

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

**Special Meeting**

**Thursday, March 11, 2004**

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Mr. Lummis, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Walser,  
Mayor Sullivan

Mr. Harding in the Chair.

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

Also Present: Student Representative: Adrienne Leslie

**Presentation of the Records:** None

## **Public Comment on School Committee Agenda**

At this time, the Chair entertained Public Comment.

The following individuals were heard regarding the budget:

- Bruce Silverman, Larch Road

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair

- Stuart Gedal, Montgomery Street
- Helen Solorzano, Bowdoin Street

The Chair announced that there will not be a vote on the budget tonight. The recommendation will be to refer it to the Sub-Committee on the Budget (Committee of the Whole).

- Ramon Gonzalez, Chilton Street
- Patty Nolan, Huron Avenue
- Cheyenne McCarter, Fletcher/Maynard Academy
- Kathy Coll, Fairmont Street
- Angelica Brisk, Amigos
- Mary Bodwell, Amigos
- Eileen Span, Gray St., re ISP

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted to close public comment.

## **Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members**

**Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting:** None

## **Unfinished Business**

Members passed over all Unfinished Business.

## **New Business**

Mr. Grassi moved, seconded by Ms. Walser, for adoption of items #04-043 through #04-045. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, it was voted that **#04-043, FY2004-2005 General Fund Budget**, be referred to the Sub-Committee on the Budget (Committee of the Whole), as follows: that the School Committee receive and approve the Superintendent's Recommended Fiscal Year 2004-2005 General Budget in the amount of \$122,053,195, for the period beginning July 1, 2004 and ending June 30, 2005 in the following statutory categories:

Salaries, Wages & Fringe Benefits	\$ 84,636,210
Other Ordinary Maintenance	29,005,524
Travel & Training	1,123,136
Extraordinary Expenditures	<u>7,288,325</u>
Total	\$122,053,195

Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini ~~ABSENT~~ YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted, as follows: **#04-044, Special Needs Contracts for Day Program Services** Not Available from the Cambridge School Department: that the School Committee award contracts to the institutions named below in the 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 contract	Deveraux Foundation, 60 Miles Road, PO Box 219, Rutland, MA 01543	\$47,093.75
1 contract	Lighthouse School, 25 Wellman Avenue, North Chelmsford, MA 01863	33,822.00
1 contract	Home for Little Wanderers, 271 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115	49,207.40
1 contract	St. Vincent's Home, 2425 Highland Avenue, Fall River, MA 02720	47,274.39
2 contracts	Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02172	185,668.98
1 contract	Corwin Russell School, 142 North Road, Sudbury, MA 01776	28,467.48
<u>1 contract</u> 8 contracts	Shore Educational Collaborative, 100 Revere Beach Parkway, Chelsea, MA 02150	<u>8,325.00</u> \$399,859.00

**#04-045, Special Needs Contracts for Residential Services** Not Available from the Cambridge School Department, be adopted as follows: that the School Committee award contracts to the institution named below in the 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.

<u>2 contracts</u>	Perkins School for the Blind, 175 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02172	<u>\$488,395.80</u>
2 contracts		\$488,395.80

Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini ~~ABSENT~~-YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent for a status report on CRLS. The Superintendent turned the meeting over to Dr. Knight who made an opening statement and she and her staff walked Members through the following presentation:

- "Small Learning Communities Consolidation Plan", by Germaine Myron, School 2 History Teacher
- "Scheduling for the 2004-2005 School Year" and "Block Scheduling 2005-06 School Year", Kathleen Wamness, School 5 Dean of Curriculum and Program
- "Curriculum Development", Chris Saheed, School 1 Dean of Curriculum and Program
- "MCAS", Gail Stein, MCAS Coordinator
- "Professional Development", Candace Dunlop, School 3 Dean of Curriculum and Program
- "CRLS Building Renovation and Construction" and "Construction of Cambridge Public Library", Caroline Hunter, Assistant Principal
- "New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC)", Reza Namin, School 2 Dean of Curriculum and Program
- "Rindge School of Technical Arts", Joe Ciccolo, Interim Executive Director, RSTA
- "Outreach to Parents and Families", Dr. Knight

The Superintendent was heard.

The Superintendent, Dr. Knight and staff responded to Members questions, comments, and concerns, including the following:

- In reference to the statement, "Small enough to know our students, Big enough to serve them all": Since Advising is gone, what has been done to make all of our students known well by an adult; and is there confidence that we do not have students who someone does not know?
- A better job needs to be done to celebrate what goes on at CRLS
- As a parent, why should I send my child to CRLS
- Materials for presentations need to be received ahead of time

Mr. Harding in the Chair

- What are personal benchmarks and goals to get this high school to be the best in the country
- Every student should graduate including passing MCAS as well as our graduation requirements
- How many students did not graduate in 2003
- Provide updated information on number of students not graduating this year
- How many portfolios were approved by the State
- Remove all barriers for children not graduating
- Concern that some parent forums did not go well - a top quality face needs to be presented
- Insure that presenters are prepared for the parent information meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup>
- What is being done to help teachers build relationships with students
- Is there a goal to move MCAS prep classes out of the high school
- Looking forward to the day we do not have MCAS prep classes in the high school
- What will be done to help students and faculty transition to four small schools
- Make students familiar with new teachers and counselors prior to the end of the school year
- How close are we to achieving goals set for April and May
- Excited about 4x4 schedule and thanked Superintendent for implementing it
- Excited about 10<sup>th</sup> grade portfolios
- Who is involved in curriculum development

- Is curriculum being developed with 4x4 in mind
- Do MCAS review classes include students on IEPs
- Would like to hear more about 4x4 training

The Chair recognized and welcomed Councilor Denise Simmons.

- How is the AVID program going to benefit teachers and students
- Learning assessments, etc. need to be in all programs
- What is projected enrollment for next year
- What is process for placing students in small learning communities
- Start professional development before budget is passed
- Happy to see natural proportions are spread out
- Is the team in place that can move CRLS towards excellence
- Will we see less of an achievement gap between schools
- Who is in charge of evaluations and how are they going
- Climate of the high school is disturbing
- What is the general climate compared to last year
- How is transitioning students back to class going
- How many students are in RSTA? How many in level II and III
- How is Shore Collaborative going
- Has RSTA received any students through the Collaborative

The Chair recognized Student Representative Adrienne Leslie who was heard regarding communications.

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair

- Is there a proposed change in the standards for varsity athletics
- Raise the bar for children participating in athletics
- Do a better job of connecting students to adults by involving them in extracurricular activities
- Enrich technology to make CRLS more efficient

The Chair thanked the Superintendent, Dr. Knight and staff for the presentation.

Mr. Fantini requested, and received, unanimous consent to be recorded in the affirmative on the previous roll call votes.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent for presentation of the FY04-05 budget. The Superintendent was heard and shared four letters he received from students at the Kennedy-Longfellow School thanking him for reading to them. Dr. Fowler-Finn walked Members through the presentation "Achieving, Excelling, and Closing the Achievement Gap".

At this time, the Chair entertained public comment.

The following individuals were heard:

- Bruce Silverman
- Sarah Carleton
- Craig Kelly
- Tom Stohlman

Student Representative Leslie raised questions on whether students at an alternative high school are more motivated to learn and how it and SAT prep are going to close the achievement gap. The Superintendent was heard. Ms. Leslie raised a question on the poor conditions of the bathrooms at CRLS.

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

Members raised questions/comments/concerns, including the following:

- What is the cost savings of outsourcing plumbing
- The format of the budget has improved but flavor is missing in terms of concise goals, objectives, benchmarks, progress, etc.

The Chair announced there will be a public hearing on March 23 at 6:00 p.m. and a meeting on April 6 at 6:00 p.m. for anticipated budget adoption.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting past 10:00 p.m.

- What is the difference between current budget and actual budget
- Health care costs look like 14%, not 12%
- If numbers are not the same they should be explained
- Need to see a copy of adopted budget and expenditure report

The Superintendent read the following communication from Louis DePasquale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs, and James Monagle, City Auditor:

"We are in receipt of the School Department's Financial Report and Expenditure Projection as of 01/31/04. As you are aware, the School Department provides current year budget updates periodically during the fiscal year. An end-of-year (EOY) projection is usually done in May that generates a statutory transfer request to the School Committee for approval.

"The report received utilizes the same format and methodology used in the past that has generally yielded an accurate estimate of EOY balances and expenditures. In addition, current year budget issues are reviewed as part of our FY05 School Budget discussions.

"Based on the information provided in the January report, on-going discussions and a review of current expenditures and balances, it appears that the report reflects an accurate picture of the status of the FY04 School Budget and shows no significant unobligated balance at the end of the fiscal year. With a third of the fiscal year remaining there may be some unforeseen expenditures that would impact the current projected balance.

"In addition, any budget balances that need to be transferred out of statutory categories will require School Committee and City Council approval and would be included in the future financial reports.

"If you require additional information, please contact us."

Mayor Sullivan explained that the balance is about 24% or \$60,000.

Ms. Walser, Budget Co-Chair thanked the Superintendent for explaining his thinking and asked that he repeat some of the presentation since this meeting is not being broadcast live. Ms. Walser also asked that Dr. Fowler-Finn spend more time between now and April 6 in schools talking to parents and

explaining his thinking. Members are asked to go to the City Council meeting the night before the School Committee budget hearing on May 11 to discuss facility needs.

In response to an earlier statement, it was pointed out that raising questions on information as presented should not be misconstrued as not supporting the Superintendent.

Members raised further questions/comments:

- Will work on the HVAC at the King building be done this summer
- What is the process for adjusting formulas or looking at new ones
- Programs in Cambridge need to change
- Would children past first grade benefit from Reading Recovery
- How are we educating children from lower income families and people of color
- Is there a direct correlation between Fletcher/Maynard increasing class size and reducing teachers
- Why is Fletcher/Maynard getting such a big hit in reduction of teachers
- Why weren't some of the administrative positions cut this year
- Why weren't aides reduced to fund more classroom teachers
- What do Principals have discretion over in the budget
- Concerned about how issues are discussed
- Bottom line is high quality education of our children
- We need to be more proactive in reducing high cost of health care, sped, transportation, etc.
- How can we strategize with unions
- How will classes in the alternative school work with different learning levels
- Welcome parents as partners in the alternative school
- How will alternative school work in conjunction with other alternative programs in the city
- How does current Challenge Prep fit into the alternative school
- Does summer school allocation include funds for students failing three or more classes
- What programs are included in the \$360,000 summer school allocation
- Why is data warehousing different or needed
- What is the formula for aides
- This budget provides resources to make all of our schools great
- Need to make more information available and more transparent
- Schools need to use resources in a way that makes schools better
- Formulas speak to issues of equity
- Make budget more transparent
- Curriculum development, leadership development make as much a difference as more dollars

The Superintendent and his staff responded to some of the above Members questions and comments.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and his staff for the presentation and entertained a motion to adjourn.

On a motion by Mr. Lummis, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (10:40 p.m.).

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee