



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

November 5, 2020

Called for 6:00 p.m. held in and broadcast from the Dr. Henrietta S. Attles Meeting Room, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of discussing and accepting the Buildings and Grounds recommendation to adopt updated metrics for CPS re-opening plan; and to consider a motion for the School Committee to write to Governor Baker and the State Delegation about prioritizing our schools.

Members Present: Vice Chair Bowman, Member Fantini, Member Rachel, Member Rojas, Member Weinstein, Member Wilson, Mayor Siddiqui

Also Present: Dr. Salim, Superintendent of Schools

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will be taken and there will be public comment.

The meeting proceeded to the first order of business with the following roll call: Member Rojas PRESENT; Member Rachel PRESENT; Member Weinstein PRESENT; Member Wilson PRESENT; Vice Chair Bowman PRESENT; Member Fantini PRESENT; Mayor Siddiqui PRESENT.

Public Comment:

The following individuals were heard:

- Elinor Actipis, Whittemore Ave. in support of the updated metrics by the scientists
- Catherine Reilly, Linnaean Street, in support of updated metrics by the scientists,
- Alex Yu, Eighth Street, in support of opening schools as a priority.
- Abigail Klima, Reed Street, supports updating the metrics, more transparency on positive cases
- Kris Newton, Newport Street, Arlington, opposed to the updated metrics, opposed to the decision making process on metrics, many staff do not live in Cambridge
- Sarah Rosenberg, Putnam Ave., requests more transparency for positive cases
- Rafael Jaramillo, Reservoir Street, parent, in person school is irreplaceable
- Samson Timoner, Locke Street, parent, supports the updated metrics
- Sarah Sikowitz, Pemberton Street, in support of the updated metrics
- Dan Monahan, Lexington Ave, CEA President, although he appreciates the work of the scientists, **#20-269** seems questionable, in support of **#20-270**, his data shows less than 2 people per week are being tested.
- Carolyn Magid, Reed Street, in support of the concerns of the EOCC statement
- Monique Riveta, Holden Green, in support of the updated metrics,
- Alisa Khan, Third St, in support of the revised metrics, prioritize in person learning
- Ailene Orr, Adams Street, Wakefield, feels like the rug is being pulled out from under her with the changing all of the metrics, in favor of keeping at least one of the original metrics.

- Gianna Ericson, Concord Avenue, in support of the updated metrics
- Tina Lieu, Huron Avenue, in support of EOCC statement, asks the district to practice anti-racism
- Noelle Danian, Parker Street, Somerville, in support of the EOCC statement
- Amanda Beatty, Franklin Street, thankful for the work so far, looking for earlier start to school year
- Ajayprasad Padmaprasad, Cambridge Park Drive, in support of updated metrics
- Betsy Preval, Harvard Avenue, Medford, read a statement of opposition from the EOCC Leadership Team, re the updated metrics because they were left out of the process.
- Jo Quest-Neubert, Alpine Street, read the rest of the statement from the EOCC Leadership Team, they do not trust the decisions being made without their input. The metrics are created for and by White people.
- Catherine Barsoum, Pleasant Street, in support of the updated metrics
- Liz Vincent, Thomas Street, Burlington, opposed to updating the metrics, in support of the EOCC Leadership Team statement
- Alana Serignese, Muller Avenue, in support of updating the metrics and having more children in school, not all kids can learn well from home.
- Sushama Scalera, Gore Street, parent, supports updated metrics

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Rachel, on the following roll call vote, Public Comment was closed: Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Mayor Siddiqui raised a point of clarification on a statement made during public comment stating there is no premature decision to turn down the updated metrics that will be presented tonight. She then turned the floor over to Dr. Salim.

Dr. Salim framed the presentation for the evening and proceeded to the PowerPoint presentation:

Proposed Revision of Public Health Metrics

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=0ef808350d&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1682562517090205790&th=1759a9b1d78c805e&view=att&disp=inline&realattid=f_kh5favh40

Dr. Helen Jenkins took all in attendance through the first part of the presentation, stating that this pandemic causes harm in numerous ways and on many levels. She supports having a public dashboard to show positive results.

Nurse Rose-Tynes informed the Committee what times and days testing is available and how many tests have been taken. The negativity rate is 94%. For the staff that is using the service, they try to make it as convenient as possible. As for students that have Covid-19 symptoms, most of the positive cases are of children that are remote rather than in-person students. When it comes to contact tracing, we are shutting down classrooms as soon as we learn about it. 85% of our teachers come from outside of Cambridge. The strong guidelines in the manual are being upheld and schools are one of the safest places to be.

Dr. Jenkins continued, acknowledging that Cambridge is not a bubble. She explained the proposed metrics and suggested the metrics are revisited as early as January, 2021.

Mayor Siddiqui explained the waste water pilot program is going to be starting in mid-November. The floor was opened for questions on the presentation.

Member Rojas asked if we will have any opportunity to respond to public comment. It was answered in the affirmative. As Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee, he is in support of the updated metrics. What is the definition of older students in relation to surveillance testing?

- Dr. Bernstein answered that the age that defines older students is somewhere around 12

- Dr. Dobberteen said testing students in grades 7 through 12 is the priority under this new parameter. Children aged 10 and under are less likely to transmit the virus.

Member Rachel asked how are staff that live outside the district reflected in the metrics? How many health aides do we have and how many vacancies are going to be available?

- Nurse Rose-Tynes answered that in the next four weeks they will be fully staffed across the district. It was brought up that testing is offered up to 8:00 p.m.
- Dr. Lichtenstein spoke to how those teachers are reflected. She encouraged any teachers that are listening to please continue to take advantage of the tests. The overall surveillance testing data allows the Dept. Public Health to take advantage of making decisions on staying open or closing.

Member Rachel asked if the teacher that lives outside of Cambridge shows up in the Cambridge data. She is not trying to expose anyone's private information.

- Dr. Salim added that CPS does report any positive cases to DESE and they can certainly work on how to move forward to making it more transparent on the dashboard.

Member Rachel asked if the positive case of a staff member living outside Cambridge is shown as a Cambridge case.

- Dr. Lichtenstein responded that it will show both places.

Member Weinstein wants to know what percentage of adults are taking the test to justify changing the metrics.

- Dr. Lichtenstein stated that there is no hard number. CP has over 80% of our teachers that have been tested multiple times and it gives her confidence.
- Dr. Keith Marzilli Ericson responded that there are many different safety procedures
- Dr. Bernstein answered that we want to encourage testing as many teachers as possible, it depends on what we are trying to detect. He suggests everything we can possibly do make testing as easy as possible across all of the schools.
- Dr. Jenkins responded that if there is some information on each district where all staff come from, it would be good to compare with the help of a consultant, it will not be easy to do.

Member Fantini stated that when we put these metrics in place back in March, we agreed to do a review in October, this is that review. What is the likelihood of our closing based on the metrics?

- Dr. Bernstein answered we would close for a minimum of seven days if we only spiked for one day.

Member Fantini asked if the panelists had any reactions to the public comment testimonies.

- Dr. Crittendon responded that she wants to encourage the teachers to eat lunch separately

Member Wilson asked about the public dashboard, can we have two metrics – a guiding metric and another that we actually use.

- Dr. Jenkins does not see a problem with that.

Member Wilson asked Nurse Rose-Tynes to read off the numbers again of whom has been tested since the reopening of schools

- Nurse Rose-Tynes answered 2,441 includes all CPS staff includes teachers, custodians and Berkshire staff. It was started October 15th for a total of 7 surveillance testing dates up to this past Monday, November 2nd.

Member Wilson asked Dr. Salim how many people are going into our buildings.

- Dr. Salim answered that he doesn't have that number off hand but will certainly get it to her and he added that the Berkshire staff is on a rotating schedule.

Vice Chair Bowman thanked the Mayor for rescheduling the meeting with the EOCC Leadership Team and allowing for diverse voices. She asked if the surveillance tests take the place of the regional metrics and our Cambridge metrics

- Dr. Ericson answered yes, and stated that the revision includes the regional metrics.

- Mayor Siddiqui added we may need to reexamine the metrics sooner.

Member Rojas stated that he was not involved in the cancellation of the EOCC meeting that was brought up during public comment.

Member Fantini is in favor of and in support of the explanations given. He is sorry that it appears to have been sudden and did not include enough voices, but he expects the Superintendent and the Mayor to make sure the teachers know that they are valued and we care about all staff members.

Member Rachel has no issue with the science of updating the metrics, however she takes a major issue with the process. Since August, EOCC, CFOCC and allies have been requested a meeting. Three months later, there is still no meeting. There was a meeting scheduled and then was cancelled. We have to start walking the talk. She suggests we postpone voting on this motion (**#20-269**) until we listen to the other voices; we need to do it within the next week. That way we can vote on it with more trust. If we vote tonight, she has to vote NAY; she cannot vote YEA on it unless we prioritize anti-racism.

Member Wilson thanked Member Rachel for her words, she is in support of much of what was stated. The problems she has is also not with the science; her issues are that we are not listening to certain members of our community. It is insulting to keep ignoring the EOCC and the CFOCC. She appreciates the collaboration of the scientists as experts, she requests at least one epidemiologist of color to work with them. We need to think of how we are going to be more intentional about the process. She will also reject the metrics, not because of the science, only the process. We cannot continue to ignore our community members; it is not the way to build trust.

Vice Chair Bowman stated that we need to be very intentional about how we talk about race. She agrees that representation matters. She pointed out that one of our Committee Members, heading up the Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee, is a person of color and is part of the scientific team. She wants to see the people of color on the Committee respected just as much as the teachers of color. She feels we owe it to our community to figure out a way to allow multiple voices to be heard; understanding that there is always a trade-off.

Member Weinstein stated we should not revise the metrics until we know we have included EOCC in a meaningful way. He agrees with public conversations, honoring a wide range of voices. He noted there were some valuable conversations that came up tonight and he supports adopting the new metrics.

Mayor Siddiqui thanked the members for sharing their views. What she is hearing is that there are problems with the process. The Chair informed the Committee that there will be another meeting and apologized that the first meeting wasn't prioritized. Cambridge has the resources to incorporate a better, process. It is important to listen to all voices and look at everything through an equity lens. It was a mistake not to have epidemiologist Dr. Holmes be part of the discussions. She is willing to do whatever she can to help fix the process issues. Mayor Siddiqui reiterated that we examine other issues that came up tonight as well. She supports the recommended metrics, she will work to improve communications.

Member Wilson placed motion **#20-269** on the Calendar.

Motion **#20-270** was brought forward.

Member Rachel spoke to the state being held accountable for closing other venues before schools.

Member Rojas asked for the same thing and asked Dr. Jenkins to elaborate.

- Dr. Jenkins responded that schools should be the first venues to open and the last venues to close. We should focus using the metrics to keep schools open instead of using them to close the schools?

Special Meeting
November 5, 2020
pg. 5

Member Fantini placed **#20-270** on the Calendar, suggesting the Committee reframe it as a Resolution and he will support it.

On a motion by Vice Chair Bowman, seconded by Member Wilson, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.: Member Rojas YEA; Member Rachel YEA; Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Vice Chair Bowman YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Attest: 

Dosha Beard
Executive Secretary to the School Committee