

# SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

**Regular Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 1, 2008**

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Tauber,  
Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also Present: Student School Committee Members Praise Agu and Emma Shreefter

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

## **Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings:**

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted that the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 4, 2008, be accepted as presented.

## **Public Comment**

The following individuals were heard:

- Peter Schweich, Brattle Street, re: Grassi motion #C08-134 on reporting data
- Lawrence Adkins, Hayes St., re: “ “ “ “ “ “
- Kathy Reddick, President NAACP, “ “ “ “ “ “

The Chair acknowledged and welcomed Councillor Kelley.

The Chair closed public comment.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to suspend the Rules to present Chief Financial Officer James Conry with a token of the School Committee's appreciation. Members thanked Jim for his years of service to the school department and wished him well in his retirement. Mr. Conry was heard.

**Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members:** None

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

## **Unfinished Business from Previous Meetings**

### **A. Calendar**

#08-97, City Council Order #O-5 (**C08-121**)

#08-98, City Council Order #O-31 (**C08-122**)

#08-106, Motion by Mr. Fantini to discuss the March 7, 2008 letter from the Educational Management Audit Council. (**C08-130**)

Motion by Mr. Grassi that the School Committee set up a meeting with the Superintendent and staff to develop a reporting system of data to assess student achievement in the Cambridge Public Schools in alignment with our goals. (**C08-134**)

Mr. Grassi asked the Chair to speak to #C08-134, Motion by Mr. Grassi that the School Committee set up a meeting with the Superintendent and staff to develop a reporting system of data to assess student achievement in the Cambridge Public Schools in alignment with our goals. Mayor Simmons was heard.

## **B. Tabled Matters**

## **C. Awaiting Report**

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to pass over Awaiting Reports.

## **New Business**

### **A. Presentation**

The Chair turned the meeting over to the Superintendent who presented the 2008-2009 Budget "Elevating Instruction: A Challenge to Students, Staff and Community". On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. McGovern, it was voted to suspend the Rules to bring forward and refer to the Budget Sub-Committee **#08-145, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that, whereas in prior years a contingency fund for School Committee use of \$100,000 was budgeted and whereas the School Committee wishes to retain flexibility with regard to its own operations, but maintain fiscal responsibility, therefore the School Committee directs the Superintendent to restore \$30,000 in contingency funds for School Committee operations in next year's budget. Further, that funds be reallocated from non school-based accounts.

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted to suspend the Rules to reopen public comment. The following individual was heard regarding the Budget:

- Craig Kelley, St. Gerard Terrace

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

On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to move to the Budget Sub-Committee meeting.

The Chair declared a recess.

The time for recess having expired, the Chair reconvened the meeting and returned to the Agenda.

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

### **B. Action Items**

Ms. Nolan moved, seconded by Mr. Fantini, for adoption of items #08-110 through #08-148. Ms. Nolan removed #08-122, #08-124, #08-125, #08-133 and #08-136. Ms. Tauber removed #08-119, and #08-121. Mr. McGovern removed #08-143 and #08-144. Mr. Grassi removed #08-118 and #08-129. Mr. Schuster removed #08-147. In the absence of Ms. MacFarlane, Mr. Grassi moved to Calendar all policies that were removed. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

**#08-110, FY07 External Audit Report:** that the School Committee receive and consider the External Auditors' Report for the year ended June 30, 2007.

**#08-111, Interim Position: Chief Financial Officer:** that the School Committee accept and approve Diane Johnson to the interim position of Chief Financial Officer.

**#08-112, Statutory Transfer of Funds for Debt Stabilization Fund:** that the School Committee approve a transfer of funds in the amount of \$450,000 from the General Fund Budget to the Debt Stabilization Fund in the Statutory Categories specified below. This amount was planned in the

FY07-08 Budget to be allocated to the Debt Stabilization Fund to help offset future capital and debt costs:

A. <u>General Fund</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Extraordinary Expenditures	0	\$450,000
B. <u>Debt Stabilization Fund</u>		
Extraordinary Expenditures	\$450,000	0

**#08-113, Transfer to School Capital Fund:** that the School Committee transfer the amount of \$350,000 from the School General Fund Capital Projects Budget to the School Capital Fund to enable the funds to be used beyond June 30, 2008:

A. <u>General Fund</u>	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>
Extraordinary Expenditures	0	\$350,000
B. <u>School Capital Fund</u>		
Extraordinary Expenditures	\$350,000	0

**#08-114, Approval of Settlement of Pending Matter:** that the School Committee approve the Superintendent's recommendation relative to the settlement of a pending matter in accordance with WR08-214-CN(A).

**#08-115, Approval of Settlement of Pending Civil Service Matter:** that the School Committee approve the Superintendent's recommendation relative to the settlement of a pending matter before the Massachusetts Civil Service Commission in accordance with WR08-214-CN(A).

**#08-116, Grant Awards:** that the School Committee accept and approve the Grant Awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Supplemental Community Partnership for Children, for the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, in the amount of \$4,210.00, Project/Grant SC08602.  
**Description:** Supplemental to the original School Committee Order #C07-216 dated September 4, 2007, in the amount of \$1,037,693.00. The total amount of the Grant is now \$1,041,903.00. The Community Partnership for Children Grant Program provides comprehensive, high-quality programs for pre-school-aged children and their families with the planning and oversight of a Community Partnership for Children Council. Working together, agencies and families in a community build a network of programs and services that increases the availability, affordability, and quality of programs that are responsive to the needs of working parents and that enhance children's healthy learning development.  
**CPS Target Population:** Cambridge residents 3 and 4 years old in day care centers in the City.  
**Outcomes and Measurers of Effectiveness:** Cambridge childcare centers will receive professional development and accreditation support which will increase the number of NAYS accredited centers in the City.
2. Supplemental Kindergarten Enhancement Program, for the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, in the amount of \$52,590.00, Project/Grant SC08663.  
**Description:** This consists of two supplemental awards to the original Grant of \$289,875.00. The Grant was initially amended on October 10, 2007 by DOE for \$29,100.00 and an additional supplemental award of \$23,490.00 was received in March, 2008, bringing the total to \$342,465.00. Cambridge continues, through the Kindergarten

Grant, to provide support for kindergartens and teachers in the areas of literacy and inclusion. The workshops provide teachers with an opportunity to enhance their skills in specific areas, including guided and enhanced reading by kindergarten teachers, support staff, and Early Childhood Resource Specialists.

**CPS Target Population:** All kindergarten classrooms in all schools as well as any classroom that may include kindergarten children (such as SPED, ELL).

**Outcomes & Measurers of Effectiveness:** Improved environments in kindergarten classrooms and greater continuity of curriculum across pre-school through grade 2, resulting in improved educational outcomes for kindergarten students and improved transitions to the first grade.

**#08-117, Approval of Revisions to the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Equal Educational Opportunities Policy as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-120, Approval of Revisions to the Released Time Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Released Time Policy as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-123, Approval of Revisions to the Damage to School Property Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Damage to School Property Policy as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-126, Approval of Revisions to the Hazing Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Hazing Policy as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-127, Approval of Deletion of the Entrance Age Policy:** that the School Committee approve the deletion of the Entrance Age Policy as detailed in the document as it is superseded by the Entrance Age Policy adopted by the School Committee on May 21, 2002 (First Reading).

**#08-128, Approval of Deletion of the Attendance Areas, Assignment of Students to Schools, Intra-District-Open Enrollment, Desegregation Plan and School Districts Redistricting Procedures Policies:** that the School Committee approve the deletion of the Attendance Areas, Assignment of Students to Schools, Intra-District-Open Enrollment, Desegregation Plan and School Districts Redistricting Procedures Policies as detailed in the documents as these policies are superseded by the Cambridge Controlled Choice Plan (First Reading).

**#08-130, Approval of Deletion of the Student Absences, Tardiness and Excuses Policy, Secondary Schools:** that the School Committee approve the deletion of the Student Absences, Tardiness and Excuses Policy, Secondary Schools as detailed in the document as it is superseded by the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Attendance Policy adopted by the School Committee on June 19, 2001 (First Reading).

**#08-131, Approval of Revisions to the Leaves of Absence Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Leaves of Absence Policy as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-132, Approval of Deletion of the Admissions Policy for Rindge School of Technical Arts Program:** that the School Committee approve the deletion of the Admissions Policy for the Rindge School of Technical Arts Program as detailed in the document (First Reading).

**#08-134, Approval of Revisions to the Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Gifts to and Solicitations by Staff Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-135, Approval of Revisions to the Professional Staff Contracts and Compensation Plans Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Professional Staff Contracts and Compensation Plans Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-137, Approval of Revisions to the Staff Complaints and Grievances Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Staff Complaints and Grievances Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-138, Approval of Revisions to the Staff Health, Protection and Safety Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Staff Health, Protection and Safety Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-139, Approval of Revisions to the Relations with Family Organizations Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Relations with Family Organizations Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-140, Approval of Revisions to the Bus Scheduling and Routing Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Bus Scheduling and Routing Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-141, Approval of Revisions to the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-142, Approval of Revisions to the Buildings and Grounds Management Policy:** that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Buildings and Grounds Management Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

**#08-146, Motion by Mayor Simmons** that the School Committee send a letter to Jim Conry thanking him for his years of service to the Cambridge School Department and wishing him well on his retirement.

**#08-148, Report** of the March 26, 2008 Meeting of the Community Relations Subcommittee.

Called for the purpose of discussing hiring a consultant to analyze our Controlled Choice system, the ongoing analysis of our placement algorithm, the current state of kindergarten registration, and possible plans for a public hearing on Controlled Choice.

Members Present: Mr. Schuster, Chair, Ms. Nolan, Ms. Tauber

Also Present: James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer, Justin Martin, Public Information Officer

Mr. Schuster in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:22 A.M. and presented the following Agenda:

1. Controlled Choice piece; current lottery assignments
2. \$15,000 previous Committee allowed for consultant
3. Community input re Controlled Choice

Discussion took place around:

- Current lottery assignments
- Reassignments
- Retention between K and 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- Why was mandatory so high
- Encourage principals and liaisons to work with parents
- Demographics of applicant pool has changed
- Next step is to move forward with a consultant.
- Determine specifications for bid or RFP
- School Committee can get 3 quotes and choose the lowest

- Write qualifications and see what we get
- Professor Willey could consider being lead consultant
- Having qualifications and specs by the next meeting
- Did algorithm follow policy
- Look at way parents make choices
- Rational vs. irrational choices depend on types of parent
- Middle class tend to pick same schools over and over
- Parents are angry about empty seats
- Larger focus is on K when talking numbers
- Parents transferring into Cambridge want to know what school child will attend

Ms. Nolan will do first draft of specs and qualifications for RFP for consultant.

A Community Forum will be held on May 13, 2008, 6:00 P.M.

Mr. Schuster will send draft of parent information letter to Justin.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Patricia A. Berry  
Secretary

Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

#### **Non-Consent Agenda**

**#08-143, Joint motion by Mayor Simmons and Vice-Chair McGovern** that, whereas the Cambridge School Committee values and encourages community input and questions, and whereas the public comment period of School Committee meetings does not allow for dialogue between Members and the public, it is hereby resolved that the School Committee schedule three "Town Hall" style forums where all Members will be present to engage in an open dialogue with the community and answer any questions put forth by community members. It is further recommended that this motion be referred to the School Committee's Community Relations Sub-Committee for scheduling and planning. Mr. Grassi moved a friendly amendment that one of the "Town Hall" forums be held at CRLS and include students. On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted to adopt **#08-143** as amended.

**#08-144, Joint motion by Ms. Nolan and Ms. Tauber** that the Superintendent confer with the City Manager on the Feasibility of establishing a grace period on street cleaning days for parking near schools for a period of 20 minutes prior to start time to 10 minutes after start time. Mr. McGovern moved a friendly amendment that the motion include leniency in writing tickets while students are dropped off. Discussion took place around protocol for communication between the School Committee and City Council. It was suggested that an ad hoc committee be formed to discuss communication between the two bodies. Mr. McGovern withdrew his amendment. On a motion by Mr. McGovern, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to refer **#08-144** to the joint meeting with the City Council.

**#08-147, Motion by Ms. Tauber** that the Mayor is requested to hold a special combined meeting of the School Committee and the City Council to start what is expected to be an on-going discussion of how to better understand, best coordinate and improve delivery of the various services available to our youth. The Superintendent and the Mayor should invite appropriate staff members and service providers to discuss what forms of services are available to our youth, and how to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of these services. Mr. Schuster raised a question on where the Kids Council fits into the above motion. Mayor Simmons was heard. On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to adopt **#08-147**.

### **Late Orders**

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted that representatives from the Governance Sub-Committee, the School Committee Executive Secretary and the City Clerk meet to discuss protocol for communication between the School Committee and the City Council.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Tauber, it was voted that a mock meeting using Electronic School Board be scheduled on April 15, 2008 prior to the Regular Meeting.

The Chair entertained a motion to convene in Executive Session to discuss strategy for contract negotiations with non-union personnel. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Nolan, on the following roll call, it was voted to convene in Executive Session for the purpose stated: Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster ABSENT, Mayor Simmons YEA. The Chair announced that the Committee will not reconvene in Open Session.

### **Executive Session**

Members Present: Mr. Fantini, Mr. Grassi, Mr. McGovern, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Tauber, Mayor Simmons

Mayor Simmons in the Chair.

Also Present: Attorney Demitrios Moschos, Special Counsel; Lenora Jennings, Education Liaison

Members discussed strategy for contract negotiations with Special Counsel.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, on the following roll call, it was voted to adjourn (9:20 p.m.): Ms. Tauber YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mr. Grassi YEA, Mr. McGovern YEA, Ms. Nolan YEA, Mr. Schuster YEA, Mayor Simmons YEA.

Adjourned  
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw  
Executive Secretary to the School Committee