

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

September 16, 2014

Called for 6:00 PM 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: Ms. Cronin, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding, Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Osborne, Mayor Maher

Mayor Maher in the Chair.

Also Present: Student School Committee Members Lucy Sternbach and Liz Kubicek

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:14 PM.

1. Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Kelly Dolan, Upland Rd., Budget
- Emily Dexter, Fenno St., DESE Report
- Karen Dobak, Allston St., DESE Report
- Pia Cisternino, Hollsworthy St., DESE Report
- Mark Gardner, Walden St., DESE report

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to close public comment.

2. Student School Committee Report:

Ms. Kubicek and Ms. Sternbach reported on the following:

- CRLS clubs and after school activities are well underway and September 23 and 24 are "Club" days at CRLS
- Rehearsal for the musical, The Addams Family, has begun
- There will be a College Fair on October 1st from 6-8 p.m.
- The CCRC has opened its office for college admissions officers to visit and hold discussion groups for students
- Thursday is curriculum night for parents

The Student School Committee also asked for clarification on a recent change of capping class size at 24 students at CRLS. They informed the Members that some students are being shut out of core classes and that no additional classes have been added. Superintendent Young responded that he would check with Principal Smith about scheduling issues and get back to the School Committee with the information.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval:

On a motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Ms. Cronin, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the September 2, 2014 Regular Meeting as presented.

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. Awaiting Reports:

- ✓ Report by fall 2013 on AP program at CRLS (C13-133) (June 4, 2013)

6. Unfinished Business/Calendar

It was voted to remove from the Calendar and place the following motions on file:

#14-171, Motion by Ms. Cronin, that, in an effort to extend learning as well as support the social and emotional growth of our students, two independent learning experiences were implemented for the first time this summer. To help upper school students in grades 6-8 successfully enter an accelerated math pathway that culminates in taking Algebra I in 8th grade, a month-long multi-tiered summer math program was implemented. For students on IEPs, the Office of Student Services implemented its half-day Universal Summer Program during the month of July.

Whereas, given these were both first time initiatives developed to target areas of perceived need, it is important that CPS fully understand the impact of these programs - their strengths, weaknesses and barriers to greater success. For this purpose, the School Committee requests that each respective program developer prepare for review by the Winter of 2015, a comprehensive analysis of their respective programs including the number of participating students; stated goals and outcomes; lessons learned and recommended improvements.

These findings will be critical to continued development and implementation of effective summer programs designed to advance the achievement of our diverse student body. (9/2/14)

#14-174, Motion by Ms. Kelly, that, whereas significant changes have been made to the mathematics program in the middle schools, including the addition of a district run summer program, that the School Committee be provided with a report on the summer program and this academic year's implementation by September 30, 2014. (9/2/14)

7. Superintendent's Agenda

The Mayor clarified that at this meeting the DESE representatives would present the summary of the DESE CPS District Review Report. The Members would then have an opportunity to ask their questions. The Superintendent and his staff would be heard at the next meeting on how they will address the findings in the DESE Report. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules for the purpose of hearing a statement from Mr. Fantini regarding the DESE Report. The Rules having been suspended, Mr. Fantini read the following statement:

Mr. Fantini's Statement – September 16, 2014

While parts of the District Review Report may be enlightening to the school community and the public and help the Cambridge School Department continue its work to improve outcomes for students, the comments related to "Governance" are deeply flawed. In fact, they are rooted in abject ignorance of our state and federal constitutions, law, political principles, fiduciary responsibilities, relevant local history and a general understanding of what a school committee is.

GOAL SETTING

We find it hard for DESE to defend its allegation that "the committee members have many visions, making it hard to have a cohesive message all could agree to," when the state agency itself has overwhelmed school districts with one major initiative after another, dozens of mandates, dozens more of reporting requirements, and a bureaucracy that forwards advisories and directives prolifically.

Knowing of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's contempt for holding itself accountable to anyone but itself, it is stunning to see such naïve and inappropriate comments aimed at legitimately elected representatives.

The school committee should be offended by the report and take a strong position to reject some of the recommendations.

However, DESE would also be well advised to note that number of major local policy initiatives over the past decade and in most recent months to restructure and reorganize the public school district based primarily on recommendations from the staff and parents. Other districts should emulate this record, and the state should not be making gratuitous criticisms.

THE REPORT AUTHORS' IGNORANCE OF WHAT MAKES EFFICIENT MEETINGS

The purpose of a School Committee meeting is not to act as briefly as possible to do what the superintendent and principals want. It is to develop an agenda and conduct a meeting that allows for thoughtful discussion of a full range of relevant topics and to address concerns of the public without trampling on the legal authority of the Superintendent. Discussion and debate is not a tool of obstruction, but a means of enlightening the public.

While criticism is tossed about in this report, few citations are provided.

It is interesting that teachers, whose union bargains aggressively for power sharing with the administration, would criticize the school committee for looking "way too deep" at issues. And this is presented as evidence to back up a caustic statement of criticism.

Suggesting that it is offensive to allow parents to present motions to members of the school committee or that the school committee has offended public policy by having its own agenda rather than a parallel agenda with the superintendent is nothing more than an assault by the executive branch (the bureaucracy of the state) against the legislative branch (the school committee as the legislature for schools in the district). It is an unambiguous fact that the agenda of the meetings of school committees are the property of the school committee – the board does not need the approval or the permission of the superintendent to organize its agenda or to decide what is discussed. DESE should remember well that absent a legal receivership, it is well advised to stay out of making of agendas, controlling of discussion, and determining who may speak to or recommend what to a school committee or individual members. Moreover, allowing parents to recommend course of action to their elected officials in the form of draft motions that a legitimately elected official may introduce merely allows for public discussion where the wisdom of the board may well reject such a motion. No such clarification is forthcoming from the authors of this report.

The state would be well informed to consult the state and federal constitutions that provide residents with an unfettered and unrestricted right to petition their government and address their elected representatives. School committee members are encouraged by law and through professional development training to welcome and listen respectfully to any concern brought to them by any citizen bring those concerns to the superintendent either through personal communication or at a public meeting of the school committee.

We should not be surprised that some principals or central office administrators, including the superintendent, would repel the effort of parents or local elected officials to disagree with them. But, were it not for access to the school committee, what other recourse would parents, citizens and other stakeholders have to air their grievances and concerns; and what other recourse would the board have but to ask the administration for information to justify its decisions.

In fact, how else would a school committee build a sufficient base to evaluate its chief executive without the ability to probe for the rationale behind decisions in order to assess judgment, decision making processes, alignment with goals, or a professional culture that respects concerns of the public?

THE FIDUCIARY RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The Education Reform Act of 1993 did not change the fiduciary responsibility of locally elected boards in Massachusetts, and the role of the school committee with regard to budgeting, budget oversight, budget reporting, and gathering information necessary to fulfill these responsibilities remains as it has for decades. School Committees have been improperly criticized by ignorant bureaucrats who do not understand the principles of fiduciary responsibility. Asking questions, seeking justifications, and using public meetings to engage the public around budgets, expenditures, and revenues are part of the role of the locally elected official, including members of school committees.

THE REPORT'S ATTACK ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

The report's criticism of the city's form of government for schools (and indirectly for its City Council) is not only misplaced, is among the most offensive portions of the report, not only because it is based on pure ignorance.

Moreover, DESE and its evaluation team has no business whatsoever recommending changes to the form of government that the people have chosen for themselves, especially when this system has a demonstrated record of empowering its citizens. (An assault on civic engagement, however, may be the intent of the recommendation, given the level of contempt that DESE has shown for citizens at large overseeing their public schools.) Had the team taken but an hour to review the history of proportional representation and known that advocates for election reform across the country have called for expansion, rather than elimination, of the single transferable vote, they would understand just how foolish they are.

In fact, the form of government and the electoral process in place in Cambridge since the reforms of 1941 have been recognized as a major element in civic pride, clean government, civic engagement, and harmony. The fact that the Cambridge School Committee is virtually unique in how its membership actually looks like the citizens of the city is sufficient defense. An investigation of the credentials of the members of the Cambridge School Committee would further demonstrate that they are as well prepared to serve in their constitutionally mandated function as most high performing boards. Proportional Representation and the STV have been cited as one of the most underappreciated potential elements of real education reform: a system that empowers the otherwise excluded residents and enriches the debate by ensuring that viable constituencies are represented.

Further, the two year election cycle is hardly divisive. By creating a single district within the city and requiring candidates to build coalitions and consensus, a School Committee like Cambridge is more likely to work together for meaningful change and reform. And for the information of DESE, there has never been an election following which a majority of the incumbents was not re-elected. So much for failure of continuity. DESE's researchers should have done some homework. That the department should call for changes in something about which it knows nothing is a further warning to all public policy makers that within DESE lies a desire to exceed its authority and undermine local democracy.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

7a. Presentations:

The Mayor welcomed Carrie Conaway, Associate Commissioner for Planning, Research & Delivery Systems, who was joined by Ms. Likis, Chief Planning Officer. Dr. Young informed the Members that Mr. Roper was unable to attend this meeting. He thanked Ms. Conaway on behalf of the staff and noted that they reviewed the report as an opportunity to learn and improve and they appreciated the feedback and thoroughness of this report.

Ms. Conaway thanked Dr. Young and the Members for inviting her and stated that this review was conducted before she took on her current position but that she would do her best to answer questions and would follow up as needed. She appreciated the spirit of openness and collaboration in this review process.

DESE CPS District Review Report

Lori Likis
Chief Planning Officer
John Roper, Ph.D.,
Center for District &
School Accountability
Carrie Conaway,
Associate Commissioner for
Planning, Research &
Delivery Systems

Ms. Conaway walked the Members through the following Powerpoint presentation (on file in the School Committee Office):

Purpose of district reviews:

- To support district improvement by providing
 - ✓ An objective analysis of how district systems support teaching and learning
 - ✓ Suggestions for the district's ongoing improvement efforts

Six district standards:

- Leadership and governance
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Assessment
- Human resources and professional development
- Student support
- Financial and asset management

Process:

- Document and data review
- On-site review: February 24 to 27, 2014
- 38 hours of interviews and focus groups
 - ✓ *90 stakeholders interviewed
- Observation on instructional practice in 113 classrooms in 17 schools

District review report:

- Context
 - ✓ Discusses practices in place during the site visit
 - ✓ Prioritizes identifying challenges and areas for growth to promote a cycle of improvement
- 21 findings (strengths and challenges)
- 10 recommendations

Ms. Conaway and Ms. Likis responded to the questions and/or concerns of the Committee:

- Does the DESE offer technical assistance
- Family engagement is not mentioned in the report
- Extending the school day did not come up in the review
- Devastating critique of management and administration in this report
- Lack of ability to differentiate in over half our classes
- Inconsistent school improvement plans
- There is no proof of the effectiveness of the K-8 coaching model or facts documenting the level of student preparedness for high school
- No verification of evaluations in almost 75 percent of administrator personnel folders reviewed during the previous 5 years
- Suggested areas in the report in need of improvement were areas that the Committee has requested administrative response
- Perceptions without evidence should be presented as perceptions and not findings
- These were reports of comments heard from at least two people
- Doing our job means making sure our policies are being followed
- How can School Committee Members be more collaborative when they get criticized for doing their jobs; they are not obstructing the superintendent's mission

- This report is flawed in the information it delivers
- Take this as an opportunity to have more focus and prioritize
- Mischaracterization of the School Committee is not useful
- Look at this as opportunity to address systemic findings
- No cohesive approach to our technology data collection system
- Get together about one vision for our system: best education in an equitable fashion
- There isn't consistency among our principals on the management of their buildings
- How can you state Members are going to schools uninvited when many of them are parents of a student in a school
- How as policymakers can we have a positive impact with this report and strive for a world class school system

The Mayor thanked Ms. Conaway for her presentation and for listening to the Members' concerns. He hopes that by working together we can continue to improve to do a better job for the students in our schools. Mayor Maher announced the possibility of a September 30th Roundtable discussion on this topic.

7b. Innovation Agenda:

7c. Consent Agenda:

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Kelly, it was voted to bring forward for discussion and adoption **Superintendent's Consent Agenda items #14-184 through #14-196**. Ms. Cronin removed **#14-187 and #14-188**; Mr. Harding removed **#14-189**; and Ms. Nolan removed **#14-191 and #14-194**.

On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted: Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Mr. Osborne YEA; Ms. Cronin YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mayor Maher YEA.

#14-184, Approval of Revisions to Public Complaints about School Personnel Policy, that the School Committee approve the revisions to Public Complaints about School Personnel Policy as detailed in the document (second reading).

#14-185, Approval of Revisions to Uniform Grievance Procedures, that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Uniform Grievance Procedures as detailed in the document (second reading).

#14-186, Approval of Global Revision of References to "Principal" in all School Committee Policies to be a Reference to "Principal/Head of Upper School", that the School Committee approve the revising in all policies, where applicable, the reference to "principal" to be changed to a reference to "principal/head of upper school" (second reading).

#14-190, Approval of Gift of \$500, that the School Committee accept and approve a gift of \$500 from the Reebok Foundation, Inc., made for the support of the Tobin Montessori School.

#14-192, Contract Award, that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for comprehensive neuropsychological evaluations; funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget. Procurement procedures for this contract have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Cambridge Ctr for Neuropsychology and Learning, 2464 Massachusetts Ave., #129,
Cambridge, for the period September 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015, in the amount of \$124,000.00

#14-193, Contract Award, that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for Student Tuition; funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget. Procurement procedures for this contract have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Minuteman Regional High School, 758 Marrett Road, Lexington, for the period September 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015, in the amount of \$65,401.00.

#14-195, Grant Award, that the School Committee accept and approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program, for the period September 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015, in the amount of \$27,225.00. Project/Grant SC15858.

Description: Funded by the US Department of Agriculture, this grant provides for fresh fruit and vegetable snacks to be served in the early afternoon, 5 days a week, to the students at the Fletcher-Maynard and Kennedy Longfellow schools. The grant supports food purchases and temporary salaries for staff to prepare and distribute the fruits and vegetables.

CPS Target Population: CPS students at the Fletcher-Maynard and Kennedy Longfellow schools.

Outcomes and Measures of Effectiveness: This project enhances the health and wellbeing of all CPS students at these two schools and improves their ability to concentrate and learn. The range of fruits and vegetables accepted by students will grow as they learn to enjoy new varieties, leading to improved eating habits and better overall health.

#14-196, Contract Award, that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for fresh produce; funds to be provided from the Revolving Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with.

A.Russo and Sons, Inc., 560 Pleasant Street, Watertown, for the period September 17, 2014 to August 31, 2015, in the amount of \$70,000.00.

Mr. Osborne exited the meeting (8:55 PM).

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

The Chair brought forward School Committee Agenda Items **#14-197** and **#14-198** for discussion. It was voted to adopt **#14-197** and **#14-198**.

#14-197, Motion by Ms. Cronin, that to best understand the impact of our current Web 2.0 policy with advancing use of technology in our schools, the School Committee requests that the Superintendent appoint representatives to join with the School Committee to look at this issue. The Superintendent supports this motion but spoke of the challenge of safety and security of students and data. He mentioned that our Chief Information Officer is eager to engage in this conversation. Mr. Harding asked who would be the representative appointed to work with the School Committee on this issue. The Superintendent stated that the most likely representatives would be Mr. Smith, Mr. Maloney and Dr. Huizenga.

#14-198, Joint Motion by Ms. Cronin and Ms. Kelly, that in an effort to best understand implications to the significant changes to the Middle School math program, the School Committee requests a comprehensive analysis of the new math program pathways, including support structures, the number of students broken down by sub-group in each pathway, stated outcomes, lessons learned upon implementation and recommended improvements. Ms. Cronin indicated that she and Ms. Kelly collaborated and revised their previous motions which were on the Calendar.

9. Non-Consent Agenda:

#14-187, Approval of Revisions to the Student Welfare Policy, that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Welfare Policy as detailed in the document (second reading). Ms. Cronin commented that the RSTA program wasn't included in the language under student safety. Attorney MacFarlane responded that it was implied under the general term of industrial arts. Dr. Turk clarified that

to be consistent with the State, the language should be career and technical education instead of industrial arts. It was voted to adopt the amendment of changing the term industrial arts to career and technical education. On the following roll call, **#14-187** was adopted as amended: Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Mr. Osborne YEA; Ms. Cronin YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mayor Maher YEA.

#14-188, Approval of Domestic Violence Leave Policy, that the School Committee approve the Domestic Violence Leave Policy as detailed in the document (first reading). Ms. Cronin asked for clarification on health insurance coverage and leave of absence language for victims of domestic violence. Attorney MacFarlane stated that an additional 15 days of leave and the language regarding timing of the leave is specified under State Law. Ms. Allen noted that illness or injury as a result of domestic violence would be covered the same as any illness or injury under our health insurance policies. Ms. Allen also responded to Mr. Fantini's questions regarding our free and confidential employee assistance program and how this type of leave could be requested verbally followed by a written request. Mr. Fantini asked that a contact person's name and address be added to the end of the policy so that an employee would know where to send his/her written leave request. On the following roll call, **#14-188** was referred to a second reading: Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Mr. Osborne YEA; Ms. Cronin YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mayor Maher YEA.

#14-189, Agreement with the Cambridge Education Association and Cambridge School Committee Regarding Full Time Release for the Incoming President of the Cambridge Education Association, that the School Committee approve the Agreement between the Cambridge Education Association and the Cambridge School Committee regarding the full time release for the incoming president of the Cambridge Education Association who is a member of Unit C. Mr. Harding questioned the benefit of doing this and asked for clarification on the history of this practice. Mr. Maloney stated that there is a long standing practice to continue paying presidents while releasing them from their classroom duties. Although, Ms. Gist's situation is unique in that she is the first union president from the clerical staff, the administration recommends that past practice be adhered to. Ms. Allen also noted that this was more than past practice; it was collectively bargained many years ago in Unit A & B contracts. The Members also asked for clarification on the second part of this recommendation which included changing clerical staff vacation accrual to begin within the first year of employment. Mr. Harding asked the Members of the Contract Negotiations Sub-Committee if they were involved in these negotiations. Mr. Fantini responded that he and Ms. Nolan were not asked to be a part of these negotiations. At the request of Mr. Osborne, **#14-189** was placed on the Calendar with the intention that it be divided into two recommendations.

#14-191, Contract Award, that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for implementation of a recess program; funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget. Procurement procedures for this contract have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Playworks, 29 Germania Street, Boston, for the period September 8, 2014 – June 30, 2015,
in the amount of \$25,000.00

Ms. Nolan would like to see the School Council's review for the use of the King Open's School Improvement funds for this contract. Ms. MacDonald provided the Members with hand-outs on the back-up for selecting this vendor and the scope of service of the contract (on file in the School Committee Office). She affirmed that Principal Williams and the School Council approved, reviewed and requested this expenditure for the Playworks contract. She noted that this program could make an impact on entire school culture and climate which would promote academic achievement. Mr. Harding questioned spending this amount of money for a level 3 school for recess rather than for supporting student achievement and performance. On the following roll call, **#14-191** was adopted: Mr. Harding PRESENT; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Mr. Osborne PRESENT NOT VOTING; Ms. Cronin YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mayor Maher YEA.

#14-194, Contract Award, that the School Committee provide 50% of funding for a contract to the following vendor for Professional Development; funding to be provided from the Grant Fund Budget.

Procurement procedures for this contract have complied with Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Early Childhood Associates, P.O. Box 3299, Saxonville Station, Framingham, for the period September 17, 2014 to June 30, 2015, in the amount of \$50,000.

Ms. Nolan questioned a task force comprised of high-level administrators being trained in focus group facilitation and having no Committee representation. She felt we should be paying our own experts to do this facilitation work. She also asked for the total number of hours involved in these meetings. It was questioned why the School Department was asked to share the cost of this contract since it is a City Manager's Task Force. Mayor Maher explained that this is a partnership between the City and the School Department and could eventually be an extremely expensive endeavor for the City. He feels it would be wise as a good faith effort of collaboration that we enter into this initial phase with the City to look at an early childhood services plan. At the request of Ms. Nolan, #14-194 was placed on the Calendar.

10. Resolutions (letters of congratulations, letters of condolence):

11. Announcements:

12. Late Orders:

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Kelly, it was voted to adjourn (9:10 PM)

Judith T. Martin
Executive Secretary

Distributed Back-up Documents (copies on file in the School Committee office):

- District Review Report – Cambridge Public Schools, conducted February 24-27, 2014 by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- PowerPoint presentation slides – DESE District Review Report
- Statement by Mr. Fantini on the DESE District Review Report
- Playworks contract back-up documentation and scope of service
- Letter from Emily Dexter (read at public comment on DESE Report)