

June 12, 2025

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Virtual Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee Report
Thursday, June 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA**

Called for the purpose of discussing the policy orders that the City Council has adopted related to exploring parking at CPSD secure parking lots and receive an update on Long-Range Facilities Condition Assessment.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Rojas, (Chair), Member Hudson, Member Rachel

Other Members Present: Vice Chair Hunter

Others Present: Vedad Konjic, Director of Facilities; Lee McCanne, Chief Information Officer; David Murphy, Interim Superintendent of Schools; City Councillor, Patricia Nolan; Jeffrey Parenti, Assistant Commissioner for Street Management/Traffic Director, Cambridge Department of Transportation; Maggie Rabidou, Operations Manager, Office of the COO; Brendon Roy, Director of the Capital Building Projects Department for the City of Cambridge; Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operating Officer; Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, City Councillor

Chair Rojas started the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and read the call of the meeting.

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 opened the meeting by asking attendees to share how they were spending their extra hours of daylight. He turned the meeting over to Interim Superintendent Murphy, who provided an update on the Long-Range Facilities and Conditions Assessment report completed by the DLR group. The report analyzes the school district's infrastructure, focusing on buildings built or renovated in the last 10 years.

Interim Superintendent Murphy discussed the financial capacity to launch building initiatives and the need for continued capital investment. He focused on the K-Lo building and explained plans to invest capital repairs to extend its shelf life. Interim Superintendent Murphy stated there will be a public meeting held on Monday, June 23, at to discuss the context of the school closure and the opportunities it presents. The public meeting will address specific investments planned for the FY26. He clarified that the K-Lo building will remain a Cambridge Public School building and emphasized the importance of community feedback. The community engagement process will be grounded in the goal of putting more CPS students in better positions to succeed.

Interim Superintendent Murphy turned the meeting over to City Councillor Patricia Nolan, who provided background on the origin of the City Council policy orders. The goal is to address parking challenges in the city by allowing public use of CPSD lots when school is not in session. **Member Hudson** raised concerns around liability, enforcement, and operational logistics related to community use of secure school parking lots. The discussion included the possibility of using underutilized parking areas, such as the garage under King Open, to support local businesses and residents.

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Chair Rojas opened the floor for public comment. Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregivers and community members—Jason Alves, Anne Coburn, Patrick Magee—shared the following sentiments:

- Commercial use of CPSD parking spaces, stressing the need to balance school and community interests.
- The impact of lost parking on local businesses and proposed using King Open's garage to help alleviate pressure.
- Inquiries about updates on infrastructure planning and programming at other CPS sites such as Graham & Parks, Tobin, and Fletcher Maynard.

Chair Rojas turned the meeting over to Interim Chief Operating Officer Damon Smith, who provided insight on the use of parking at CPSD school buildings. He noted that there are 105 parking spaces total in the parking garage located under the King Open and Cambridge Street Upper School—including 20 single spaces and 80 tandem spaces (front to back). He stated that the garage requires key card access and adjustments would have to be made to allow wider community use. Mr. Smith emphasized the consistent high usage of the garage, reinforcing that it is a functional, active school space throughout the day and evening.

Member Rachel expressed appreciation for the public's desire to collaborate and support community parking needs, while emphasizing that student and staff safety must come first. She requested the Administration reach out to BPS to learn how they manage public parking access, including how they handle similar safety restrictions. **Member Hudson** suggested the district conduct a more detailed conversation with City Council to define who would be responsible for operational elements, such as managing overnight commercial/residential parking, monitoring for vehicles left behind, arranging towing services to avoid staff disruptions. She emphasized that CPSD's operations teams are already at capacity, and any added responsibilities would require dedicated resources. **Member Rachel** advocated for a full outline of possible parking models to avoid placing additional burden on school staff, particularly early-morning arrivals.

Director of the Projects Department, Brendon Roy emphasized the importance of ensuring that any policy changes do not interfere with school operations or compromise safety and security. He noted that CPSD is willing to collaborate with the city but reiterated that additional staffing and resources would be necessary to implement any expanded public use of parking facilities. Assistant Commissioner, Jeff Parenti explained that the City Council policy orders were intended to help alleviate neighborhood parking issues by exploring public use of CPSD lots during non-school hours. He acknowledged the security and operational concerns raised but emphasized the City's interest in continued collaboration with CPSD to find workable solutions.

Vice Chair Hunter raised safety concerns, noting that two garage doors open into the King Open school and most parking spaces are tandem, which requires drivers to leave contact info. She questioned how the setup could work without a valet and said the district likely doesn't have the insurance to support that. She added that the 20 regular spots are probably for central staff and urged the committee to think carefully before opening the garage to the public.

Chair Rojas closed the meeting at 7:00 p.m. by thanking participants and noting the need for continued community input, transparency, and urgency in addressing transportation and space issues.