

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, January 17, 2006

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Walser,
Mayor Reeves

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, on the following roll call, it was voted to convene in Executive Session for the purpose of conducting strategy in preparation for contract negotiations with non-union personnel. Mr. Harding ABSENT, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser, YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA. The Chair announced that no votes will be taken in Executive Session and the Committee will reconvene in Open Session.

Executive Session

Members present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding (joined in progress), Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Walser, Mayor Reeves

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

Also Present: Superintendent Thomas Fowler-Finn
Deputy Superintendent Carolyn Turk
Chief Operating Officer James Maloney
Legal Counsel Maureen MacFarlane

Members discussed with Legal Counsel strategy for contract negotiations. The Chair adjourned the Executive Session at 6:18 p.m. and the Committee returned to Open Session.

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 6:30 p.m., announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session and returned to the Regular Meeting Agenda.

Also Present: Student School Committee Members James Conway and Spenser Skates.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the following meetings:

- Regular Meeting - December 20, 2005
- Organization Meeting - January 2, 2006

Public Comment on School Committee Agenda

The following individuals were heard:

- Jack Haverty, Ellsworth Ave., CTA Vice President and CRLS Teacher re: lack of heat in classrooms
- Elie Yarden, Pleasant St. re: issues with public information and public comment

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

Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members

James Conway reported that there was a productive meeting with CRLS Deans and students regarding the ramifications of MCAS scores and next steps. Mr. Conway was heard in support of a military "opt-in" policy. Spenser Skates was heard reiterating the lack of heat in classrooms and asked that the situation be fixed. The Superintendent responded that there were two broken pipes at the high school early today or late last night and they have since been repaired.

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business

The Members passed over all unfinished business.

At this time, the Chair moved to the Presentation on the Strategic Marketing Plan. While the presenters are setting up, the Chair entertained a motion to move to New Business.

New Business

Mr. Harding moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, for adoption of items #06-01 through #06-11. Mr. Harding removed #06-11. Mr. Grassi removed #06-01 and #06-07. Mr. Schuster removed #06-09 and #06-10. Mr. Fantini removed #06-08. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#06-02, Contract Award: that the School Committee award a contract for transportation services for Cambridge students placed at Schools for Children, funds to be provided from the General Fund budget:

1. Schools for Children, Inc., 20 Academy Street, Arlington, for the period July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, in an amount not to exceed \$180,893.00.

#06-03, Approval of Home School Applications for School Year 2005-2006: that the School Committee approve the home school application for the 2005-2006 school year as detailed in the document.

#06-04, City Council Order, Calendar Item #13: that the Mayor be and hereby is requested to convey to the School Committee the request of the City Council that the School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools provide the City Council with the graduation rates for African American males from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

#06-05, Special Needs Contracts for Residential Program Services not available from the Cambridge School Department: that the School Committee award a contract to the institution on the list in an amount not to exceed the shown rate, having been approved by the Operational Services Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, funds to be provided from the general fund budget:

- 1 student Learning Center for Deaf Children, 848 Central St., Framingham \$35,806.14

#06-06, Special Needs Contracts for Day Program Services not available from the Cambridge School Department: that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions on 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.

1 student	Kennedy Day School, 30 Warren St., Brighton	\$ 40,089.66
1 student	Farr Academy, 71 Pearl St., Cambridge	45,663.84
1 student	The Home for Little Wanderers, 271 Huntington Ave., Boston	62,126.11
1 student	Tufts Educational Day Care Center, 165 Holland St., Somerville	14,244.00
1 student	SHORE Collaborative, Owen Center, 100 Revere Beach Pkwy., Chelsea	42,793.80
<u>1 student</u>	Harbor Schools, Inc., 26 Rolfes Lane, Newbury	<u>15,469.87</u>
6 students		\$220,387.28

Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA.

Justin Martin, Public Information Officer, introduced Nicholas Morgan from The District Management Council, who gave an overview of the organization and walked Members through a presentation, including:

- How Does a Brand Work
- Sources of Brand Equity
- Valuing Brand Equity for Schools
- Customer Decisions: The Hierarchy of Needs
- School Brands - Brand Portfolios
- The Brand Management Process

Justin Martin then presented the CPS' first Strategic Communications/Marketing Plan prepared by a core committee of Human Resources Executive Director Barbara Allen, Web Administrator Trish Keenan, Chief Operating Officer James Maloney, Chief Technology Officer Jeff LaPlante, Public Information Director Justin Martin, and Student Registration and Enrollment Management Director Christine Szafran Fisher.

The Superintendent, Mr. Martin and Mr. Morgan responded to some of the following questions, comments and concerns Members raised:

- Look at how branding might affect enrollment
- Insure that we look at more conventional ways to get information out
- Anything negative associated with the brand has to be dealt with
- I'm encouraged by the existence of this plan
- Cambridge's real estate values are not correlated with the perception of the district - refine branding issues that are specific to Cambridge
- Do not shy away from doing threats
- Insure that focus groups extend beyond the list in the document - reach out to a large group of people
- Understand what parents of 0-4 children want for them
- How can School Committee members leverage their position as leaders and take a more active part in this plan
- List stakeholders in the community and reach out to them
- The high school is lacking identity
- Would like to see outside focus groups

- Many of the focus groups listed do not seem to be objective
- Happy to see Family Liaisons included in the plan
- What does “progressive school system” mean
- Happy that we have this - it’s a great start
- Teachers are the #1 influence of a school district’s perception
- If we don’t define ourselves through a plan like this others will define us
- Having this draft is a watershed event
- Do we have a brand or are we getting to a brand
- What are the three words that will define our brand
- Capture from graduates what going to CRLS means to them
- What is chalkboard chatter
- What are the results from other districts that have put branding plans into effect
- The concept of auditing the plan and conducting focus groups is good
- Word of mouth is extremely powerful
- Revisit our mission statement - it is lengthy
- Target families with children who are months-4 years old to enroll in our schools
- Improving internal communications makes schools better
- What is the relationship between Nick Morgan, The District Management Council and CPS
- Air a monthly show of what is happening in our schools
- The promise should equal the experience
- Is there an infrastructure in place to support this plan for the next five years
- Good data will make a good communication plan better
- This is one of the best reports I’ve seen in a long time
- Use educational rates to send out bulk mailings
- Are public schools in other countries trying to advertise themselves
- 8th graders are an important group of stakeholders in a communications plan
- If we are producing Rhodes Scholars we need to tell people
- We should have alumni endow certain activities and scholarships

The Chair thanked the Superintendent, Mr. Martin and Mr. Morgan for the presentations.

At this time the Chair moved to the Report on Benchmarks.

Mr. Grassi in the Chair.

The Superintendent was heard and noted that this is a one year comparison and will grow and develop over time. Maryann MacDonald, Executive Director of Student Achievement & Accountability, Barbara Van Sickle, Director of Student Achievement & Accountability and Kathleen Ivins, Assessment Specialist, walked Members through a slide presentation “CPS Benchmarks of Student Achievement”, including:

- Overview
- Purpose of Benchmark Report
- How to Read Benchmarks
- How to Read Benchmarks Gap Analysis
- *CPS District Results K-5*
Early Literacy Assessment K-2
MCAS, ELA grades 3 & 4 – Math grade 4
- *CPS District Results 6-8*
MCAS, ELA grade 7 – Math grades 6 & 8
- CPS District Results 6-8, Report Card Grades
- CPS District Results 6-8, School Climate
- CRLS Results, MCAS – Grade 10

- CRLS Results, Graduation Indicators
- CRLS District Results, SAT
- CPS District Results 9-12, Advanced Placement
- CRLS Results 9-12, Grades GPA
- CRLS Results 9-12, School Climate
- Next Steps

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

The Superintendent and staff responded to some of the following questions/comments/concerns raised by the Members:

- Keep eye on the prize of 100% excellence - indicators need to be summarized
- Make this report as transparent as possible
- Why is 90% and not 100% a benchmark on the developmental reading assessment
- The gap would not matter if achievement levels were high overall
- Are there any theories on why district improvement has happened or when we have lagged and the decreases why they have occurred
- Has this data been correlated with the length of time children are in our district and whether that has had an impact on all of these overall achievement levels
- Is there a trend line in the data over the last few years
- A summary page by school by benchmark would be useful
- Our schools serve a purpose for things other than academic achievement
- Concerned that only 49% of CRLS students participate in extracurricular activities - would like to see a breakdown of what the extracurricular activities are
- Interested to see if AP participation goes up next year as a result of the AVID program
- Who is included in the African-American category
- Can we break out who is African-American, Afro-Caribbean, etc.
- Need to look at F/R Whites, Black and Hispanic
- Is there a way to disaggregate data to give us a clearer picture
- There are greater numbers of African-American children in AP classes but the passing rate is not high
- How do test scores relate to the job that is being done
- What are some of the numbers in the report that were surprises
- What are some of the plans for middle school math
- There is an issue with students not passing our graduation requirements - the gap should be 0
- There is no sense of connection at the high school – need to have freshmen and sophomores connected with an adult at the high school through extra-curricular activities
- What performance are we measuring our white students against and how do we assure that those students move forward
- How has the discrepancy between MCAS levels of proficiency and report card grades been reconciled
- How do we change the view of the gap that emphasizes the positive as well as the negative progress
- Concerned that the high school experience will be focused just on getting better MCAS scores
- Publicize positive information on how we have narrowed the gap
- Looking for great breakout scores and phenomenal extra-curricular activity next year

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting to 10:30.

The Chair recognized and welcomed Councilor Craig Kelley.

Ms. Walser raised a question on whether there is a way for the School Committee to take the MCAS test this spring. The Superintendent said he will provide an old MCAS test with an answer sheet.

Mayor Reeves introduced his Educational Liaison, John Clifford, and asked him to get a copy of Governor Romney's speech for the Members.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to return to the Agenda.

Non-Consent Business

#06-01, Revised School Committee Reports. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, this item is placed on the Calendar.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, **#06-07, Consultant Agreements**, was adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the consultant agreement with the company on the list, in the amount set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

1. Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, in the amount of \$31,560.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 859138, prog. 138, proj/grant SC06632

Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi PRESENT, Mayor Reeves YEA.

#06-08, Grant Awards: Members raised questions on the Gifted and Talented Curriculum Review grant whether there are five or six schools involved, how it might be implemented in all schools, whether all children are gifted and talented, and why it is implemented in only six schools. The Superintendent and Dr. Turk were heard. On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, on the following roll call, **#06-08, Grant Awards**, was adopted as follows: that the School Committee accept and approve the grant awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Title I Distribution, for the period September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2006, in the amount of \$1,239,453.00, Project/Grant SC06604. Supplemental to the original School Committee Meeting October 18, 2005, Order #C05-195. This grant amount is the remaining balance from D.O.E.
2. C.A.S.I.T., Inc., for the period December 12, 2005 to June 30, 2006, in the amount of \$15,000.00, Project/Grant SC06727. This grant will support the salary for an Italian instructor for grades K-5 at the Haggerty School.
3. Cambridge Community Foundation, for the period December 12, 2005 to June 30, 2006, in the amount of \$2,000.00, Project/Grant SC06745. The CRLS STARS (Students Teaching and Advocating Respect), is an exemplary peer leadership program at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. This grant will support the STARS annual, week-long conference, entitled Seeking Solutions, which will be held March 2006.
4. Friends of the King School, for the period October 7, 2005 to September 30, 2006, in the amount of \$710.00, Project/Grant SC05792. Supplemental to the original School Committee Meeting November 15, 2005, Order #C05-218. These funds are various donations and will be used for the school beautification and special events.
5. King School, for the period December 4, 2005 to June 30, 2006, in the amount of \$1,000.00, Project/Grant SC06799. These funds will be used for field trips for grades 7/8.

6. Cambridge Community Foundation (MSAN), for the period September 1, 2005 to October 31, 2005, in the amount of \$8,000.00, Project/Grant SC06809. Supplemental to the original School Committee Meeting September 20, 2005, Order #C05-175.
7. Gifted and Talented Curriculum Review, for the period January 6, 2006 to June 30, 2006, in the amount of \$43,000.00, Project/Grant SC06815. This grant will support the seventh grade science teachers at 6 schools, will pilot a new life science curriculum and evaluate its effectiveness for high ability learners at the Baldwin, Cambridgeport, Kennedy-Longfellow, King Open, Peabody, and Tobin Schools.
8. Healthy Food Choices in Middle and Elementary Schools, for the period December 15, 2005 to June 30, 2006, in the amount of \$10,000.00, Project/Grant SC06816. Cambridge School Food Service has been working to improve the choices and appeal of school meals, and Tasty Choices in Cambridge Schools would allow us to take the next step.

Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mayor Reeves PRESENT.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to take the Agenda items out of order. **Ms. Nolan is recorded as voting NAY.**

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting to 10:50.

#06-11, Motion by Mr. Grassi that, in the interest of protecting the safety of students and the public and in the interest of protecting personal property of students and the public, the School Committee approve a motion not allowing spectators at home basketball games until the Superintendent of Schools present a report to the School Committee outlining an action plan to insure safety and security inside and outside the War Memorial before, during, and after games. This report is to be presented at the next School Committee meeting. The Superintendent was asked to speak to the altercation after a recent CRLS/Medford basketball game and the locker room theft after a CRLS/Peabody basketball game. The Superintendent was heard. The Members discussed with the Superintendent and Mr. Maloney the steps being taken to increase safety and security at high school basketball games. Satisfied with the response, Mr. Grassi withdrew his motion and placed it on file.

#06-09, Joint motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Schuster that the 2006-2007 Rules of the School Committee be amended as follows: Page 1, Chapter I, Section 3.2. Roundtables. Change "shall not be broadcast..." to "may or may not be broadcast". Further, that wherever public "comment" is referenced it be changed to public "testimony". Mr. Fantini offered the following friendly amendment that after "shall not be broadcast", insert "unless a majority of Members vote to have it televised and it is stated in the call of the meeting". Members discussed the process by which broadcasting would be decided. Mayor Reeves moved to Calendar the motion.

#06-10, Joint Motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Schuster that the School Committee direct the Executive Secretary to communicate information of scheduled meetings to all school Principals and Family Liaisons for them to disseminate to their communities; specifically, information should be E-mailed as soon as the date and subject are set for a workshop and when a presentation date for a topic at a Regular School Committee meeting is known. Mr. Schuster deferred to Ms. Nolan who was heard in support of the motion.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to extend the meeting by two minutes.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adopt **#06-10, Joint Motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Schuster** that the School Committee direct the Executive Secretary to communicate information of scheduled meetings to all school Principals and Family Liaisons for them to disseminate to their communities;

specifically, information should be E-mailed as soon as the date and subject are set for a workshop and when a presentation date for a topic at a Regular School Committee meeting is known.

Late Orders

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted that the School Committee schedule a meeting on January 24, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. to convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for collective bargaining as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the School Committee.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted that the School Committee send a letter of thanks to C.A.S.IT. INC. for its generous grant to support an Italian teacher at the Haggerty School.

On a motion by Mayor Reeves, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted that the School Committee send a get well letter to Safety Specialist George Thompson.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to adjourn (10:50 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee