



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Regular Meeting

December 2, 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, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Mayor Simmons

Others Present: Megan Bayer, City Solicitor, Student Member Jama; Dr. Chad Leith, Chief Accountability Officer; David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools; Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operation Officer

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and read the call of the meeting.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with a roll call of members present: Vice Chair Hunter, PRESENT, Member Harding, PRESENT, Member Hudson, PRESENT, Member Rachel, PRESENT, Member Rojas, PRESENT, Member Weinstein, PRESENT, Madam Mayor, PRESENT

Mayor Simmons shared that there were technical issues with streaming the meeting on Channel 26. She noted that the meeting remained available on the advertised Zoom link.

1. Public Comment

The following individuals were heard:

- Luisa de Paula Santos, Walker Street, spoke regarding **Superintendent's Presentation & Update, #25-292, #25-300.**
- Fred Fantini, Canal Park, spoke regarding **#25-301.**
- Jess Goetz, Pemberton Street, spoke regarding **#25-300.**
- Chris Montero, Warren Road, spoke regarding **Superintendent's Presentation.**

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Rojas, public comment was closed on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein, the rules were suspended to bring forth **#25-301** on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

#25-301 Resolution honoring School Committee Member Rachel Weinstein – Vice Chair Hunter

WHEREAS: Member Rachel is deeply rooted in the Cambridge community, proud daughter of Lawrence and Diane Weinstein, product of Cambridge Public Schools and a graduate of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School before heading off to Brown University; and

WHEREAS: Her longtime commitment to children and public education is unwavering, demonstrated through her work as a reading teacher with AmeriCorps, a paraprofessional at the Graham & Parks School, and in her current role as Chief Collaboration Officer for the Boston Compact, where she fosters partnerships among Boston's district, charter, and Catholic schools; and

WHEREAS: As a CPS parent, she served on the Tobin Montessori School Council and participated in the district's Building Equity Bridges initiative, further deepening her engagement with students, caregivers, and educators; and

WHEREAS: Following in the footsteps of her father, Lawrence Weinstein, who served on the Cambridge School Committee from 1986 to 1994, Member Rachel sought elected office in 2019, citing her four years at CRLS as the most important of her education; and

WHEREAS: During her first election campaign she championed the priorities that have remained steadfast throughout her six years of service: racial equity; support for all children; championing each and every student; universal pre-K; and fostering strong, healthy school cultures; and

WHEREAS: She has been the lead author of more than 40 motions and a co-sponsor of over 60, Member Rachel has been a dedicated collaborator throughout her tenure, from her first motion in January 2020, co-sponsored with Member Wilson to prioritize racial equity and anti-racist work, to her partnership with Mayor Siddiqui in strengthening the Title IX policy with the Title IX Aurelia Advocates; and

WHEREAS: She served with distinction through an unprecedented period during the COVID pandemic, an uncharted time for Cambridge and the world. She consistently centered student and educator safety while advocating for access to in-person learning for families who sought it; and

WHEREAS: Member Rachel has unwaveringly placed students at the forefront of her work, understanding that social-emotional well-being is essential to academic and life outcomes. She has been a committed partner and advocate for the Cambridge Families of Color Coalition, Cambridge Families of Asian Descent, and the LGBTQ+ community; and

WHEREAS: Her lifelong passions and advocacy work made her an ideal leader as Chair of the School Climate Subcommittee, where she actively engaged students, educators, administrators, and caregivers in this critical work, and championed the importance of social-emotional learning and the critical need for each and every child to feel supported and safe; and

WHEREAS: Her leadership, integrity, and steadfast commitment to the Committee's priorities earned her the unanimous support of her fellow members to serve as the Committee's Vice Chair for the 2023–2024 term, during which she worked tirelessly behind the scenes with the Mayor and Superintendent to advance the district's vision and goals; and

WHEREAS: Her colleagues, peers, fellow leaders, and caregivers consistently describe Member Rachel's approach to work and life as one grounded in personal sacrifice, responsiveness, accountability, deep care for others, active listening, and a genuine commitment to building bridges across differences; now therefore be it
RESOLVED: That Member Rachel leaves the School Committee, the Cambridge Public Schools, and the broader community better than she found them through her dedicated service, compassion, innovative thinking, and unwavering leadership; and that the Committee knows she will continue to bring these values to all of her future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED: That a formal copy of this resolution be prepared by the Executive Secretary to the School Committee and presented to Member Rachel with profound gratitude and respect.

A discussion followed **#25-301**. Committee members and Superintendent Murphy gave heartfelt sentiments regarding Member Rachel's impactful contributions to the School Committee and wished her all the best in her new endeavors. **Member Rachel** gave remarks regarding her service and hopes for the Committee's future.

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Weinstein, **#25-301** was adopted made unanimous on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, PRESENT; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

2. Student School Committee Report:

Student Member Zihaam Jama, provided the following updates:

- Falcon Friday / Falcon Pride Day

- The annual Falcon Friday celebration took place just before the Thanksgiving mini-break.
- On this day, academic classes are suspended and students and faculty participate in community-building activities and events.
- The day is largely organized by Student Government, with support from STARS students and various staff.
- Winter Sports registration and tryouts are underway.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

- November 18, 2025, Regular Meeting

Member Rachel shared that she had an amendment to the November 18 Meeting Minutes. She noted that she had contacted the City Solicitor and the School Committee's counsel regarding The Equity Process contract. **Member Rachel** shared this edit with the Executive Secretary prior to the meeting

On a motion by Member Rachel seconded by Member Harding, the records were amended on a voice vote.

On a motion by Member Rachel seconded by Member Rojas the records accepted as amended on a voice vote.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Unfinished Business/Calendar:

Late Order 11-18-25

Search Firm Contract: Superintendent Search – Member Hudson & Member Harding

WHEREAS: The scope of work for the firm that aided us in the Superintendent search process may be unclear; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the District communicate to The Equity Process to immediately stop all work on the Cambridge Public Schools Superintendent Search, and communicate that it does not intend to pay for services not ultimately rendered; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Chief Financial Officer produce the School Committee Order referenced on Page 2 of the Cambridge Public Schools Superintendent Search Articles of Agreement (File Number CPS—FY26-30564)

City Solicitor, Megan Bayer joined the Committee's discussion regarding the **Late Order**. She shared a [document](#) with her responses to the School Committee's questions that were previously submitted by the Committee. A lengthy discussion took place. Highlights of the discussion included:

- Members noted that the required School Committee Order authorizing expenditures over \$25,000 was not attached to the contract materials, and the Committee confirmed that no prior vote had been taken to approve the contract.
- Procedural changes that should be implemented to ensure this does not happen again.
- Continued investigation into the process with a report to be provided to the School Committee.
- Ensuring that The Equity Process is paid for services that were rendered.
- Phase 4 of the contract was not performed and invoices were not submitted. The Committee was not under obligation to pay the remaining \$10,000.

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Weinstein, the late RESOLVED on the motion was replaced by *That the School Committee approve the contract with The Equity Process with authorized payments not to exceed \$30,000 of the \$40,000 contract* on a following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, NAY; Member Hudson, NAY; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Weinstein, the Late Order was approved as amended on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, NAY; Member Hudson, NAY; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Rojas to suspend the rules for reconsideration so the same would not prevail: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, NAY; Member Hudson, NAY; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

On a motion by Vice Chair Hunter, seconded by Member Rojas for reconsideration so the same would not prevail: Vice Chair Hunter, NAY; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, NAY; Member Rojas, NAY; Member Weinstein, NAY; Madam Mayor, NAY

6. Awaiting Reports: None

7a. Superintendent's Update:

An update on pending matters and highlight various initiatives. The report will include an excerpt from the presentation provided to the Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee on November 20, 2025 focusing on the district administration's analysis of the implications of modifying the elementary and upper school three-tiered start time system in the 2026 - 2027 school year for the purpose of ensuring all CPS students are consistently delivered via district transportation on time for school.

Mr. Smith joined Superintendent Murphy for the presentation which can be found on this [website](#). Highlights of the discussion include:

- The Superintendent continued a discussion on student transportation and on-time arrival performance, an issue the district has faced for multiple years.
- CPS transportation operates with three school-start tiers: 7:45 a.m., 8:15 a.m., and 8:45 a.m. Although non-CPS obligations can make routing function like five tiers, only three tiers apply to CPS schools where start times are district-controlled.
- Persistent late arrivals continue to occur, especially among 8:45 a.m. routes, despite annual troubleshooting efforts.
- Work with transportation vendors has focused on route optimization, map review, eliminating or consolidating under-utilized stops, and adjusting routing to improve performance.
- Additional buses have been added this year to increase capacity and improve on-time arrivals, but overall performance has not reached acceptable levels.
- A small share of early-tier buses arrive within ten minutes of the bell; although late under CPS standards, students still reach classrooms before instruction begins.
- Some routes for the earliest start times require students to be at stops as early as 6:50 a.m., raising safety concerns during dark winter months.
- The greatest challenge remains in the 8:45 a.m. tier, where roughly 30 percent of buses arrive within ten minutes of the bell, disrupting classroom routines and instructional time.
- CPS transportation costs exceed 13 million dollars annually for approximately 3,500 transported students, made more complex and expensive by multiple schools, school-choice patterns, traffic congestion, and tiered start and dismissal times.
- Adding more buses would not fully resolve lateness, since partially filled buses would increase congestion and may not meaningfully improve on-time performance.
- The district will continue to monitor arrival performance through November data and incorporate findings into budget planning and resource discussions.
- The group noted the importance of communicating these proposed changes very early in the planning process with caregivers.

7b. Presentation

The Superintendent and members of the administration will present on the recommendation to adopt a

competency determination policy as a high school graduation requirement in response to the December 31, 2025 purported deadline imposed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Superintendent Murphy was joined by Dr. Chad Leith. They gave the following presentation that can be found on this [website](#).

Highlights of the presentation and discussion include:

- DESE required all districts to adopt a competency determination policy by December 31 following the ballot initiative eliminating MCAS as a graduation requirement.
- CPSD previously adopted policies for the Classes of 2025 and 2026; administration recommends applying the same policy to the Class of 2027 since MCAS would have already occurred before its elimination.
- Policy work for the Class of 2028 and beyond centers on course completion, increased required credits, and a required mastery measure (end-of-course assessment, benchmark, capstone, or portfolio).
- State guidance released the day before aligns with CPSD's approach; nothing conflicts with CPSD recommendations, though future statutory or regulatory requirements may add new elements beyond current expectations.
- The elimination of a common statewide exam raises concerns about consistency, risk of lowered standards, and variability in local assessment practices. The superintendent emphasized vigilance and strong internal quality controls.
- Course completion expectations (English, math, science, etc.) remain, but required credits increase from 224 to 240 to reduce senior-year credit gaps and promote fuller participation.
- End-of-course or capstone assessments will be developed locally with rigorous alignment across teachers; CPSD anticipates blind scoring to reduce bias.
- Mastery will continue to be measured against Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, which remain rigorous and intact.
- **Member Harding** raised concerns about instructional rigor, equity, teacher evaluation, and variability in locally scored assessments; he emphasized the need for strong calibration and meaningful quality checks.
- Harding also asked for future discussion on how large-scale capstone implementation would operate, noting the difference between small portfolio programs and citywide graduation requirements.
- Several members stressed that many families value clear performance measures, even when results are difficult, and want honest information and accountability.
- **Vice Chair Hunter** requested more creativity and civic-readiness components such as community service, internships, and real-world learning opportunities, and expressed concern that coursework alone is insufficient for civic readiness.
- Several members emphasized that locally developed systems must have "real teeth" and transparent standards; concerns were voiced about graduating students who lack foundational skills and the district's responsibility to prevent social promotion.
- Superintendent acknowledged:
 - this policy serves as a floor, not a ceiling
 - vigilance and execution quality will matter more than policy language
 - further refinement is expected beyond the December 31 deadline
 - civic engagement, applied learning, and vocational alignment remain priorities for future phases of work.

At approximately 9:45 pm on a motion by Member Hudson, seconded by Vice Chair Hunter, the meeting was extended to 10:15 pm on a voice vote.

7c. CPS District Plan: None

7d. Consent Agenda:

On a motion by Member Rojas, seconded by Member Harding, **#25-291, #25-293, #25-294, and #25-295** were adopted on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

#25-291 Recommendation: 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 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.

	#	Amount
Day Program Tuition Contracts:	3	\$367,603.05
Residential Program Tuition Contracts		
45 Day Program Contracts:		
Total	3	\$367,603.05

#25-293 Recommendation: Contract Award: Transafe Transportation (FY26 Contract) 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.

Transafe Transportation, 675 VFW Parkway, Chestnut Hill, MA for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$35,000.00.

#25-294 Recommendation: Contract Award: M&M Safe and Clean Transport (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

M&M Safe and Clean Transport, 650 Cummins Highway, Mattapan, MA for the period of July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$60,000.00.

#25-295 Recommendation: Contract Award: Cambridge Public Health Dept (FY26 Contract) be adopted as follows: That the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated:

Cambridge Public Health Dept, 119 Windsor Street, Cambridge, MA for the period of September 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 in the amount of \$66,544.08.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

#25-292 Recommendation: Contract Award: TeachTown (FY26 Contract) 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.

TeachTown, 2 Constitution Way, Woburn, MA for the period of November 1, 2025 to October 31, 2026 in the amount of \$33,850.00.

A brief discussion followed regarding **#25-292**. Superintendent Murphy explained that Teachtown is an evidence-based platform designed to model life skills for students with disabilities. The program offers short video exemplars and instructional supports, helping students learn daily living skills. Remote capabilities allow caregivers to reinforce learning at home, making it useful across school and home environments.

On a motion by Member Weinstein, seconded by Member Hudson, **#25-292** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

#25-296 Recommendation: Contract Award: HR Acuity (FY26 Contract) 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.

HR Acuity, 23 Vreeland Road, #220, Florham Park, NJ for the period of January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026 in the amount of \$28,659.75.

A brief discussion followed **#25-296**. Member Rachel raised concerns that the incident reporting platform, *Speakfully*, may not be implemented effectively. She noted that this should be flagged for the next School Committee for a deeper review, but not addressed in detail at this meeting.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Weinstein, **#25-296** was adopted on the following roll call vote: Vice Chair Hunter, YEA; Member Harding, YEA; Member Hudson, YEA; Member Rachel, YEA; Member Rojas, YEA; Member Weinstein, YEA; Madam Mayor, YEA

9. School Committee Agenda (Policy Matters/Notifications/Requests for Information):

#25-297 MASC Conference - Additional World Languages – Member Rojas

WHEREAS: The annual joint conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) took place in November 2025; and

WHEREAS: The conference represents a unique opportunity for school committee members to learn from strategies being implemented in other districts; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge School Committee asks the Superintendent to look into the feasibility of providing additional world languages in high school through online providers, such as Founders Education, when providing them at CRLS is not feasible.

#25-298 MASC Conference - Third-party Career Exploration Programs – Member Rojas

WHEREAS: The annual joint conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) took place in November 2025; and

WHEREAS: the conference represents a unique opportunity for school committee members to learn from strategies being implemented in other districts; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge School Committee asks the Superintendent to look into the feasibility of providing complimentary third-party in-person and virtual career exploratory opportunities in middle schools and high school, such as LiUNA! New England Region and Learning Blade, when providing them in-house is not feasible.

#25-299 MASC Conference - Required Orientation Training – Member Rojas

WHEREAS: The annual joint conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) and Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) took place in November 2025; and

WHEREAS: MASC provides services ranging from the required orientation by recently elected school committee members to helping school committees perform useful superintendent and self evaluations; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Cambridge School Committee will consider coordinating a joint orientation of all recently elected school committee members through the MASC in January 2026.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, **#25-297**, **#25-298** and **#25-299** were adopted on a voice vote.

#25-300 Excessive Screen Time – Member Hudson, Member Harding and Member Weinstein

WHEREAS: Excessive screen use can be detrimental to students' academic engagement and well-being; and

WHEREAS: Families have a strong and legitimate interest in understanding the amount and nature of screen use their children experience during the school day; and

WHEREAS: The district currently lacks a consolidated, grade-band analysis of instructional and non-instructional screen time across elementary, upper school, and high school settings; therefore be it RESOLVED: That the

Superintendent will prepare and deliver to the School Committee, no later than the last regular meeting of the 2025–26 school year, a report that:

1. Quantifies average daily and weekly screen time for students in elementary, middle, and high school, distinguishing between instructional and non-instructional use, and including program-specific caveats where appropriate;
2. Assesses whether there are opportunities to reduce screen-time exposure in age-appropriate ways;
3. Provides a recommendation—or a determination that no change is warranted—regarding district-wide or grade-band policies to reduce screen time; and
4. Outlines the anticipated costs, benefits, and operational impacts of any proposed changes.

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Rojas, **#25-300** was adopted on a voice vote.

11. Announcements:

- **Vice Chair Hunter** congratulated Innovators for Purpose, recently featured on national NBC News, and encouraged continued support for this student-centered program.
- **Member Weinstein** provided updates on the upcoming Visual and Performing Arts opportunities.

12. Late Orders: None

13. Communications and Reports from City Officers: None

On a motion by Member Rachel, seconded by Member Harding, the meeting was adjourned on a voice vote. (10:00 p.m.)

Email Communications:

- ✓ Phoebe Putnam

Attest:



Katherine Christo
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

Meeting Documents:

- December 2 Letter from City Solicitor Megan Bayer regarding The Equity Process Contract
- Draft Competency Determination (CD) Policy