

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## (Official Report)

**Special Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 13, 2003**

Called by Mayor Michael A. Sullivan, in accordance with Chapter I, Section 3, of the Rules of the School Committee (immediately following the special meeting to vote on the Superintendent) for the purpose of an update on Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Mr. Price, Ms. Turkel, 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 7:10 p.m.

Ms. Turkel in the Chair.

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

The following individuals were heard:

- Norma Wassel, Richdale Avenue, in support of dismissed Deans
- Dennis Friedler, Corporal McTernan St., re request for records on elementary consolidation plan
- Mary McDavitt, Armory Street, in support of Dr. Knight
- Jackie King, Essex Street, anti firing of Deans
- Larry Ward, Broadway, ceded his time to the following students:  
Nina Ward, Broadway, letter to Dr. Knight re firing of Deans  
Dara Byer, Magee St., School 3  
Zoe French, Prince St., School 2  
Andrew King, Essex St., School 5

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the time for the students to speak.

- David Vogel, Beech Street, CRLS parent
- Jan Corash, Orchard Street, CRLS Parent
- Cheryl Kennedy, Lopez Street, re direction of CRLS; accountability of public employees
- Frank Honts, Belvedere Place, Teacher, School 5, re direction of CRLS

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend Mr. Honts time to speak.

- Vincent Finn, Teacher, School 3, in support of Dr. Knight
- Laura Blacklow, Erie Street, CRLS Personnel Committee
- Tad Sudnick, Brooks Street, Medford, CRLS Science Teacher
- Richard Freierman, RC Kelly St., re communication
- Carol Siriani, CRLS Teacher re vision for CRLS
- Jay Yesselman, Vassal Lane re CRLS

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

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

Emma Lang was heard re direction of CRLS. Ms. Epsteinkraus reserved her comments until after the presentation.

The Chair introduced Superintendent Turk who made an opening statement regarding the vision for and direction of CRLS. The Superintendent turned the meeting over to Dr. Sybil Knight, Principal, CRLS, who walked Members through a presentation titled "CRLS 2003-2004", including:

- CRLS Small Learning Communities – One Cambridge Rindge and Latin School
- Advantage of One CRLS
- Composition of CRLS Small Learning Communities
- What Does this Mean for CRLS?
- CRLS Student Course Progression
- Academic Steering Committees
- Major Components of Our Work Together
- Additional Area We Must Address
- CRLS Goals 2003-2004

The Chair thanked Dr. Knight for the presentation and entertained questions from the Members. On advice from Counsel, the Chair announced that any conversation touching on personnel matters will be a violation of the law.

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

- Did some of the recent changes mean a change in direction or consistency in direction re small schools
- Are learning expectations for CRLS going to be delayed until 03-04
- There is no community input on benchmarks for learning
- School Committee and community need to see benchmarks prior to implementation
- Would accepting grant money have changed the direction of CRLS
- Did Dr. Knight support the decision to not accept CCE money
- It is not the School Committee's responsibility to deal with hiring and firing
- Timing of communication was poorly planned
- Is there a process to include community and staff in communicating a plan for CRLS
- Correct information needs to be communicated to the public
- Explain why probation may not be a bad thing for CRLS
- Will moving away from small schools make the Principal the sole driver of the high school
- Things need to be changed dramatically to improve course failure rate
- High school community is divided on too many issues and subjects
- Every day spent on talking is a day lost on what needs to be done
- What can the Committee do to support the Principal on focusing on the issues
- Principal's vision and values pulls people along and should be transparent to all
- Principal needs to have the leadership team he or she needs
- Are resources available for the items mentioned in tonight's presentation
- What is the status of scheduling for next year
- What is the vision for CRLS in three years
- How has staff reacted to the change from five small schools
- Is there a plan to clarify the direction for restructuring
- Is professional development in place to insure heterogeneous instruction will work
- There are some very good things going on at the high school and some very bad things that need to be addressed
- What is the plan for the "Man-to-Man" and other programs
- The presentation answered many questions and in some ways none of the questions
- What kinds of actions are being taken in terms of student outcomes, culture, safety and quality of teaching at CRLS
- Uncomfortable spending another year trying to solidify the direction of CRLS
- Need a school that is going in the right direction that everybody understands
- Need to communicate in basic ways what CRLS has to offer
- Find a way to move to all the goals in the restructuring plan

- The mark of an educational leader is someone who delivers results
- Thanks to all those who did not have their contracts renewed

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Price, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Jennah Epsteinkraus to speak. Ms. Epsteinkraus was heard regarding respect and communication.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Ms. Lang to speak. Ms. Lang was heard.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Price, it was voted to adjourn (9:30 p.m.).

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee