

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

January 5, 2016

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. Bowman, Ms. Dexter, Mr. Fantini, Mr. Harding, Ms. Kelly, Ms. Nolan, Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also present: Student School Committee Members Griffin Andres and Ben Austin

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Kelly, to suspend the Rules to hear from Mayor Simmons. It was voted to suspend the Rules for the reason stated.

Mayor Simmons stated that after 8 years, she is happy to be back on the School Committee. She noted that it is important for us to do the people's work as policy makers and that she looks forward to a productive and efficient term. She stated that she will endeavor to always start meetings on time and if she is delayed or unable to be here, she has advised Vice-Chair Fantini to begin the meeting on time. She will follow Roberts Rules and the School Committee Rules. She will strictly adhere to the 3 minutes per person for public comment. She will allow every Member to speak at least once before everyone speaks again for one more time.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

1. Public Comment:

There being no one signed up to speak, on a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Bowman, it was voted to close public comment.

2. Student School Committee Report:

Mr. Andres reported on the following:

The CRLS boys' basketball team was ranked first in the state and they are an exciting team to watch. There is a home game this Friday at 7 p.m.

Mr. Austin reported on the following:

Student government had weekly meeting. They discussed the winter formal being held at the Kendall Marriott in February. They also discussed a survey they are working on. He noted that students were excited about the School Committee inauguration and asked him about it.

3. Presentation of the Records for Approval: None

4. Reconsiderations: None

5. **Unfinished Business/Calendar:** None

6. **Awaiting Reports:** None

7. **Superintendent's Agenda:**

7a. **Presentations:** None

7b. **Innovation Agenda:**

7c. **Consent Agenda:**

Mr. Harding moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, to bring forward the Superintendent's Consent Agenda Items **#16-01 through #16-06** for discussion and adoption. Ms. Nolan removed **#16-03**. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt the balance of the items: Ms. Dexter YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Ms. Bowman YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#16-01, Approval of Cambridge Liaisons Invested in Families & Education AFSCME-/ALF-CIO (LIFE/AFSCME) September 1, 2015 – August 31, 2018 that was approved at December 15, 2015 meeting, that the School Committee ratify the agreement between the Cambridge School Committee and the Cambridge Liaisons Invested in Families & Education, AFSCME-/AFL-CIO (LIFE/AFSCME) for a collective bargaining agreement for the period of September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2018, which was ratified by their members and which was ratified and approved by the Cambridge School Committee at its December 15, 2015 meeting.

#16-02, Approval of Revision to School Committee Organizational Meeting Policy, that the School Committee approve the revision to the School Committee Organizational Policy as detailed in the document (first reading).

#16-04, Nursing Services, that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for Special Education Services; funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

ReadyNurse, 30 Bloomfield Drive, Suite 300, Windsor, CT, for the period December 14, 2015 to June 30, 2016, in the amount of \$53,940.00

#16-05, Grant Award, that the School Committee accept and approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

Let's Move/Cambridge in Motion, for the period January 5, 2016 to June 30, 2016, in the amount of \$500.00. Project/Grant SC16128.

Description: This mini-grant will enable the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School's Athletic Trainers to buy healthy snacks to have on hand for students in need of nourishment. Let's Move/Cambridge in Motion mini-grants are co-funded by the Cambridge Public Health Department and the three Whole Foods Market stores in Cambridge.

#16-06, Grant Award, that the School Committee accept and approve the grant award below in the amount and for the period indicated.

Massachusetts Cultural Council-STARRS, for the period January 9, 2016 to June 30, 2016, in the amount of \$13,000.00. Project/Grant SC16894.

Description: This grant will support residency artist series at the Cambridgeport School (\$3,600, Underground Railroad Theater); Kennedy Longfellow School (\$1,900, Anne Lilly, Kinetic Artist); Vassal Lane Upper School (\$2,800, Cambridge Creativity Commons); and Rindge Avenue Upper

School (\$4,700, Cambridge Creativity Commons). Both Upper Schools will be working on science/math arts projects.

8. Non-Consent Agenda:

Ms. Nolan asked for clarification on the budget for the Special Needs contracts since this recommendation indicates a shortfall of \$309,000. Dr. Young added that there are some challenges in this budget and that they are working very closely with all cabinet members to develop and implement a plan to end in balance. Dr. Greer and Ms. Spinner were recognized. Ms. Spinner noted that they have been watching this and that she is working very closely with the Office of Student Services. She indicated that there may be a statutory transfer in the future to transfer from salaries to cover this deficit. Dr. Greer updated the new Members. Dr. Greer stated that this over expenditure is based on the intensity of the needs of students coming into our district, but not necessarily on an increase in the number of students requiring these services. Dr. Greer explained the critical case review process and the high priority case review process which they are putting in place. Dr. Young stated that Dr. Greer and her team are scheduled to come forward in February with the annual OSS report. Dr. Young asked that the Members forward questions prior to February's presentation and they will try to orient the presentation to the Committee's needs. The Mayor requested that the Committee receive any materials related to this presentation at least 48 hours before the meeting. On the following roll call, Item **#16-03** was adopted: Ms. Dexter YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Ms. Bowman YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#16-03, Special Needs Contracts for Day and Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department, that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions as detailed in the 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 budget and/or Grant Fund Budget.

	<u># Active Contracts</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Day	2	\$120,584.96
Residential	0	\$0.00
45 Day Program Contracts	<u>1</u>	<u>\$25,076.25</u>
	3	Total \$145,661.21

Mr. Harding moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, to suspend the Rules to go back to an earlier item on the agenda, Item 7b. Innovation Agenda. It was voted to suspend the Rules for the reason stated. Mr. Harding asked for a status update on the mid-year changing of acting principals at the Vassal Lane Upper School. Dr. Young responded that the plan required that Barbara Boyle be the interim principal until December 31, 2015. As of January 1, 2016, Mr. McNulty will take over as interim principal. Mr. McNulty has worked with Ms. Boyle and Assistant Principal Bacci-Benzan. Dr. Young noted that the search for a permanent principal has begun with a search committee, recruitment, and resume screening. Ms. Allen added that it is their hope to have an appointment in April with that person assuming duties in July. Dr. Turk noted that the key to this transition was the team approach of Boyle, McNulty and Benzan. Dr. Turk continues to meet at the school each week with the principal and assistant principal.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

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

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Mr. Harding, to bring forward the School Committee Agenda Items **#16-07 and #16-08** for discussion and adoption.

#16-07, Motion by Mr. Fantini, that the School Committee ratify the contract which was approved at the December 15, 2015 Regular Meeting (School Committee Order #C15-384) for Dr. Kenneth Salim as the Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools effective as of July 1, 2016.

Ms. Dexter asked about the length of 4 years of the contract and the rationale of \$228,000 for the salary. Mr. Harding explained the negotiation process and that 4 years is pretty standard for us as shown in the hiring of the last five superintendents. He noted that negotiations were handled in good faith and we finished where we needed. Ms. Bowman asked about evaluation, goals and measurable outcomes for each year and when that process would start. Mr. Harding responded that the School Committee would decide what the measures would be. The Committee would think about what it is looking for and then engage our new superintendent as we move forward to set these measures. Mr. Fantini noted that there is an opportunity to work out an arrangement with Dr. Salim to work with the Committee and Dr. Young for transition days. The Mayor indicated that she would like us to talk about our own goals and then have an opportunity to meet with Dr. Salim. On the following roll call, Item **#16-07** was adopted: Ms. Dexter YEA; Mr. Fantini YEA; Mr. Harding YEA; Ms. Kelly YEA; Ms. Nolan YEA; Ms. Bowman YEA; Mayor Simmons YEA.

#16-08, Joint Motion by Mr. Fantini and Ms. Kelly, that understanding the need and importance for all of us to have a community conversation about testing and assessment, we request that the Superintendent in consultation with the School Committee set a date in February for this conversation. Ms. Kelly reflected after the meeting of December 15th that we never had a community meeting on assessment and testing. During conversations with teachers, she said she realized it wasn't just about MCAS or PARCC but about larger concerns of assessment and climate in the classrooms. Mr. Fantini indicated that he feels we should have a community wide conversation with active dialogue. Mr. Fantini added that one possible outcome would be to work with the CEA representation to create an "innovation school" that would use alternative assessment. Ms. Bowman asked what the end goal would be on this motion. Mr. Harding added that we should be clear on what we hope to accomplish. He gave an example of using a "world café" format. Ms. Dexter noted that it is difficult for her to vote on a motion that is so brief with no written details. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to place item **#16-08** on the Calendar with the hope to bring back a more fleshed-out plan after collaboration with the Superintendent. Dr. Young indicated that he would be happy to work with the motion makers to clarify purpose of this motion.

10. Resolutions:

It was voted to adopt the following:

Motion by Ms. Nolan, that the School Committee send a letter of thanks to Trill Foods to acknowledge their work in catering the inaugural reception and providing foods which represented the diversity of our district.

Ms. Nolan also expressed appreciation to the Inaugural Ad Hoc Sub-Committee and to Ms. Martin, Executive Secretary, for her role in coordinating a successful inaugural event. Ms. Nolan announced that the leftover food from the inaugural dinner was donated by the School Committee to the Cambridge Caspar shelter. The Chair asked that in the future Ms. Nolan put this in writing so that it may become part of the record and a letter may be forwarded to the individual(s).

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, to suspend the Rules to make a comment on a matter not before us. It was voted to suspend the Rules for the reason stated. Mr. Fantini thanked the leadership and staff of the Putnam Ave. Upper School and King School for a smooth and successful move into the new school building. He offered kudos to both schools for a job well done. The Chair asked that in the future that Mr. Fantini put this in writing so that it may become part of the record and a letter may be forwarded to the individual(s).

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

11. Announcements:

Mayor Simmons announced that the M.L. King Jr. day of remembrance sponsored by the Peace Commission will be held soon as well as the "Many Helping Hands" volunteer effort. Ms. Kelly confirmed

that it will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church on Monday, January 18, 2016 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and that the "Many Helping Hands" starts at the same time. The Mayor encouraged everyone to attend.

Mr. Fantini announced that he has placed a spreadsheet on each Member's desk for them to indicate choices for sub-committee assignments. He asked that they return this sheet to him or to the Executive Secretary.

12. Late Orders:

It was voted to adopt the following:

Motion by Mr. Harding, that the School Committee send a letter of condolence to the family of Jabula Butler.

Motion by Mr. Harding, that the School Committee send a letter of condolence to the family of CJ Silverio.

Ms. Nolan explained that she had considered a late order since some people had expected a second reading vote on a major policy decision on Superintendent's Recommendation #15-284, Approval of the Administration of the PARCC (Partnership of Assessment for Readiness for College & Careers) to Students in Grades 3-8 during Spring of 2016, which was adopted at the December 15, 2015 Regular Meeting. She noted that after consulting with legal counsel, she was informed that the reconsideration at the last meeting also eliminated the second reading of the major policy decision and doesn't allow the Committee to reconsider the PARCC decision.

The Chair noted that as this pertains to reconsideration, she did research as well and the ruling of the Chair is that this item cannot be reconsidered and the vote of the December 15th meeting stands.

Ms. Dexter moved the following late order, seconded Ms. Nolan:

That given that the School Committee had to vote on a major decision about standardized testing on the last day of the 2015 session because frightening bomb threats prevented earlier consideration, and that the timing of this vote made it impossible to have thorough discussion, a second reading, or reconsideration; given that four of our twelve elementary or upper schools will be moving buildings this winter; and given that the majority of districts that took the MCAS last year will also not be administering the PARCC this spring, also forgoing the opportunity to be "held harmless" for the results; **I move that the School Committee direct the Superintendent to contact DESE immediately to inform them that CPS, unfortunately, will not be able to administer the PARCC exam this spring for the following reasons and any other reasons raised by the Committee:**

1. Four of our 12 elementary or upper schools will be moving buildings this winter, which will require considerable reorientation for our students and teachers, thereby reducing the learning time required to teach our students the skills and material specified in the state standards. This widespread loss of learning time will make it extremely difficult to orient all our students to the new test, which will make the results an unreliable measure of our students' actual abilities.
2. The PARCC exam will be a timed test, which will be very stressful for our most emotionally vulnerable students if administered without sufficient preparation.
3. CPS is currently a Level 2 district; thus we are in no imminent danger of state intervention.
4. Only 3 of our schools are scheduled to take the exam in the computer format, which reduces the advantage of taking the PARCC as practice for future online testing.
5. CPS has engaged in numerous initiatives over the past four years, and teachers have requested, on multiple occasions, that the pace of change be slowed and that they be consulted before

decisions are made. The CEA rarely makes an explicit request of the School Committee, but in this case did request that the Committee decline the PARCC for this spring.

6. The majority of districts that took the MCAS last year will also not be administering the PARCC this spring; this decision is in no way contrary to that made by other Massachusetts districts.
7. Input from our community was overwhelming in opposition to administering the PARCC this spring.
8. DESE gave MCAS districts the option of requesting an extension to the December 18th deadline to notify DESE about their testing decision, which makes this a reasonable request that is also possible for DESE to implement if notified immediately.

Ms. Dexter and Mayor Simmons read Ms. Dexter's late order aloud.

Superintendent Young responded to Ms. Dexter's late motion in the following statement:

I understand that this is a notice for reconsideration in compliance with the regulations of the DESE. We have submitted paperwork indicating our intentions to go forward with PARCC by their date December 18th or 19th and have submitted that paperwork.

I think there are a couple of assumptions in these things that are not precise. Main reasons for going forward on this are not about the computer aspect of the test-that's not the main difference between MCAS & PARCC. It's an element but the more important element between the two tests are high standards associated with PARCC. The kinds of critical thinking, reasoning and writing associated with PARCC rather than MCAS.

We made this recommendation and the School Committee supported it based on what we felt was in the best interest of the students and the district trying to get them prepared for taking the kinds of assessments that they will be taking going forward once we have the MCAS 2.0. It will have a different name than PARCC but by all accounts it will be PARCC like than the MCAS and so this in a way goes back to the earlier discussion about assessments. I think it was Mr. Harding that was talking about all the angst and emotions that comes around assessments and that's not even to mention what comes up around changes. So you put 2 of those together and it produces a lot of these kinds of sentiments. Sentiments that Ms. Dexter is representing on behalf of her constituents-totally understandable-totally real and heartfelt, all genuine, all authentic and all sincere. I totally understand that, but we feel we are at the place now where we need to move forward not backward where this School Committee has expressed its interest in raising standards and having higher expectations for students in helping all children achieve at higher levels.

Sometimes Mr. Harding talks about moving the needle. All these elements, words and ideas we put forward-we think this new assessment system coming forward-whether we like it or not-it is going to be the MCAS 2.0-offers our students and staff, really it's our students that I'm thinking about, an opportunity to pilot and test out the new kinds of work that we are facing.

Mr. Fantini noted that this is a very dangerous precedent to undue a vote of a previous Committee.

Mr. Harding took note of what is factual in the motion and noted that it is dangerous for a body to circumvent the rules we have set up for ourselves. Ms. Nolan explained that the only teachers we heard from urged us to stay with MCAS. We know for sure we are not doing PARCC for more than one year. Why change to a new test when you know next year there will be a different test. She noted MCAS this year would have some PARCC items. No one knew that a major change in our testing was being proposed until the recommendation came from the Superintendent for the December 15th meeting. Ms. Nolan indicated that we should have been having a conversation on this for a month.

Ms. Bowman indicated that she does not want to undermine the vote of the previous Committee and did not feel that they had the time to digest this motion. She noted that she wanted to respect the decision and process of the body that made the vote. The Chair advised Ms. Dexter of the options she could take

regarding her motion. The Chair also indicated that she would like to review with the new Members the formatting of motions.

Mr. Fantini moved adoption of Ms. Dexter's motion. On the following roll call, Ms. Dexter's Late Order failed of adoption: Ms. Dexter PRESENT; Mr. Fantini NAY; Mr. Harding ABSENT; Ms. Kelly NAY; Ms. Nolan PRESENT; Ms. Bowman NAY; Mayor Simmons NAY.

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Kelly, to suspend the Rules to make a comment on an item not on the agenda. It was voted to suspend the Rules for the reason stated. Mr. Fantini cautioned the Members in regard to the Open Meeting Law and about corresponding with more than one Member. Mayor Simmons explained how someone could unintentionally violate the Open Meeting Law by sending an email to a quorum of the Members. She indicated that she would arrange to have someone conduct a review of these laws for the Committee.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

Ms. Dexter moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, to suspend the Rules to make a comment on a vote that was already taken. It was voted to suspend the Rules for the reason stated. Ms. Dexter indicated her appreciation to the Members and the administration for the time and consideration given to her late motion. She admitted that she did not know if it was procedurally legal to present this motion. She apologized if she had misread information on point #6 of her motion. She also affirmed that she did not communicate with any other members on this motion. She noted that Robert's rules does allow for late orders that are not submitted beforehand and submitted her late order because of the extreme deadline issue. Ms. Dexter commented that she was told that it would be necessary to rewrite over 500 IEPs in the district in order to allow for time testing for PARCC. The Chair noted that there will be an opportunity to hear from Dr. Greer and to have a discussion in the future on testing and assessment.

The Chair returned to the regular order of business.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Bowman, it was voted to adjourn (7:50 PM).

Judith T. Martin
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

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

- Ms. Dexter's late order – January 5, 2016
- School Committee Sub-Committee preference sheet