



CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

(Official Minutes)

Special Meeting

March 22, 2022

Called for 6:00 p.m. broadcast from the Media Arts Studio, 454 Broadway, Cambridge, for the purpose of a Budget Workshop on the FY23 Proposed Budget.

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

Also Present: Dr. Greer, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools; Claire Spinner, Chief Financial Officer; Anais Killian, Student School Committee Representative; Nuriel Vera-DeGraff, Student School Committee Representative

Mayor Siddiqui in the Chair.

A quorum of the School Committee being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. The Chair read the call of the meeting and explained that this meeting is being televised, votes will not be taken and there will be no public comment.

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

Mayor Siddiqui provided a summary of the goals for the workshop and turned the meeting over to Budget co-chairs Vice-Chair Rachel and Member Rojas who gave a brief overview of the Budget Workshops and the budget process for the FY23 Proposed Budget and ESSER III plan.

The meeting was turned over to Dr. Greer and Ms. Spinner who led the presentation for the evening. The full presentation can be found on the [website](#).

After the presentation, Dr. Greer opened the meeting to the Committee for a discussion about the proposed FY23 Budget. The discussion was focused on the following three questions:

1. What excites you about this budget proposal?
2. What lingering questions do you still have?
3. What suggestions do you have for the administration and budget co-chairs as we plan for our workshop next week?

The Committee members began the discussion by each speaking about what parts of the budget proposal they are most excited about:

- **Mayor Siddiqui:** early college
- **Member Bhambi:** effective use of ESSER III funding
- **Member Weinstein:** support for the increase in Visual and Performing Arts, Athletics, and after-school program opportunities
- **Member Rojas:** increase in district-wide professional development opportunities
- **Member Fantini:** increase in building substitutes and health teachers
- **Member Wilson:** alignment of stakeholders and student success and outcomes

- **Vice-Chair Rachel:** expansion of peer-mediation at CRLS, support for LGBTQ+ families, equity audits, and enhancement of work-based learning.
- **Student Member Killian:** student contribution and involvement in the budget process
- **Student Member Vera-DeGraff:** student contribution and involvement in the budget process, district reorganization

The discussion continued and focused on lingering questions the Committee members still have about the proposed budget:

Member Bhambi inquired about the dollar amount of professional development opportunities for SEL instructors. Ms. Spinner responded that there is not a particular dollar amount in the budget book, but the district has a budget for both district and school-level professional development. In the current proposed budget, \$500,000 was allocated from ESSER funds for professional development opportunities.

Member Bhambi inquired about the RSTA assessment timeline in the budget and if there are funds in the budget for any necessary improvements. Dr. Greer responded that a RSTA review will be presented during the April 5th School Committee meeting and the district has set aside some funding to address some findings based on the review.

Member Fantini inquired about job postings for the new positions, job descriptions, school improvement plans, and gateways/core values at the upper school level that will be established by the district to assist in college and career success for current students. Dr. Greer confirmed that she along with Dr. Gittens are actively working on establishing plans and core values for graduates. Current school improvement plans are available but plans for the upcoming school year will not be available until the summer/fall.

Member Fantini also inquired about the positions created based on ESSER funding and what is the projection of the positions in FY24 once the ESSER funds decline. Ms. Spinner responded that most of the positions were created as recovery positions, however, positions such as additional health teachers will be incorporated into the district's SEL strategy. Dr. Greer provided detail about updated job descriptions.

Member Weinstein inquired about the proposed reorganization, particularly around Pre-K, and the district's anticipation of reorganizing once universal Pre-K is implemented. Dr. Greer described the current structure of Pre-K as being in the elementary budget but discussions are in the works for implementing a program manager. She also explained the reasoning why universal Pre-K was not in the proposed budget. **Mayor Siddiqui** also provided feedback and discussed that if needs arise, there are ways to supplement those needs in regards to implementing universal Pre-K.

Member Wilson inquired about the proposed Chief Academics of Schools position and its alignment with the Assistant Superintendents. Dr. Greer responded that there would be a collaborative alignment between the position and the Assistant Superintendents.

Member Wilson also asked about after-school partnerships for students with special needs. Dr. Greer said that there have been many discussions in recent weeks on the district implementing more robust after-school programs and partnerships to support students with special needs. Currently, after-school programs are organized through the city.

Vice-Chair Rachel asked for more clarification and elaboration on the district's expectations of improved student mental health outcomes based on the implementation of an MTSS and SEL Director. The district hopes that since there will be more resources for students, students will utilize the opportunities.

Member Rojas asked about career readiness, flexibility in grant allocation in the budget, and the advance learning assessment proposal. Dr. Greer mentioned that there is flexibility and revisions would need approval from DESE which usually has a quick turnaround time on approvals. Dr. Mullen provided more context on the advanced learning proposal.

Discussion followed on the next steps in the budget process, the Public Hearing, and additional workshops.

On a motion by Member Wilson, seconded by Member Fantini, on the following roll call vote, the meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.: Member Weinstein YEA; Member Wilson YEA; Member Bhambi YEA; Member Fantini YEA; Vice-Chair Rachel YEA; Member Rojas YEA; Mayor Siddiqui YEA.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ariel B. Kennebrew".

Ariel B. Kennebrew
Executive Secretary to the School Committee