, Member Rachel ABSENT, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Others Present: Racecia Catchings, Chief People Officer, City of Cambridge (REMOTE), David Murphy, Interim Superintendent; Student Member Shimelis (REMOTE); Ivy Washington, Chief Financial Officer

**Mayor Simmons** in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and 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: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, PRESENT; Member Weinstein, PRESENT; Vice Chair Hunter, PRESENT; Member Harding, PRESENT; Member Hudson, PRESENT; Mayor Simmons, PRESENT

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

The following individuals were heard:

Dan Monahan, Lexington Ave, spoke regarding the **Superintendent's Update/Presentation**.  
Anne Coburn, Otis Street, spoke regarding the **Superintendent's Update/Presentation**.

**Mayor Simmons** kept Public Comment open until 6:30 p.m. should other citizens want to participate.

**Mayor Simmons** entertained a motion to suspend the rules to bring forth Recommendation **#25-015**.

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Harding, the rules were suspended bring forth **#25-015** on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA

**#25-015** Recommendation: Approval of the Memorandum of Agreement Between The Cambridge School Committee & Cambridge School Food Service Employee Association, SEU Local 888 for a Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Period of July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026

**Mayor Simmons** noted that Rae Catching, Chief People Officer, would be joining the vote on the City's behalf.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Weinstein, Recommendation **#25-015** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Ms. Catchings, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (7-1-0)

On a motion by Member Hudson, seconded by Member Harding, public comment was closed on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

**2. Student School Committee Report:**

Student Shimelis shared an update on the following:

- Availability of the CRLS Scholarship Portal
- CRLS Curriculum Night
- CRLS Youth Equity Summit
- Valentine's Day Fundraisers – carnation sales and singing Valentines
- Valentine's Day Spirit Week including a self-care fair
- Continued student engagement in the budget process

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

- January 7, 2025, Special Meeting
- January 8, 2025, Special Meeting
- January 15, 2025, Special Meeting
- January 21, 2025, Regular Meeting

On a motion by Member Rojas seconded by Member Harding on the following roll call vote, the records were accepted as presented: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

**4. Reconsiderations:** None

**5. Unfinished Business/Calendar:**

**#24-259 Tobin Montessori Preliminary Report – Member Hudson and Member Harding**

WHEREAS: The Tobin Montessori School was recently recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and by the Cambridge Public Schools Superintendent for its high student achievement;

WHEREAS: The Tobin Montessori School is leading the way within the Cambridge Public School District, delivering clear, measurable progress in narrowing gaps in achievement between students with different backgrounds – an issue that the District has long stated is its most important; and

WHEREAS: The School Committee went on record a year ago supporting the expansion of the and directed the Superintendent to "...provide a report and recommendation to the committee a plan of action for the possible next steps..."; and

WHEREAS: No report nor recommendation was ever made; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee request that the Superintendent provide a preliminary report on the feasibility of making this change, and a recommendation from the Superintendent as to whether next steps are

warranted and what those next steps would be, no later than December 31, 2024 (with the definition of preliminary to be determined by the Superintendent). Tobin Montessori program (specifically, "...to explore the recommendation of the American Montessori Association Accreditation team to extend the Tobin Montessori Upper Elementary Program to three years...") and referred the matter to the Superintendent "...for further review of the recommendations from the Accreditation team to explore implications of such a change including but not limited to the budget impact, upper school enrollment, and feeder patterns..."

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Hudson on the following roll call vote, **#24-259** would remain on Unfinished Business/Calendar: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

**#25-006 Dr. Robert S. Peterkin Condolence – Mayor E. Denise Simmons and Vice Chair Caroline Hunter**

WHEREAS: The School Committee was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin—a distinguished and visionary educator who leaves a profound legacy of advocacy for children’s rights, dedication to educational innovation, and an enduring impact on countless lives—on December 23, 2024; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin’s extraordinary 50-year career began in Albany, New York, where he taught emotionally disturbed children and founded an alternative school for high school dropouts, demonstrating his commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable students; and

WHEREAS: As Boston’s first Black public school Headmaster, Dr. Peterkin guided The English High School during the busing era, transforming it into an integrated Magnet School for the Arts, and he later served as Deputy Superintendent in Boston and Superintendent of Schools in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he introduced initiatives such as school-level decision-making, bilingual education, and specialized programs for African American boys; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Robert Peterkin continued his commitment to learning for excellence and equity and to providing a quality education to all students during his tenure as the Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools, 1984-1988, and

WHEREAS: Many of the educational initiatives by Dr. Robert Peterkin continue on today, including many of the recommendations of the Concerned Black Staff in the CBS Report, “An Enrollment Study of Minority Academic Achievement at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 1985-86”, that were added by Dr. Peterkin to the CPS District

Plan, including access to Algebra in the 8th grade, foreign language and advanced courses in the Upper Schools, the addition of a parent liaison at CRLS, and new standards for academic awards and rewards.

WHEREAS: In 1991, Dr. Peterkin joined Harvard University as Director of the Urban Superintendents Program, preparing a diverse cadre of urban school leaders, particularly women and persons of color, while serving as an indispensable mentor and advocate for educational equity; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Robert Peterkin was committed to diversifying the educational leadership, and encouraged, inspired and mentored a generation of diverse group of educational professionals, especially the Urban Superintendents, including Dr Carolyn Turk;

WHEREAS: Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dr. Peterkin contributed as an educational consultant, court appointed expert, and board member for organizations including the B.E.L.L. Foundation, National Urban Alliance, TERC, and Boston Youth Theater, further amplifying his impact on education and young people’s well-being; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin was a devoted husband to the late Louise Bauer, to whom he was married for 56 years, and a beloved community figure whose passions for jazz, the New York Yankees, and education reflected his vibrant character; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Peterkin’s warmth, wisdom, and unwavering belief in individuals’ potential inspired colleagues and students to rise to challenges and achieve their fullest potential, leaving an indelible imprint on the hearts and minds of those fortunate to know him; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the School Committee formally go on record in extending its deepest condolences to the family of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin for their tremendous loss; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Executive Secretary be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the family of Dr. Robert S. Peterkin on behalf of the entire School Committee.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Harding on the following roll call vote, **#25-006** was adopted as amended: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

**6. Awaiting Reports:** None

**7. 7a. Superintendent's Update:**

*The Interim Superintendent will provide an update on pending matters and highlight various initiatives taking place across CPS school communities including an update on the transition of the Kennedy-Longfellow School.*

Mr. Murphy gave an update primarily focused on the Kennedy-Longfellow (KLo) transition process. He noted that that the recent administration change was adding an additional layer to the process. He shared that all KLo families had been contacted and that 32 students would be participating in the special lottery. He underscored that he and his team intend to focus on the staffing implications of the KLo's closure. He noted the recent highly successful family engagement event at the Fletcher Maynard Academy and the decision to continue with its expanded learning time model at both the Fletcher Maynard and MLK. He underscored the importance of celebrating the KLo's history and ensuring that KLo students are warmly welcomed into their new school communities.

**7b. Presentations:**

*An update on the developing FY 26 operating budget for the Cambridge Public Schools.*

David Murphy, Interim Superintendent  
Ivy Washington, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Murphy and COO Washington gave the following presentation which can be found on this [website](#).

The FY2026 Proposed Budget Update & Discussion covered the following topics:

- Upcoming Budget Meeting Dates
- Cambridge Birth Rate History
- Enrollment Projections
- Strategic Initiatives
- District Plan's Major Focus Areas
- Challenges facing FY26
- Ongoing Work Streams
- Anticipated FY26 Federal Funding Amounts
- Items under revision due to financial and organization implications
- FY26 General Fund Estimates

Following the presentation, the group discussed the following topics:

- Determining the overall impact of grant funding
- Focusing on Educator Effectiveness and Teacher Evaluations
- Caregiver Academy Programming and Support
- Review of the RSTA Program and its Offerings
- Assessing the Effectiveness of the Falcon Block

- Strengthening Family Engagement Initiatives
- Continuing to implement the Train the Trainer Model for Professional Development
- Developing Programs to Retain Students Within the District
- Examining the Link Between Out-of-School Learning Opportunities and the Budget
- Exploring Alternative Education Opportunities Beyond RSTA
- Reviewing the Thrive Equity Audit
- Structuring the District to Build Durable School Communities
- Maximizing Accessibility to Preschool Programs
- Prioritizing ELA & Math to Ensure Student Success
- Updating the CPSD Website and Calendar, and Streamlining Communication Channels

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

7d. **Consent Agenda:**

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Harding the items **#25-017, #25-018, #25-119, #25-020** and **#25-021** were adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

**#25-017 Recommendation: Approval of Revisions to the Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Policy (Second Reading) be adopted as follows:** That the School Committee approve the revisions to the Sexual/Misconduct Title IX policy as detailed in the [attached document](#). (Second Reading)

**#25-018 Recommendation: Contract Award: Day & Residential Program Services not Available From the Cambridge School Department be adopted as follows:** That the School Committee award contracts to the institutions on the attached list in amounts not to exceed the shown rates, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the general fund and/or grant fund budget.

Description: SY24-25 Placement of students in private schools for implementation of educational plans in accordance with Chapter 766.

	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts:	1	\$38,874.00
Residential Program Contracts:		
45 Day Program Contracts:	1	\$27,200.25
Total	2	\$66,074.25

**#25-019 Recommendation: Contract Award: Star Dance School LLC: Dance Program be adopted as follows:** that the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Star Dance School, 323 Washington Street, Brighton MA for the period January 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025 in the amount of \$29,500.00.

**#25-020 Recommendation: Contract Award: WW Grainger: Facilities Equipment & Supplies be adopted as follows:** That the School Committee approve a contract with the following vendor, funds to be provided in accordance with the budget reference listed below. Procurement procedures for this purchase have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

WW Grainger, 100 Grainger Parkway, Lake Forest, IL for the period of January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025 in the amount of \$150,000.00.

**#25-021 Recommendation: Gifts/Miscellaneous Receipts be adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the following donations as described:**

DONATION - \$893.69 for Cambridgeport School from HELPSY in return for items collected in the school's clothing/book donation collection box. Funds will be used for the general support of the school.

IN-KIND - 280 printed uniform t-shirts donated to Fletcher Maynard Academy by the Cambridge Black Pastors Alliance.

**8. Non-Consent Agenda:**

**#25-016 Recommendation: Approval of Authorization for the Superintendent to Submit a Statement of Interest to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for the Replacement of the Cambridgeport School Building Roof be adopted as follows:**

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on February 4, 2025, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the School Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated no later than March 21, 2025 for the Cambridgeport School building located at 89 Elm Street which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future.

The funds are sought to be used for the replacement of the building's roof. The Elm Street building's roof approximately forty-five years old and has had multiple leaks repaired. This project falls under priority category number 5, which is for the replacement, renovation, or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility.

The Cambridge School Committee hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the City/School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

A brief discussion followed **#25-016** regarding the basic details of the SOI and the competitive grant process.

On a motion by Member Harding, seconded by Member Rojas, **#25-016**, was adopted on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0)

9. **School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):** None.

10. **Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolences):** None.

11. **Announcements:**

- **Vice Chair Hunter** shared that Amigos student, Adrian Davis, won the National Association for Bilingual Education 2025 in the middle school division. He was planning to make the trip to Atlanta to read his essay at the national conference. She shared the upcoming events, at PAUS - the Story of Self; and KLo's poetry exhibit
- **Member Harding** highlighted that the upcoming CRLS boys basketball game at home would showcase the seniors.
- **Mayor Simmons** highlighted that upcoming State of the City address on February 25 and the following events related to Black History Month:
  - In Our Midst: The Grace of the Black Church
  - The History of Black Churches in Cambridge
  - Black Leadership in Cambridge: Shaping our Future
  - Various Cambridge Public Library events

12. **Late Orders:** None

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

**Email communications:**

- ✓ Dan Monahan

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter ,seconded by Member Rojas, the meeting was adjourned on the following roll call vote: Member Rachel, ABSENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Mayor Simmons, YEA (6-1-0) (8:011 pm.)

Attest:



Katherine Christo  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee