

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

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

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

Also Present: Student School Committee Representatives: TSION Girum, Marilyn Paschal

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings

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

- Special Meeting - September 26, 2006
- Regular Meeting - July 18, 2006
- Special Meeting - June 20, 2006
- Regular Meeting - June 6, 2006

Public Testimony on School Committee Agenda

The following individual was heard:

- Kathy Reddick, Broadway, NAACP President, re CPS Benchmark Report

The Chair asked Superintendent Fowler-Finn to explain the difference between the Benchmarks and the Student Data Report. The Superintendent was heard. The Chair closed Public Testimony.

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Schuster, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#06-187, Approval to go into Executive Session**: that the School Committee go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the collective bargaining and litigation positions of the School Committee: Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini ABSENT, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding YEA, 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. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Walser, Mayor Reeves

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

Also Present: Thomas Fowler-Finn, Superintendent
Barbara Allen, Executive Director, Human Resources
James Conry, Chief Financial Officer
Maureen MacFarlane, Legal Counsel
James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer

Members discussed a Level III grievance with staff and Legal Counsel. The Chair adjourned the meeting 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.

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to suspend the Rules to bring forward **Recommendation #06-188, Response to Cambridge Teachers Association Level III Grievance**. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, it was voted to amend **#06-188** to change WR06-154(E) to WR06-154(H): Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini ABSENT, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding NAY, Mayor Reeves PRESENT. On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **Recommendation #06-188, Response to Cambridge Teachers Association Level III Grievance**, as amended: Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini ABSENT, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. Harding NAY, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mayor Reeves PRESENT.

The Chair returned to the Agenda.

Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members

Ms. Paschal reported that the Homecoming dance and the assembly on National Aids Day were a success. Ms. Girum invited Members to the CRLS Winter Ball on December 15.

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business

Calendar

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to remove Calendar item **#06-119**, Joint motion by Ms. Nolan and Mr. Schuster, and refer it to the Buildings and Grounds and Long Range Planning subcommittee.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to remove the following Minutes from the Calendar and accept them as presented:

- Special Meeting - November 3, 2006
- Special Informal Meeting - May 30, 2006
- Special Meeting - May 23, 2006
- Regular Meeting - May 16, 2006
- Regular Meeting - May 2, 2006
- Regular Meeting - April 4, 2006
- Special Meeting - April 4, 2006

Mr. Harding raised a question on **#06-159** when the DOE review of Special Education will happen. The Superintendent was heard.

Awaiting Reports

Mr. Harding raised a question on whether the report on obesity can be removed. Mr. Grassi asked that it be left on until additional information is received.

New Business

Mr. Harding moved, seconded by Mr. Grassi, for adoption of #06-189 through #06-196. Mr. Harding removed #06-192. Mr. Schuster removed #06-193. Mr. Grassi removed #06-191 and #06-196. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#06-189, 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:

3 students	Boston College Campus, Champion Hall, Room 197, Chestnut Hill	\$195,619.38
1 student	New England Center for Children, 33 Turnpike Rd., Southboro	68,457.55
<u>1</u> student	Schools for Children, 20 Academy St., Arlington	<u>35,331.84</u>
5 students		\$299,408.77

#06-190, Consultant Agreements: that the School Committee approve the Consultant Agreements with the company or individual on the list, in the amount set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

1. CASPAR, Somerville, in the amount of \$18,497.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 849234, prog. 234, proj/grant SC07611; and in the amount of \$10,000, account 53101, fund 15000, org. 830255, prog. 255.

#06-194, Joint Motion by Mr. Grassi and Mr. Schuster that the Superintendent present updated plans for report cards, progress reports and curriculum guides for the elementary middle schools. Further, that the update be presented at a School Committee Meeting in February.

#06-195, Joint Motion by Mr. Grassi and Mr. Harding that the Superintendent present updated plans for report cards, progress reports and curriculum guides for the elementary middle schools. Further, that the update be presented at a School Committee Meeting in February.

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

Non-Consent Business

Mr. Grassi announced that the first meeting of the Policy & Procedures Subcommittee will be December 15 at 9:00 a.m. with MASC Policy Director, Jim Hardy. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#06-191, Motion by Mr. Fantini** that the Rules of the Cambridge School Committee be amended to add the following (second reading):

- Ad hoc Committee - Achievement Gap
- Joint Committee with the City Council - Public Facilities, Art & Celebrations
- Joint Committee with the City Council - Cable TV, Telecommunications & Public Utilities

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

Mr. Harding was heard regarding the following motion. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to adopt **#06-192, Joint Motion by Mr. Harding and Mr. Grassi** that the School Committee invite the Healthy Children's Task Force to make a brief presentation on the topic of obesity (Pulling Together for Fitness and Academic Achievement: Success in the Cambridge Public Schools). Further, that this presentation be scheduled for the next Regular Meeting of the School Committee.

Discussion took place around charging some students tuition to attend Cambridge Public Schools. Ms. Nolan was heard in support of her motion. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mayor Reeves, on the following roll call, the following motion **failed of adoption: #06-193, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that whereas the current projections are for multi-million dollar deficits and a tight fiscal climate, according to financial estimates by the administration, and whereas currently parents pay in excess of \$12,000 for half day private Montessori education for preschoolers, and whereas an unfair subsidy paid for by taxpayers for a select few families would be created with a free Montessori program for preschoolers; now, therefore, be it ordered that the School Committee sets a policy that the new Montessori program charge tuition, of approximately half the cost of per capita spending in CPS as determined by the State DOE, for any student enrolled in the Montessori below the current age for Kindergarten eligibility. However, such tuition will be automatically waived for any student who qualifies for free or reduced lunch.

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

Mr. Grassi asked the Superintendent to speak to the recent break-ins. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to adopt **#06-196, Joint Motion by Mr. Grassi and Mr. Harding** that, in response to the recent rash of break-ins and technology thefts, the Superintendent of Schools bring forth a recommendation on a comprehensive security review for all school buildings.

Late Orders

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted that the School Committee send a letter of congratulations to Mr. Ché Santos on the occasion of his graduating from the Cambridge Police Academy at Lowell. Further, that the Members wish him good luck and blessings as one of Cambridge's newest police officers.

On a joint motion by Mr. Grassi, Mr. Fantini and Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted that the School Committee Secretary prepare a Resolution on the retirement of Sheila Donelan.

The Chair introduced Maryann MacDonald, Executive Director, Student Achievement & Accountability, for the Presentation on Benchmarks. Ms. MacDonald was joined by Barbara Van Sickle, Director, Student Achievement & Accountability, and Jeff LaPlante, Chief Technology Officer.

Mr. Harding in the Chair.

Ms. MacDonald walked Members through a presentation "CPS Benchmarks of Student Achievement, Student Data 2005-2006", including:

- CPS Benchmarks 2005-2006
- Changes in Benchmarks 2006
- Elementary Benchmarks K-5 Highlights

Mayor Reeves in the Chair

- Middle Grade Benchmarks 6-8 Highlights

- CRLS/HSEP Benchmarks 9-12 Highlights

The Superintendent and Ms. MacDonald explained how the State calculates Composite Performance Index and responded to some of the following questions, comments and concerns raised by Members:

- What is the definition of "outperform the State"
- Is the conversion from percentages to CPI complicated
- If Members are having difficulty understanding CPI we can guess that members of the public will have difficulty as well
- How many students drop out
- What is the formula for calculating drop outs
- If students are lumped together, how are students who are failing identified
- How does this information trickle down to the schools for use in school improvement plans
- How do we articulate to Lesley that our students are not up to speed
- How does benchmark information influence professional development
- Are we comparing ourselves to ourselves on school climate

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to suspend the Rules to extend the meeting past 10:00.

- Are schools comparing their results to the State, Cambridge or both
- Are there any surprises or disappointments in the Benchmark results
- How will collaboration with Lesley look different now than in the past
- Is special education one of the most prominent issues
- Is there a decline in students having just one infraction
- Focus on discipline needs to be on K-8, especially in middle school
- Why are we not collecting parent conference data at the high school
- How will staff work toward a greater parent participation rate
- Do Principals call parents to attend conferences
- Congratulations to the high school on 8th grade transition program
- Goal for CRLS is that it can be returned to being one of the best high schools
- Music has suffered at the high school
- Break down extracurricular activities by activity and race
- Interested in seeing plans for 8th and 9th graders to participate in extracurricular or advisor program
- Benchmarks document is just one tool that should be used to evaluate our schools
- Insure that students in classrooms are eager and engaged

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and staff for the presentation and all those individuals involved in producing the Benchmarks report.

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to adjourn (10:38 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee