

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

**Special Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 13, 2004**

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

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

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

Also Present: Student Representative: Adrienne Leslie

## **Presentation of the Records**

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted that the Minutes of the following meetings be accepted as presented:

- Regular Meeting - March 2, 2004
- Special Meeting - March 11, 2004
- Special Informal Meeting - March 12, 2004
- Special Informal Meeting - March 13, 2004

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

The following individuals were heard:

- Bruce Silverman, Larch Road, re budget
- Catherine Sullivan, Notre Dame Ave., re alternative high school
- Patty Nolan, Huron Ave., re budget; parental involvement
- Heather Hoffman, Hurley Street, re budget
- Sarah Carleton, Antrim Street, re budget and administrative costs

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

The Chair introduced RSTA Interim Director, Joe Ciccolo, who recognized RSTA staff members present: Interim Assistant Executive Director Ms. Ruby Pierce; SkillsUSA Advisor and Graphic Communications Instructor Ms. Jackie Forstrom; Commercial Design Instructor Dr. Michelle Maxwell; Biotechnology Instructor Dr. Angela Zapata; Carpentry Instructor Mr. Paul Walsh. Mr. Ciccolo presented the winners of the following:

## **Outstanding Vocational Technical School Student Award**

- Richardson Maurissaint

## **SkillsUSA (VICA) Award**

- Lena Groeger, 1<sup>st</sup> Place State T-shirt Design
- Krishana House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place State T-shirt Design (accepted by her grandfather, Bill Moran)
- Nina Berg, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place State T-shirt Design

- Karishma Khalifa, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place State Pin Design and Novartis Honorable Mention

### **NASA Student Involvement Program for Space Flight Opportunities**

- Jeffrey DeMartin
- Christopher Nelson
- Kaitlyn Webster
- Conner Epsteinkraus
- Anthony Lewis
- Jessica Scotland

Dr. Zapata was heard and gave a brief summary of the design project that was selected from a national competition to fly aboard the next space shuttle. Dr. Zapata and the winning teams have an all-expense paid trip to Goddard Space Center in June for flight week to do final testing and to present their prototype to NASA for the next launching.

Dr. Maxwell was heard and gave a brief summary of the t-shirt designs six of her students entered in a national competition. Three of the designs won first, second and third place. The first place winner will be honored on April 29 at the SkillsUSA State Conference where 500 attendees will be wearing t-shirts with the winning design.

The Members congratulated all of the winners for their exciting accomplishments.

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

Adrienne Leslie reported that the women's seminar held this week was very enlightening and congratulated everyone who attended.

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

### **Unfinished Business**

Members passed over all Unfinished Business.

### **New Business**

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt items #04-046 through #04-054, as follows:

**#04-046, Approval of Home School Applications** for School Year 2003-2004: that the School Committee approve home school applications for the 2003-2004 school year. Approval of the manner of instruction is required in order for each of the children to be exempt from the compulsory attendance requirements of state law.

**#04-047, Consultant Agreements:** that the School Committee approve consultant agreements with the companies or individuals, in the amounts set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

1. Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, in the amount of \$27,120.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 859138, prog. 138, proj./grant SC04632.
2. Professional Services, Cambridge, MA, in the amount of \$36,000.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 849622, prog. 622, proj./grant SC04767.

**#04-048, Grant Awards FY03-04:** that the School Committee accept and approve the following grant awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Sped Corrective Action, project/grant SC04779, for the period September 1, 2003 to August 31, 2004, in the amount of \$14,000.00. This grant will provide the Office of Special Education with funding to address issues raised during the Spring 2003 program review. The Office of Special Education has provided DOE with a Corrective Action Plan relative to this review. Funding will be used for training consultants and teacher training stipends.
2. Mark Sandman Music Education, project/grant SC04780, for the period March 15, 2004 to June 30, 2004, in the amount of \$1,000.00. The Mark Sandman Music Education grant will supplement the "Drum Logic" after school curriculum development project. The purpose of this project is to design a drum making and drum rhythms activity that integrates mathematical problem solving, deductive reasoning and skill development with musical explorations. This project will continue to be implemented at 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC Partnership Grant after school sites in Cambridge.

**#04-049, 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 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	Home for Little Wanderers, 271 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA	\$ 69,171.81
1 contract	Dearborn Academy, 34 Winter Street, Arlington, MA	17,367.52
1 contract	Justice Resource Institute (The Victor School), 380 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA	41,659.97
1 contract	Justice Resource Institute (Meadowridge/Glenhaven) 380 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA	36,119.95
1 contract	Lighthouse School, 25 Wellman Avenue, North Chelmsford, MA	45,428.40
1 contract	Linden Hill School, 154 South Mountain Road, Northfield, MA	13,700.40
<u>1 contract</u> 7 contracts	Lakeside School, 629 Lowell Street, Peabody, MA	<u>17,990.40</u> \$241,438.45

**#04-050, Email from Ruby Pierce** re: presentation of the winners of the SkillsUSA contest and the NASA Student Involvement Program.

**#04-051, Motion by Mayor Sullivan** that the Superintendent report back to the School Committee with a recommendation proposing changes to the school menu in order to improve the health of children in Cambridge.

**#04-052, Joint motion by Mayor Sullivan and Mr. Harding** that the Cambridge School Committee establish a sub-committee, by agreement with the Superintendent of Public Schools, relative to the functioning of the School Committee office, its location, and overall evaluation.

**#04-053, Letter from Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)**, dated March 15, 2004, regarding election of an Official Delegate and Alternate, and other items for its Annual Meeting on October 27, 2004.

**#04-054, Report of the March 23, 2004, Meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Budget (Committee of the Whole).**

**Meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Budget (Committee of the Whole)  
Tuesday, March 23, 2004, 6:00 p.m.**

Called for the purpose of a Public Hearing on the proposed FY2004-2005 School Department Budget.

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

Mr. Fantini in the Chair

A quorum of the Sub-Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent. The Superintendent spoke to the initiatives going on in the elementary grades, and walked Members through some highlights from the following slide presentation, "Achieving, Excelling, and Closing the Achievement Gap":

Budget Allocation Formulas

- Comparison of Regular Classroom Aides
- LEP/ELL/SEI, Free & Reduced, SPED

Elementary Summary

- Student Projections vs. Actual
- SY2000-SY2003 Enrollments for Communities Near Cambridge
- % of District Attending Public Schools

Restructuring & Reorganization of Positions

- Projected Revenues vs. Projected Expenditures - General Fund Budget
- Major Cost Increases
- Major Cost Decreases
- Proposed Restructuring/Reorganization of Positions

Program Initiatives/Improvements

The Chair thanked the Superintendent for the presentation and made the following announcements:

- The budget is on our website
- The Superintendent will be on Channel 95 beginning tomorrow evening for two weeks at 7:00 and 8:00 p.m.
- Mr. Harding and Mr. McGovern visited the Richard Milburn Alternative School in Virginia
- Mr. Lummis has worked on AVID and SpringBoard programs.

At this time, the Chair entertained public comment.

The following individuals were heard:

- Elaine Shear, Amory St., re proposed cuts at the Kennedy/Longfellow

- Eileen Span, Gray St., re cut at ISP, teacher cuts at 6 schools
- Tom Stohlman, Channing St., re comparison of '02 budget to '04
- Patty Nolan, Huron Ave. re Amigos additional SSL teacher
- Monica León, High St., re elementary teaching cuts
- Sarah Carlton, Antrim St., re need to have difficult conversations; quarterlies; Principal discussions
- Bruce Silverman, Larch Rd, re budgetary power; procedure on approvals
- Kathy Reddick, Franklin St., President NAACP, raised the following questions re alternative high school:
  - How and when will students receive information on applying?
  - If the school is managed by an outside entity, how will the success of students be measured and who will be responsible?
  - What type of curriculum is being proposed and how will it relate to MCAS?
  - Will the school be private and how can that work within a public school system?
  - Will students have private diplomas rather than a state mandated diploma?
  - How will the school work in concert with CRLS?
  - Since Cambridge is a deseg district, how will racial and socioeconomic balance be assured?
  - Get information out to parents so they can make informed choices.
- Rosa Beato, Spring St. re Amigos cuts
- Marla Erlie, Greenough Ave., re Principals signing on to changes; alternative school

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

Mr. McGovern was heard regarding his and Mr. Harding's trip to Richard Milburn Alternative School in Virginia, reporting that he was impressed; staff was knowledgeable and enthusiastic re: needs of the children; Principal had pride in the program; program tailored itself to the needs of the population; has questions on how we will do it here.

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

- Will there be a formal presentation from Milburn
- We are voting on \$900,000 for an alternative school, not necessarily Milburn
- If we don't get 100 students what will happen with the excess money
- Commend the Superintendent on \$400,000 for in-service training for block scheduling
- What is educational benefit for making changes to grade structure
- What is the concern of going to a single strand
- Impressed with alternative school in Ft. Wayne - different concept of how we want to do it here
- Need parent component and small class size
- How will different learning levels of students needs be met
- Will Project Challenge continue to exist
- Involve children in extracurricular activities
- Make alternative school students a part of our school system
- Need clear cut expectations on how students are referred and admitted
- How will the group of 242 students who are suspended out of school be referred into the program

The Chair welcomed and thanked Principals, CTA President, and Teachers for their attendance tonight.

- What are Title I funds for King Open and Peabody
- Are Title I funds used at the discretion of the Principal
- How is Spanish teacher at Amigos configured
- How will achievement gap be closed particularly at the elementary level

- How can teachers be supported who are teaching to students with wide ranges of abilities
- Small class size and more money has not helped close the achievement gap
- Need to talk about options at the high school level and how they are different
- Schools need to be defined in an understandable way
- List of urgent facilities needs comes to \$14.5 million

Mr. Harding thanked the Superintendent for facilitating the trip to Virginia where he found a caring environment at the school conducive to affecting student achievement.

- Need to see what the request for proposals for alternative high school looks like
- Need to write into RFP what we want the program to look like
- How will the diploma system work
- How will evening classes work
- How do classes with 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders work
- Is this \$900,000 better spent in the classroom or on an alternative high school
- Need to see Title I allocations for current year
- Need to see explanation of discrepancy between adopted and proposed budgets

The Chair recognized Adrienne Leslie who was heard and reported progress on issues at the high school in a meeting with Ms. Hunter; in support of lowering the voting age; and in support of everybody in the community working together to close the achievement gap.

- Will the recruitment process be the same this year for ISP
- If numbers for ISP come up larger, will an adjustment be made
- Hope Principals will use discretion in keeping diverse staff of young and veteran teachers at schools

The Superintendent responded to some of the above questions/concerns/comments.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent for the presentation.

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

Respectfully Submitted  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

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

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow the following individual to speak:

- Elaine Schear, Amory St., Parent, re cuts to ISP

On item **#04-047**, pages 7, 8 and 9, Mr. Grassi requested and received unanimous consent to be recorded as Present, not voting.

The Chair entertained a motion to recess. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to recess this meeting to go into the Budget Sub-Committee meeting. The Chair announced that this meeting will reconvene immediately following the Budget Sub-Committee meeting.

Mayor Sullivan in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the time for recess having expired, the Chair reconvened the meeting and asked for a report from the Budget Co-Chairs. Ms. Walser reported that the Sub-Committee voted to refer the budget favorably to the full Committee with Mr. Harding's motion to divide. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to accept the report of the Budget Sub-Committee as amended.

The Members had a lengthy discussion regarding an alternative school and the amendment to divide it from the main motion. The Superintendent responded to some of the following issues/questions/concerns that were raised:

- Need to pay close attention to the RFP process
- Need program to help students transition back into our system
- Need to insure that students suspended out of school transition back into school seamlessly
- Need different terminology other than "alternative"
- Teacher training is important to working with at-risk students

The Chair recognized and congratulated Adrienne Leslie on being accepted to Boston College, George Washington, Smith College, Temple University, Johnson C. Smith and Tufts University. In response to questions raised by Ms. Leslie, the Superintendent explained the difference between an alternative school and a charter school.

The Members thanked the Budget Co-Chairs, the Superintendent and staff for their work on the budget.

Mr. Fantini moved the adoption.

The Chair announced his intention to take three votes, (a) \$121,156,082, (b) an alternative school \$903,113 and, finally, depending on the first two votes, (c) \$122,053,195 in the following statutory categories: Salaries, Wages & Fringe Benefits, \$84,756,675; Other Ordinary Maintenance, \$28,914,540; Travel & Training, \$1,123,135; Extraordinary Expenditures, \$7,258,845.

On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt \$121,156,082: Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt \$903,113 for an alternative high school: Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding NAY, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt \$122,053,195 in the categories previously mentioned: Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding NAY, Mr. Lummis YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Mayor Sullivan YEA.

Ms. Walser moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, for suspension of the Rules for the purpose of moving reconsideration of the foregoing votes. The Rules having been suspended, a motion to reconsider the foregoing votes, hoping the same would not prevail, failed of adoption.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to refer the FY2004-2005 Budget in the amount of \$122,053,195 to the City Council for a favorable response.

At this time, the Chair returned to the Agenda for a presentation on drop outs. The Superintendent reported receiving some good news regarding our drop out rate, and walked Members through the following presentation:

“CRLS Drop Out Information, 2002-2003”:

- Dropout Rates 1999-2003 - Cambridge and State
- Cambridge 2003 Dropout Rates by Race/Ethnicity
- 2003 Dropout Rate - Cambridge and Surrounding Communities

The Superintendent responded to some of the issues/questions/comments that were raised and discussed:

- How do we define students who drop out
- We should be proud of this report
- Schools often push kids out - they do not drop out
- What is actual number of dropouts for 2003

The Chair thanked the Superintendent for the presentation and moved to the “Effective School Battery” presentation.

The Superintendent prefaced the presentation by saying that the survey was taken in December 2003 and is a snapshot of what was happening in 2003. He also reminded Members that the Principal was only in the job for little over one year when the survey was taken. Dr. Fowler-Finn said he and Maryann MacDonald met separately with the Principal, Deans, teachers and students and each group agreed that these results are an accurate picture of the high school. Dr. Fowler-Finn walked Members through the presentation: “Effective School Battery, Summary of Results, Cambridge Rindge and Latin, December 2003”.

The Superintendent responded to some of the issues/questions/comments that were raised and discussed:

- Ratings point out need for stability at the high school
- What happens from here in terms of students, faculty, etc.
- Give people time to address issues raised in the survey
- Need to see action plan from high school
- What other urban systems use this and what areas are we compared to
- It's important to get this information out
- There is a big disparity between expectations and work being put into getting there - how does that get played out
- Would like to see actual plan that comes back to the Committee
- Safety really stands out
- If rules are clear problems can be avoided later on
- ID badges need to be made for SC Members and staff
- Perception of CRLS will be helped by getting this information out
- People in trenches need to feel supported
- Would like to see what survey looks like in two years re professional development
- Students need to be clear on the rules - looking forward to recommendations clarifying rules
- Interested to see what grammar school/middle school survey looks like
- You can't improve what you can't measure
- Happy with the honesty in the interpretation of the results
- Students at this high school have different reality from what this document reflects
- Look at the Minutes of the meeting with CRLS and the Housing Authority
- Meet with 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to ask their interpretation after visiting CRLS
- Survey supports Dr. Orfield's findings that there are some good things happening at CRLS

- People are going to feel better about this high school as soon as academics are improved
- Are there different scales for each indicator on the chart
- Need to be vigilant about taking care of those students who are not represented in this document
- It is difficult for students to learn when they do not feel safe and supported
- Safety and educational expectations are positive
- There is a long way to go to get things under control - start with clear and concise messages
- Need to use data to effect positive change

The Chair thanked the Superintendent for the report.

#### **Late Orders**

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted unanimously to send letters of congratulations to:

William Bates on being named District B Athletic Director of the Year;

Students who received the Massachusetts Student-Athlete Citizenship Award: Jason DaCosta, Littane Bien-Amie, Rachel Freierman, and George Krebs; and

CRLS students, Lena Groeger and Hummy Song, who received an award for designing a new logo for the Massachusetts Spina Bifida Association.

Mayor Sullivan encouraged Members and the public to visit City Hall to view children's art work on display, and thanked the great art teachers who help children reach their potential.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Lummis, it was voted to adjourn (8:50 p.m.).

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee