

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, March 7, 2006

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding (joined in progress), 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 5:45 p.m.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Walser, on the following roll call, it was voted to convene in Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for collective bargaining and strategy for litigation: Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding ABSENT, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA. The Chair announced that no votes will be taken in Executive Session and that the Committee will reconvene in Open Session.

Executive Session

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

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

Also Present: Thomas Fowler-Finn, Superintendent
Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent (joined in progress)
Barbara Allen, Executive Director, Human Resources
James Conry, Chief Financial Officer
Maureen MacFarlane, Legal Counsel
James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer

Members discussed with Legal Counsel strategy for collective bargaining with Units A and B and discussed with staff and Legal Counsel strategy for litigation.

The Chair ended the Executive Session and returned to Open Session.

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

The Chair reconvened the meeting, announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session and returned to the Agenda.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the following meeting as amended:

- Special Informal Meeting - January 3, 2006

Public Testimony on School Committee Agenda

The following individual was heard:

- Suzanne Pearce, Lakeview Ave., President, Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Assn., re: appointment of a School Committee Member as an ex-officio Board Member

The Chair closed public testimony.

Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting:

Unfinished Business

New Business

Mr. Schuster moved, seconded by Ms. Walser, for adoption of items #06-23 through #06-37. The Chair moved to item **#06-024, School Nutrition Policy**. Mr. Maloney thanked the Members of the Healthy Children's Task Force Sub-committee, Virginia Chomitz, Alice Turkel, Jose Wendel, Don Alcott, Kim DeAndrade, Jack Mingle and other volunteers who developed this comprehensive umbrella policy. The Members thanked everybody involved for the hard work put into this policy. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to refer **#06-024, School Nutrition Policy**, to a second reading.

Ms. Nolan removed #06-25, #06-26 and #06-31 through #06-37. Mr. Fantini removed #06-28.
Ms. Walser removed #06-30. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#06-23, Approval to go into Executive Session: that the School Committee go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for collective bargaining and litigation strategy as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiation and litigation positions of the School Committee.

#06-27, 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:

2 students	League School, 300 Boston-Providence Turnpike, Walpole	\$106,888.48
1 student	Berkshire Hills Music Academy, 48 Woodbridge Street, South Hadley	39,500.00
1 student	Germaine Lawrence Inc., 18 Claremont Ave., Arlington	24,599.25
1 student	Brandon Residential Treatment Center, 27 Winter Street, Natick	23,818.08
1 student	Beacon High School, 74 Green Street, Brookline	23,747.50
1 student	Schools for Children, Dearborn Academy STEP Program, 20 Academy Street, Arlington	37,800.00
1 student	Schools for Children, Dearborn Academy, 20 Academy Street, Arlington	21,566.48
1 student	Schools for Children, Seaport Campus, 20 Academy Street, Arlington	<u>24,690.64</u>
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9 students		\$302,610.43

#06-29, Grant Award: that the School Committee accept and approve the grant award in the amount and for the period indicated:

Collaborative Success Plan, proj/grant SC06819, for the period March 1, 2006 to August 31, 2006, in the amount of \$38,500.00. The purpose of this state-funded grant is the development of a Collaborative Success Plan to supplement existing district resources to increase the number of students entering high school who will exit having met the competency determination and graduation requirements; and increase the number of post 12th grade students who are aware of the postsecondary educational and/or employment/workforce training opportunities available until passing the MCAS retest. Through these funds and the collaborative efforts of students, families, schools, and community, communication and support tools will be developed and implemented to provide an outline of educational choices, consequences, and options for secondary and postsecondary students.

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

Non-Consent Business

Ms. Nolan raised questions on the hand-held polling devices. The Superintendent said that the \$100,000 for the devices is being held for submission at a later date. Ms. Nolan asked if the union and employees had input into equipment purchases. The Superintendent and Mr. Maloney were heard. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, **#06-25, Statutory Transfer for Use of FY05-06 Surplus Funds**, was adopted as follows: that the School Committee approve the transfers of funds in the Statutory Categories specified to provide funding for the use of FY05-06 Surplus funds approved at the February 7, 2006 School Committee meeting:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Salaries & Fringe Benefits	0	(\$944,770)
Other Ordinary Maintenance	\$150,000	0
Travel & Training	0	0
Extraordinary Expenditures	<u>\$794,770</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	\$944,770	(\$944,770)

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

#06-26, Plan for System-wide Technology Upgrade and Transfer of Funds. The Superintendent, Mr. Maloney, Jeff LaPlante, Chief Technology Officer, and Joanne Krepelka, Educational Technology Coordinator, responded to some of the following Members questions, comments and concerns:

- An overall technology plan and an understanding of the implications for the district is needed
- Why is this upgrade needed at this time
- In what other districts can parents access grades, etc.
- Where will this investment put us in terms of being a first-class system
- This is a great opportunity for the district to communicate with families
- How many families have internet access
- Insure that all students have internet access
- Outside the context of a vision, put upgrade off for six months
- Pay more attention to training and maintenance

- This is a good start on a multi-year plan
- Are there any staffing issues associated with this plan
- Where are we in terms of long-distance (on-line) learning and is it helpful to us
- Is there an opportunity for matching grants
- Are there companies who will donate computers to disadvantaged families

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, on the following roll call, **#06-26, Plan for System-wide Technology Upgrade and Transfer of Funds**, was adopted as follows: that the School Committee receive the Plan for a System-wide Technology Upgrade; and further, that the Committee approve a transfer of funds in the Statutory Categories specified for the use of projected FY05-06 Surplus Funds to implement the Plan:

	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Salaries & Fringe Benefits	0	0
Other Ordinary Maintenance	0	(\$1,100,000)
Travel & Training	0	0
Extraordinary Expenditures	<u>\$1,100,000</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	\$1,100,000	(\$1,100,000)

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

Mr. Fantini asked if home school applications with students' names can be sent to Members confidentially. The Superintendent was heard and said he will get back to him. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adopt **#06-28, Approval of Home School Applications for School Year 2005-2006**, as follows: that the School Committee approve the home school applications for the 2005-2006 school year as detailed in the document.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to suspend the Rules to move to this evening's presentation. The Members congratulated sophomore Skyy Anderson and presented her with an award for excellence in both the classroom and on the athletic field as the first student in the history of CRLS to earn all-American honors in girls' soccer.

Members thanked the Superintendent for the policy. On a motion by Mr. Harding, it was voted to refer **#06-30, Cambridge Public Schools Recruiter Policy**, back to the Superintendent to incorporate language offering support to those students who are interested in joining the military.

#06-31, E-mail from Suzanne Pearce, President of Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association, requesting that the School Committee designate one of its Members to serve as an ex-officio Member of their Board. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted that Vice Chair Fantini designate both Mr. Schuster and Ms. Nolan ex-officio members of the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association.

Mayor Reeves announced that he has recommended Mr. Harding and Mr. Schuster for membership on the Kids Council.

Mr. Grassi asked that the request in City Council Order #5 get resolved prior to the March 27 joint meeting. It was suggested that ways of communication between the School Committee and City Council be discussed at the 27th meeting. On a motion by Mr. Harding, it was voted that the Superintendent provide answers to the City Council's request for the meeting on the 27th, and place on file item **#06-32**,

Memorandum from Deputy City Clerk Lopez, forwarding City Council Order #5 requesting the School Department to provide the City Council with an analysis, by grade, of how many students in the Cambridge Public School System are reading at what grade levels.

#06-33, Joint motion by Mr. Grassi and Mr. Fantini that the School Committee adopt a policy requiring all CRLS, Extension School and Bridge Program freshmen and sophomores to participate each year in one extra-curricular activity or a community service activity as defined and designed by the CRLS Principal. Mr. Grassi was heard in support of the motion's intent. Members discussed the pros and cons of the motion. The Superintendent was heard in support of the intent of the policy but asked that the motion be withdrawn until a new Principal is hired. In response to a question from Mr. Harding, Candace Dunlap, Dean of Curriculum, Learning Community L, introduced Lynn Williams, Director of Guidance, Administrative Intern Jamalh Prince and Damian Smith, Dean of Curriculum, Learning Community R. Ms. Dunlap said that this motion was discussed at length with the leadership team and they concur with the Superintendent that this policy change would be a mistake at this time. Ms. Walser offered a friendly amendment to substitute the word "encourage" for the word "require". Ms. Walser's amendment was not accepted. Mr. Grassi offered an amendment to remove the words "and sophomores" and add the words "or an advisor/advisee program" after "community service activity". Ms. Walser moved to Calendar the motion as amended.

In order to expedite the budget sub-committee meeting, Mr. Fantini moved to Calendar the following items:

#06-34, Motion by Mr. Grassi that the Superintendent direct the Executive Director of RSTA to create a guide listing information on gaining entrance to area trade unions. This information should include union local, address, contact information, entrance requirements and procedures. This information should be updated on a yearly basis and multiple copies for distribution be made available to CRLS Guidance Counselors and Cambridge Youth Centers.

#06-35, Motion by Mr. Harding that the Superintendent schedule a workshop presentation to discuss how professional development for elementary school teachers is scheduled and implemented during regular school hours. Further, that this presentation include information on the frequency of substitute teachers being used to support professional development activities in the absence of regular classroom teachers.

#06-36, Motion by Ms. Nolan that all quarterly budget reports, which include the projected end of year balances compared to originally approved budget, include a variance analysis. That the variance analysis include the amount and percent of the variance by budget category. Further, for all categories for which the variance is either greater than \$100,000 or the variance is more than 50%, that an explanation be provided for the variance. The explanation should summarize why the amount was less than expected if less and on what the money was spent if greater than expected. Further, to get the process started, the Superintendent should provide to the School Committee an explanation for all variances fitting this criteria from last year, per attached list.

#06-37, Motion by Ms. Nolan that the School Committee requests the Superintendent to present a district-wide technology strategic plan. Prior to any future spending, including the proposed \$1.1 million in technology spending, and approval of next year's budget, a 5 year strategic plan for district technology spending will be presented to the School Committee. Further, this strategic plan should include an assessment of the current status of technology at all schools and at central administration, and future plans by program area. The plan should include a priority spending plan which is used to determine future projects based on availability of funding.

Mr. Grassi raised a question on how to proceed with future discussion regarding the Superintendent's recommendation for the Tobin School. Mayor Reeves and Ms. Nolan were heard.

The Chair returned to **Agenda item #4, Reconsideration of Votes** Taken at Previous Meeting: By Kenneth E. Reeves, of the vote taken at the Regular Meeting of February 7, 2006, that adopted the following motion: **VOTED:** That the Committee adopt the 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. After "shall not be broadcast" insert "unless a majority of Members vote to have it televised and it is in the call of the meeting". Mayor Reeves withdrew his request for reconsideration. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, on the following roll call, the motion to reconsider the foregoing motion **failed of adoption:** Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding PRESENT, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA.

Mr. Harding asked that the following item be removed from Awaiting Reports and placed on file: Report within the current school year from the Superintendent and the high school Principal, and their designees, on a viable "opt-in" policy that meets the guidelines of the No Child Left Behind Act.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (8:35 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee