

CORRECTION – p. 6

(June 12, 2007)

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, May 1, 2007

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

Mr. Fantini in the Chair.

Also present: Student Representatives Marilyn Paschal, Daneiris Heredia-Perez

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. and entertained public testimony. There being no one signed up, on a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to close public testimony.

The Chair turned the meeting over to Superintendent Fowler-Finn for a presentation on Survey Results of the Class of 2005. The Superintendent introduced Justin Martin, Public Information Officer who gave a snapshot of how the survey is conducted and walked Members through a PowerPoint presentation, "CPS Class of 2005 One Time Survey", with a comparison to the Class of 2004 survey.

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

The Superintendent, Mr. Martin and Mr. Maloney responded to some of the following questions, comments and concerns raised by Members:

- Who is the audience for this survey
- Concerned how some questions were phrased – some responses don't match the prompt
- Where is the analysis in what has been presented
- There is nothing to tell us what is the margin of error
- There is no category to include...
- Is it possible to submit questions to LifeTrack
- Look at how we can do this better to glean certain information
- 87% said that they were prepared well – we are doing something right
- Would like to see more participation from students
- How does this survey help us in our mission – make questions work in conjunction with our goals
- Would not survey students in first year of college
- Would focus more on guidance and financial aid – incorporate in Guidance 5-year plan
- There is some beauty in the simplicity of this survey
- Nationally we compare very favorably in some areas
- This shows that we have very satisfied customers
- There is value in knowing the affect of our policies
- The survey should be kept short if we want to get a high response rate
- Disaggregate parents from students
- Teen Health survey covers much of what is in this survey
- Report uses a lot of pages for a small amount of data
- This survey is as valid as some of the anecdotal information that is out there
- Survey juniors and seniors on the internet – would like to respond to students in real time
- Trending is important
- Survey does not answer the question of whether or not students stay in college
- Why don't we survey last four graduating classes to get better data
- Follow up with the bottom half of the class – there is still a cohort that is not addressed
- Look at a more sophisticated organization to do survey

- Get graduate students to look at bottom half of class
- What indicates that it is the students at the top half of the class responding
- What is LifeTrack's average response rate
- Answers to probing questions are not in this survey

The Members thanked Mr. Martin for the presentation and asked the pleasure of the Committee.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings

On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the following meetings as presented:

- Special Meeting – April 10, 2007
- Regular Meeting – April 3, 2007
- Special Meeting – February 6, 2007

Reports and/or Comments from Student School Committee Members

Ms. Paschal said that she is in favor of using email to survey students and asked if it could be done before graduation. She announced that the Senior Prom is May 19 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. Mr. Grassi asked if students have been given any information in terms of prom and graduation safety. The students said the administration changed its mind on requiring students to take taxis to the prom. The Superintendent was asked to be proactive in terms of public safety awareness around prom and graduation and that he contact the Cambridge Licensing Advisory Board (CLAB) for suggestions.

Reconsideration of Votes Taken at Previous Meeting: None

Unfinished Business

Members passed over all unfinished business.

New Business

B. Action Items

Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by Ms. Walser, for adoption of items #07-75 through #07-89. Ms. Walser removed #07-76, #07-77, #07-82 and #07-83. Ms. Nolan removed #07-75. Mr. Grassi removed #07-84. Mayor Reeves removed #07-86 and #07-87. On the following roll call, the remaining items were adopted:

#07-78, Contract Award: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for instructional software and training, funds to be provided from the General Fund Budget, Chapter 30B of the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts having been complied with:

1. CompassLearning, Inc., 7878 N. 16th St., Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ, for the period April – June 2007, in the amount of \$34,590.00.

#07-79, Contract Award: that the School Committee award a contract to the following vendor for additional support services under the Community Partnerships for Children Grant FY07, funds to be provided from the Massachusetts Department of Education Early Learning Services Division Grant. This is a continuing contract under the grant:

1. CEOC, 11 Inman Street, Cambridge, for the period January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2007, in the amount of \$36,082.00.

#07-80, Special Needs Contract for Day Program Services not available from the Cambridge School Department: that the School Committee award a contract to the institution on the list in an 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:

1 student	EDCO Collaborative, 281 Winter St., Waltham	\$41,236.00
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#07-81, Consultant Agreements: that the School Committee approve Consultant Agreements with the companies or individuals on the list, in the amounts set forth, funds to be provided as shown:

1. Boston University, Hancock, NH, in the amount of \$15,740.00, account 53201, fund 15000, org. 830250, prog., 250; and Boston University, Hancock, NH in the amount of \$10,000.00, account 53101, fund 25000, org. 849622, prog. 622, SC07767.

#07-85, Report of the January 30, 2007 Meeting of the Sub-Committee on the Budget (Committee of the Whole).

Called for the purpose of discussing the proposed FY2007-2008 Budget.

Members Present: Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding, Co-Chairs, Mr. Fantini, Ms. Nolan, Mr. Schuster, Ms. Walser, Mayor Reeves

Also Present: Student Representatives Tsion Girum and Marilyn Paschal

Mr. Grassi in the Chair.

A quorum of the Sub-Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m. and turned it over to Mr. Maloney who walked Members through a slide presentation "FY07-08 Budget – Public Budget Forum, including:

- 5-Year Projected Revenues vs. Projected Expenditures – General Fund Budget
- Multi-Year Budget Comparison – Cambridge Public Schools
- FY06-07 General Fund Budget – Staffing Summary
- FY07-08 Budget – Enrollment Summary

Mr. Conry then presented "Five-Year Financial Estimates", pointing out some highlights:

- 5-Year Revenue Estimates
- Estimated Revenues – Selected Items Impacting the Budget
- 5-Year Expenditure Estimates – Major Changes
- Estimated Expenditure Increases & Decreases – Selected Items Impacting the Budget
- 5-Year Projected Revenues vs. Projected Expenditures – General Fund Budget
- What Flexibility do we have?

The Superintendent stated that we are facing a very different situation with this budget than we have in the past and that he is not in a position to reduce administrative or other staff. Members raised the following questions, comments and concerns:

- We need to look for more creative ways to help with potential shortfalls
- How is this projected deficit different from the past
- What would reorganizing with existing staff mean for music at the high school
- Is charter school expenditure included in the per pupil cost
- Have we thought about introducing wellness programs to reduce health care costs
- 9% increase in health care costs seems conservative

- Are the financial implications of the custodian's contract included in the budget
The Chair and the Superintendent responded to questions raised by Student Representatives and offered to have Mr. Conry give them a primer on finance and the budget.

At this time, the Chair entertained Public Comment.

The following individuals were heard regarding the budget:

- Tim Plenk, Berkeley St., Co-Chair, King Open School Council
- Elie Yarden, Pleasant St.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to suspend the Rules to allow Mr. Yarden additional time to speak.

- Craig Kelley, St. Gerard Terrace

The Chair closed public testimony and announced that the budget process started with a December retreat, meetings with the Superintendent and staff, with a budget presentation scheduled February 13, a public presentation March 6, a public hearing March 13, and adoption of the budget at the March 20 regular meeting.

The Chair returned to the Agenda. Discussion took place around Elementary Specialist Staffing, Allocation Formulas or Standards, and Mr. Schuster's January 30 letter regarding putting more money into classrooms. Members raised the following questions, comments and concerns:

- What is the educational value of librarians
- Change budget allocation for technology teacher
- If a Member proposes adding money to the budget, show where it is coming from
- This Committee looked at a deficit post-consolidation and it turned into a \$2 million surplus
- Think of librarians as we think of teachers
- Spend less on hardware and fund technology staff
- Having more gym teachers than technology teachers is sending a wrong message
- Is the librarian issue one of quality instead of quantity
- Our technology model is an old one
- Look at technology as a long-term goal
- Schools should get what they need to be successful
- In favor of a budget that challenges the status quo
- Would like further comparison with Somerville
- Lower the amount we send back to the City
- Adding more people does not get results
- How are we going to close the \$4.1 million gap
- Look at programs that may have outlived their usefulness

The Superintendent and staff responded to some of the above questions, comments and concerns.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to adjourn (9:10 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee

#07-88, Report of the February 9, 2007 Meeting of the Community Relations Sub-Committee.

Called for the purpose of discussing issues relating to the community and the schools.

Members Present: Ms. Nolan, Chair, Mr. Grassi, Mr. Harding

Also Present: Justin Martin, Public Information Officer

Ms. Nolan in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:43 a.m. and distributed the following Agenda – What to discuss/decide:

1. Review agenda
2. Family outreach
3. Exit interviews
4. Environmental awareness
5. Next meeting

Discussion took place around:

- Creating a monthly event calendar
- Web-based system for outreach – Edline
- Adding a communications section to the district handbook with questions and answers
- Is mail the best way to communicate with parents
- Researching what can be backpacked and what should be direct mailed
- Putting section on communication vehicles in parent survey
- Moving to a system where all school events can be published
- Creating a city-wide listserv
- Evaluating programs across schools
- What individual schools are doing to get parents involved
- Identifying schools' two or three most successful events replicating them district-wide
- Whether or not parent/teacher conferences are consistent
- What is the current process for leavers' interviews
- Look at results of leavers' survey for past two years

It was agreed that environmental issues should be discussed in full committee.

Justin will bring back a proposal for a school-wide calendar at the next meeting.

Next meeting: First week in March, date TBD

The meeting adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

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

#07-89, Report of the February 14, 2007 Meeting of the Achievement Gap Ad-Hoc Committee.

Called for the purpose of continuing to plan a series of public forums on the achievement gap in Cambridge, with a focus on the initial forum on definitions.

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

Also Present: Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Superintendent Fowler-Finn; Sheli Wortis, Early Childhood Connections; John Clifford, Mayor's Education Liaison; Jack

Haverty, CTA President; Justin Martin, Public Information Officer; Susan Richards Scott; Deborah Lerme Goodman, Community Learning Center

Ms. Walser in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. The Superintendent discussed the origin of achievement gap and asked that whatever definitions we use that they be consistent with the benchmarks. There was discussion around whether to use benchmark language or MCAS language and finding a location and date for the first forum.

Justin Martin discussed his communication strategy.

The meeting adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

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

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

Non-Consent Business

Discussion took place around the number and quality of candidates presented for interviews and the process for hiring and selection. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#07-75, Approval of Appointment of Executive Director of Special Education**: that the School Committee ratify and affirm the votes taken in Executive Session on April 10, 2007, and that the School Committee appoint Aida Ramos as the Executive Director of Special Education and approve the contract for the Executive Director of Special Education according to the terms of the document. Mr. Grassi NAY, Mr. Harding YEA, Ms. Nolan NAY, Mr. Schuster YEA, Ms. Walser YEA, Mr. Fantini YEA, Mayor Reeves YEA. Mr. Fantini moved, seconded by ~~Ms. Simmons~~ **Ms. Walser**, for suspension of the Rules for the purpose of moving reconsideration of the foregoing vote. The Rules having been suspended, a motion to reconsider the foregoing vote, hoping the same would not prevail, **failed of adoption**. The Superintendent was heard. Dr. Ramos was heard. The Members welcomed and congratulated Dr. Ramos.

Discussion took place around **#07-76, City Council Order #O-5**, "What resources CRLS offers to CRLS post-graduates for past high school educational programs, placements and transfers". On a motion by Mr. Harding, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to refer **#07-76** to Mayor Reeves to be brought forward at the next joint roundtable with the City Council.

Discussion took place around #07-77, City Council Order #O-6, regarding removing snow from School Department buildings, sidewalks and walkways regardless of whether school buildings are open. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted that **#07-77** be referred to the Superintendent.

Ms. Walser clarified that items **#07-82** and **#07-83** came out of the Buildings & Grounds sub-committee and asked the Secretary to so indicate when motions come out of sub-committees. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to adopt, **#07-82, Motion by Mr. Grassi** that the Cambridge Energy Alliance be requested to provide a review of the viability of a co-generation option for the CRLS project, and **#07-83, Motion by Ms. Nolan** that the school department look into putting the Mass Renewable Energy Trust's 2 kilowatt photovoltaic panel installation (1 or 2 modules) on a school building. Further, that the criteria be (1) efficiency of system, meaning potential for solar power; (2) visibility of system to enhance educational aspects; and (3) interest and involvement of school community. Further, that the Field House be the first site to consider.

Ms. Nolan was heard in support of her motion. Mr. Maloney was heard. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to refer **#07-84** to the Buildings & Grounds subcommittee: **Motion by Ms. Nolan** that the School Committee host a community forum in June on sustainable building design with a focus on possible elements to include in the CRLS project.

Members congratulated Ms. Walser and the Achievement Gap subcommittee on a job well done on Saturday's forum. It was suggested that members from universities be included on the Achievement Gap subcommittee. On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to adopt **#07-86, Report of the January 31, 2007 Meeting of the Achievement Gap Ad-Hoc Committee.**

Called for the purpose of continuing to plan a series of public forums on the achievement gap in Cambridge, with a focus on the initial forum on definitions.

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

Also Present: Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Sheli Wortis, Early Childhood Connections and Cambridge 0-8 Council; Susan Richards, Agenda for Children; Jack Haverty, CTA; John Clifford, Mayor's Education Liaison; Khari Milner, CPS & Afterschool Partnership

Ms. Walser in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m. Mr. Grassi gave a summary of the achievement gap community forum he attended at Freedom House in Roxbury January 27 and suggested that our forums be held in communities where schools are struggling.

Ms. Walser distributed Draft 2 of "Achievement Gap Forum Planning Outline – Concept Paper for Brainstorming Format, Speakers, Activities". Discussion took place around the following:

- Forum I: What is the Achievement Gap? – How Far Do We Have to Go? April 2007
- Forum II: Contributing Factors – Making of the Achievement Gap – May 2007
- Forum III: Saturday School: Just for Parents – Getting the Best for Our Kids: What You Need to Know Now – September 2007
- Forum IV: Solutions: Closing the Gap – It Can Be Done – October 2007
- Wrap-Up School Committee Roundtable – Late November 2007
- On-going Activities:
 1. OUTREACH for attendance, publicity
 2. Poster design contest at schools for series/printed and distributed around city
 3. Reading list distributed through the Public Library, on websites
 4. Blog on the School Committee/cpsd.us website for public reaction and ideas; along with web casting of forums
 5. Press releases reporting out forums, advertising forums – Public Information Office

It was suggested that Justin Martin be invited to the next subcommittee meeting.

Next meetings: February 7 and 14, 2007, 12 Noon.

The meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.

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

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Ms. Walser, it was voted to adopt **#07-87, Report of the February 7, 2007 Meeting of the Achievement Gap Ad-Hoc Committee:**

Called for the purpose of continuing to plan a series of public forums on the achievement gap in Cambridge, with a focus on the initial forum on definitions.

Members Present: Ms. Walser, Chair, Mr. Grassi, Mayor Reeves

Also Present: Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Sheli Wortis, Early Childhood Connections and Cambridge 0-8 Council; John Clifford, Mayor's Education Liaison; Khari Milner, CPS & Afterschool Partnership, Christopher Saheed, Principal, CRLS; Justin Martin, Public Information Officer; Ellen Grant Valade, 0-8 Council, CPS Home-Based Early Childhood Education; Rob Ramsdell, Parent & Fresh Pond Education; Deborah Lerme Goodman, Community Learning Center; Trina Abbott, Cambridgeport School Council

Ms. Walser in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. Following introductions, Ms. Walser distributed Draft 3 of "Achievement Gap Forum Planning Outline", including discussions and ideas from the January 31 meeting.

Discussion took place around the following:

- Student forum with Dr. Ron Ferguson
- Getting teachers involved
- Working with the Minority Student Achievement Network and AVID students
- Structure all school assembly for grades 9/10 and 11/12
- Talk about the gap and then have a Q & A with students
- Have Dr. Ferguson administer his survey and follow up in September
- Is there a comparable survey for teachers
- What is the end product of Dr. Ferguson's survey
- Share survey results with all stakeholders and put together a web cast
- Look at designs to promote forums
- Think about speakers for first forum
- Have diversity as focus for all forums
- Get the word out

Next meeting: February 14, 2007, 12 Noon.

The meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.

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

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

Late Orders

On a motion by Mr. Grassi, seconded by Mr. Fantini, it was voted that the School Committee name the driveway in front of the John M. Tobin School after a veteran teacher who is retiring after more than 30 years of service in the Cambridge Public Schools. The motion is consistent with the wishes expressed by the School Principal.

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (9:35 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee