

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Report)

Regular Meeting

Tuesday, December 18, 2007

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

Mayor Reeves in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:20 p.m.

Presentation of the Records of Previous Meetings: None

Public Comment

The Chair read a letter from Kathy Reddick, President, Cambridge NAACP, regarding "the interpretation of student data that does not start with the standard of excellence".

Ms. Walser presented a draft booklet of the Achievement Gap Forums. Members discussed the achievement gap, expressed hope that during the next term the Committee will address it, and that people who are in the achievement gap will be part of the solution.

The Chair moved to Unfinished Business.

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

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to remove and place on file Calendar item **#C06-240**: Motion by Ms. Walser that the Superintendent review caseloads of Special Education personnel to assure that adequate levels of staff exist to meet the current needs of Special Education students. Furthermore, following the upcoming mid-cycle coordinated review of Special Education in the district by the Massachusetts DOE, that the Superintendent report to the School Committee on the process by which OSE coordinates with the schools to assure that staffing remains adequate as student needs change. Furthermore, that the Superintendent report to the School Committee the process and timeline for creating a new strategic plan for Special Education to improve outcomes for students and address issues raised by constituents including, but not limited to, a) increasing technology; b) enhancing researched-based interventions for language-based disabilities, dyslexia, and autism; c) minimizing whenever possible the use of compensatory services; d) eliminating over-identification, especially of minority students; e) addressing summer "regression"; and f) fostering a district culture where "kids get what they need" vs. parents having to advocate for services (in addition to plans to create a parent "ombudsman").

On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Mr. Grassi, it was voted to adopt Calendar items **#07-211**, and **#07-212**:

#07-211, Report of the September 5, 2007 Achievement Gap Ad-Hoc Committee Meeting:

Called for the purpose of continuing to plan a series of public forums on the achievement gap in Cambridge

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

Also Present: Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Justin Martin, Public Information Officer; Ginny Berkowitz, Educational Access; John Clifford, Mayor's Education Liaison; Trina Abbott, Cambridgeport School; Lei-Anne Ellis, Lauren Leikin, Agenda for Children; Rabeya Akther, Parent

Ms. Walser in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

Logistics and format for the forum (going out live) were discussed:

9:30 – 10:00 – Registration and continental breakfast
10:00 – 11:00 – Charlie Applestein presentation
11:00 – 11:30 – Parent panel
11:30 – 12:00 – Q & A

- Questions to parents by next Tuesday
- Messrs. Grassi and Harding to field questions from the audience
- Rope off upper auditorium for translators
- Child care workers in First Steps and Media Caf
- Tables and microphones
- Projector and screen
- Handout with Applestein bio, feedback form, index card and pencil
- Supermarket gift cards

It was suggested that Mr. Applestein speak and the parent panel be scrapped. It was pointed out that there are two events that may interfere with attendance - Area IV Pride Day and the Attles Empowerment Breakfast.

Publicity:

- Letter went home from Superintendent
- Ad in Chronicle tomorrow and next Thursday
- List on "News"
- Connect-Ed message going out next Thursday
- Meeting with Liaisons on Friday to encourage them to post on listservs

Ms. Ellis announced that she will be leaving Agenda for Children and Ms. Leikin will be taking her place. Ms. Ellis was congratulated and wished the best in her new position.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

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

#07-212, Report of the September 6, 2007 Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee Meeting:

Called for the purpose of discussing the upcoming high school renovation project with the City Manager.

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

Also Present: Superintendent Fowler-Finn; James Maloney, Chief Operating Officer; Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent; Bob Healy, City Manager; David Kale, Budget Director; Louis DiPasquale, Assistant City Manager for Fiscal Affairs; Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager; Nancy Schlacter, Assistant to City Manager

Mayor Reeves in the Chair

The Chair called the meeting to order 10:05 a.m.

Discussion took place around priorities and financing for the CRLS renovation.

The following questions, comments and concerns were raised:

- We are looking at a \$90 million project
- How is this project financed as well as elementary schools
- The CRLS project is almost a redesign
- When can a bid document be expected and what is the SBA looking at
- Architects need a decision by the end of this year
- Community Learning Center and administrative offices can be located in the vacant police station
- If people speak well of the high school it translates into higher enrollment for elementary schools
- There has to be a plan in place to relocate students prior to the start of the project – Longfellow and Upton Street buildings have to be considered – also check with MIT re space
- The cost could drop if it doesn't have to be phased in
- There will be complaints whether the project costs \$50 million or \$90 million
- Missing from the draft document are science labs, theater and cafeteria upgrades and security
- Do not approve soft costs without a final \$ amount
- This will be a 20-year bond
- We are one city and need to work together
- There should be agreement that the Upton Street building will be used for swing space but at the end it will be sold to offset debt
- Have a joint City Council/School Committee meeting the end of September, early October

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

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

On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Mr. Schuster, it was voted to remove Calendar item **#07-268, Consultant Agreements (2)**. Ms. Nolan raised a question on whether the training provided by Lesley University could be done in other ways. The Superintendent and Dr. Turk were heard. On the following roll call, it was voted to adopt **#07-268, 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. Cambridge Public Health Department, Cambridge, in the amount of \$55,740.00, Account 53101, Fund 15000, Org. 852355, Program 355.

2. Lesley University, Cambridge, in the amount of \$35,100.00, Account 53101, Fund 25000, Org. 859138, Program 138, Project/Grant SC08632; and in the amount of \$21,300.00, Account 53101, Fund 24000, Org. 859651, Program 651; Project/Grant SC00416.

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

B. Tabled Matters

C. Awaiting Reports

Ms. Nolan removed **#C06-260**, Report on current standards and national research regarding use of seat belts on public school buses, and rationales for not using them; and **#C07-336**, Report by elementary school, on the performance of students in high school, including the percentage proficient on 10th grade MCAS, as well as graduation rates, for students in the aggregate and for racial and income subgroups. Mr. Grassi removed **#C07-251**, Report on pay policies for the City of Cambridge and School Department employees that are deployed to active duty; and **#C07-334**, Report comparing current CRLS graduation requirements to the MassCore Curriculum being discussed by the Board of Education.

Mr. Schuster removed **#C06-201**, Report and presentation on the ways in which civic participation at the local, state and national levels is encouraged and taught in the Cambridge Public Schools. On a motion by Ms. Walser, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to place the foregoing reports on file.

New Business

A. Presentations

B. Action Items

Ms. Nolan moved, seconded by Mr. Schuster, for adoption of items #07-275 through #07-301. Ms. Walser removed #07-298. Mr. Schuster removed #07-299. Ms. Nolan removed #07-301. On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Schuster, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt as a group, the following items:

#07-275, Approval of Revisions to Annual General Fund Operating Budget Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Annual General Fund Operating Budget Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-276, Approval of Revisions to Fiscal Management Goals Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Fiscal Management Goals Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-277, Approval of Revisions to the Budgeting System Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Budgeting System Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-278, Approval of Revisions to the Fiscal Year Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Fiscal Year Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-279, Approval of Revisions to the Budget Planning Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Budget Planning Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-280, Approval of Revisions to the Communication of Budget Information Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Communication of Budget Information Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-281, Approval of Revisions to the Budget Hearings and Reviews Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Budget Hearings and Reviews Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-282, Approval of Revisions to the Budget Adoption Procedures Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Budget Adoption Procedures Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-283, Approval of Revisions to the Funding Proposals and Applications Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Funding Proposals and Applications Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-284, Approval of Revisions to the Authorized Signatures Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Authorized Signatures Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-285, Approval of Revisions to the Fiscal Accounting and Reporting Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Fiscal Accounting and Reporting Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-286, Approval of Revisions to the Inventories Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Inventories Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-287, Approval of Revisions to the Audits Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Audits Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-288, Approval of Revisions to the Purchasing, Purchasing Authority and Bidding Requirements Policies: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Purchasing, Purchasing Authority and Bidding Requirements Policies as detailed in the documents (Second Reading).

#07-289, Approval of Revisions to the Payment Procedures Policy: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Payment Procedures Policy as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-290, Approval of Revisions to the Payroll Regulation and Salary Deductions Policies: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Payroll Regulation and Salary Deductions Policies as detailed in the document (Second Reading).

#07-291, Approval of Revisions to the Business Travel and Conference/Training Attendance and Expense Reimbursements Policies: that the School Committee approve the revisions to the Business Travel and Conference/Training Attendance and Expense Reimbursements Policies as detailed in the documents (Second Reading).

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

On a motion by Ms. Nolan, seconded by Mr. Harding, on the following roll call, it was voted to adopt the remaining items:

#07-292, Approval of Home School Application for School Year 2007-2008: that the School Committee approves the Home School Application for the 2007-2008 school year as detailed in the document.

#07-293, Grant Awards: that the School Committee accept and approve the Grant Awards in the amounts and for the periods indicated:

1. Friends of the Amigos School, for the period November 27, 2007 to May 8, 2008, in the amount of \$53,500.00, proj./grant SC08787.

2. Safe Schools for Gay and Lesbian Students, for the period November 27, 2007 to June 30, 2007, in the amount of \$1,000.00, proj./grant SC08823.

#07-294, Motion by Mr. Grassi that the School Committee reschedule the January 8, 2008, Budget Subcommittee meeting to January 15.

#07-295, Motion by Mr. Grassi that the School Committee send a Resolution to thank Cambridge resident, Anthony Cicariello, on his ongoing knowledge and passion for celebrating Italian cultural heritage.

#07-296, Motion by Mr. Grassi that the Superintendent provide the School Committee with an updated list of staff with Ph.Ds.

#07-297, Report of the December 12, 2007, meeting of the Governance Subcommittee.

Called for the purpose of discussing the process for home school petitions and models for better engaging student School Committee Members.

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

Also Present: Maureen MacFarlane, Legal Counsel; Student School Committee Members' Advisors, Laurence Kimbrough and Brendan Kells.

Mr. Schuster in the Chair.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m.

Mr. Schuster read his previous motion made to the School Committee regarding Student School Committee Members' availability to vote. He stressed that it is his motion not the Committee's even though it came out of work done by the Sub-Committee and concerns of the Committee.

The following questions, comments and concerns were raised:

- School Committee responsibilities need to be known to students
- Students have some confusion about the packet
- Representatives need the weekend to read the packet
- Better orientation re meetings
- Learn how to read the Agenda
- Define items on the Agenda
- Social Study credit would be a great incentive
- Do reps need to be members of student government
- Could this be an independent study
- Meetings too long for students to attend the whole meeting
- Take items out of order to address those relevant to high school
- Goal should be to report back to the student government
- School Committee has done little to reach out to students
- Setting is uncomfortable for some students
- School Committee owes it to the students to go to them
- Establish better relationships between School Committee and students
- School Committee could meet with student government twice a year
- CRLS has the population to be part of the School Committee if they know what it is
- Meet with students prior to student government elections
- Put in course catalog as independent study
- How would 1 or 2 students affect an opinion vote
- Language of the meetings may be hard to understand

- Could be an elite position
- Student School Committee Member be Chair of student government Policy Subcommittee
- What is deadline for course catalog
- Determining credit is on the school end
- School Committee needs to say what expectations are for participation
- New School Committee should meet with student government
- Student government would sponsor meeting open to entire student body

Mr. Schuster, moved, seconded by Ms. Nolan, that the Governance Sub-Committee recommend that the School Committee, through the Superintendent, ask the high school Principal to explore the feasibility of developing an independent Social Studies course to increase participation of student School Committee Members and that the exploration of the development of such a course include the following:

- Student body elects up to three members
- Student School Committee Member Chair Student Government Policy Committee
- Attendance expectations
- Posting of opportunity in course catalog
- Independent social studies required element for serving as a student School Committee representative

Mr. Kimbrough and Mr. Kells will meet with Dr. Saheed and report back to the sub-committee.

Mr. Kimbrough and Mr. Kells left at this time. Members discussed the process for home school petitions.

The following questions, comments and concerns were addressed:

- There is flexibility in the statute
- Private schools are different; petition must be approved by the School Committee
- Turn the decision over to the Superintendent
- Request report from Superintendent re number of petitions
- Superintendent provide an update twice a year
- Petitions could be kept on file in the School Committee office
- What is fiduciary responsibility of School Committee to ensure legitimacy of request
- Documents must be on file
- Requestor must define testing, qualifications, curriculum
- District cannot do home visits nor inspect home
- Petitions are related to school attendance statute
- District must know where children are
- Law requires they go to school
- District must ensure that child is educated
- Do we have to allow kids to do both; home and public schooling
- Would like to delegate decision to Superintendent
- Superintendent submit report at beginning and end of school year
- Have petitions available for Members to review
- Does Dr. Turk spend a lot of time on petitions
- Application can be refused
- It's clear what can and cannot be asked.

Ms. Nolan moved, seconded by Mr. Fantini, that the Governance Subcommittee recommend that the School Committee give the Superintendent authority to approve all home school petitions; and, further, that all applications be made available to School Committee members on request;

and, further, that the necessary changes to the School Committee policy be presented for School Committee approval.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patricia A. Berry
Secretary

#07-300, Motion by the Buildings & Grounds Sub-Committee that the School Committee send a letter to the City Manager and the City Council expressing its appreciation for the approval of funds for the high school.

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

Non-Consent Agenda

Ms. Walser raised a question on whether the high school Principal is being asked to create another School Committee Subcommittee. Mr. Schuster was heard. Members discussed Student School Committee member involvement. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. Fantini, seconded by Ms. Nolan, it was voted to adopt **#07-298, Motion by the Governance Sub-Committee** that the School Committee, through the Superintendent, ask the high school Principal to explore the feasibility of developing an independent Social Studies course to increase participation of Student School Committee Members; and that the exploration of the development of such a course include the following: student body elects up to three members; Student School Committee Member Chair the Student Government Policy Committee; attendance expectations; posting of opportunity in course catalog; and independent Social Studies required for serving as a Student School Committee representative.

Ms. Nolan moved a friendly amendment to **#07-299, Motion by the Governance Sub-Committee**, to change the "first" meeting in September to the "second" meeting in September and the "first meeting in June" to the "second meeting in May". Mr. Harding raised a question on the School Committee's approving home school applications. The Superintendent was heard. On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adopt, as amended, **#07-299, Motion by the Governance Sub-Committee** that the School Committee give the Superintendent authority to approve all home school petitions; and, further, that the second meeting in September and the second meeting in May the School Committee will receive a report on the number of applications received and approved; and further, that all applications will be made available to School Committee Members on request; and, further, that the necessary changes to the School Committee policy be presented for School Committee approval.

Ms. Nolan moved to Calendar **#07-301, Motion by Ms. Walser** that the School Committee accept for the record the booklet, "2007 Achievement Gap Forums," summarizing the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Achievement Gap this year.

Late Orders

Members discussed the handling of the recent snow storms and the communication with parents regarding inconsistent bus schedules. The Superintendent and Mr. Maloney were heard. The Superintendent was asked to provide an action plan on how future emergency situations will be handled. Members thanked the Superintendent, Mr. Maloney and staff for rising to the occasion during the snow emergency and staying with children.

Mayor Reeves raised a question on the Upton Street Building being used for a Transition School and asked the Committee to keep the Council informed. Mr. Maloney responded that there is no definite plan for the Upton Street Building to be used except for staging for the CRLS renovation. It was suggested

that answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding the renovation be posted on the web as soon as possible.

Ms. Walser read a statement for the record thanking the Superintendent and his staff, former CTA President, Paul Toner, Marilyn Bradshaw, Patricia Berry, Principals, former colleague Alice Turkel, Glenn Koocher and the MASC staff, campaign managers, her family and the voters of the City of Cambridge for all of their help during her eight years as a member of the Cambridge School Committee.

The Members thanked Ms. Walser, Mr. Harding and Mayor Reeves for a job well done.

On a motion by Mr. Schuster, seconded by Mr. Harding, it was voted to adjourn (8:30 p.m.).

Adjourned
Marilyn Y. Bradshaw
Executive Secretary to the School Committee