



CITY COUNCIL

ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, February 8, 2022

5:30 PM

Remote Meeting

The City Council and School Committee hold a joint virtual roundtable to discuss priorities for the FY23 School Budget.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dennis J. Carlone	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alanna Mallon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
E. Denise Simmons	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Quinton Zondervan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

I. Call to Order

II. Public Portion

III. Ordinances



CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL & SCHOOL COMMITTEE

ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI, CHAIR

ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FEBRUARY 8, 2022

5:30 PM, SULLIVAN CHAMBER

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Absent

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Present

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Absent

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Absent

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Present

Councillor Denise E. Simmons - Present

Councillor Paul F. Toner - Present

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Present

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui - Present

Present-6, Absent-3.

Moving on to the School Committee:

Committee Member Bhambi - Absent

Committee Member Fantini - Present

Committee Member Rojas Villarreal - Present

Committee Member David Weinstein - Present

Committee Member Rachel Weinstein - Present

Committee Member Ayesha Wilson - Absent

Present-4, Absent-2. Quorum established.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: We're also joined by
Councillor Azeem and Councilor McGovern, um, and I know I
think a few folks will join momentarily. Uh, and we have

our superintendent, our city manager, um, along with, um, Dr. Turk, uh, deputy superintendent, our CFO Claire Spinner, um, and Dr. Madera, uh, assistant superintendent as well.

So we, um-- today, the overview essentially will have a quick CPS budget overview. We'll talk about enrollment projections. We'll talk about the superintendent's entry plan findings. We'll go through budget guidelines, uh, and then we'll talk a little about the FY23 budget process and timeline.

So before I get to that and we get to that, I'd like to ask my colleagues on the School Committee, uh, Vice Chair Rachel and member Rojas, who are our budget Co-Chairs, to start with a few words. Vice Chair.

COMMITTEE MEMBER RACHEL WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Mayor Siddiqui. And let's welcome Member Bhambi has also joined us.

COMMITTEE MEMBER AKRITI BHAMBI: Thank you, Vice Chair.

COMMITTEE MEMBER RACHEL WEINSTEIN: Sure. Um, you're going to hear from my Co-Chair Member Rojas in a moment about why we have this meeting. Um, I will just say that

many of you council members have served on the School Committee. One of you has actually been a leader in our schools and I know all of you share our commitment to children and families across the city. We really value your input and are, um, excited for this opportunity to be in dialogue with you.

So as we have this conversation, I want to invite you to, um, to consider limited priorities for the schools -- for the school budget. And I will share that my own educational professional, um, training was through the coalition of essential schools, which had a principle of less is more and meaning that -- which means depth over breadth in curricular instruction.

And I want to posit that this principle holds true for organizational development and efficacy as well. And Superintendent Greer is helping the committee and the administration and the community get clear on top priorities for district plan, um, which will come after budget adoption. But she's working -- she's helping us all work with a really mindset of focused priorities and being strategic. Um, so actually, right before I pass it off to my budget Co-Chair and the superintendent, I want to

publicly thank her and our CFO MS. Spinner, um, for their leadership of this process. The team has worked really hard and despite changing in School Committee roles and COVID and everything else on their plates, they posted, um, multiple community forums for -- including for students and staff and have done specific outreach to families who speak languages other than English at home to understand their concerns and priorities for a budget as well.

Um, this is the School Committee as you probably know that cares really deeply about engaging in communication with the children and families we serve and so we appreciate this work in addition to the presentations the administration has done for us at regular meetings. Um, so we really look forward to your thoughts and questions. I want to also acknowledge that Member Wilson has joined us and, um, with that, I'm going to pass the mic to Member Rojas. Thank you so much for making the time for this.

COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLARREAL: Thank you, Vice Chair Rachel and -- and thank you, um, Mayor Siddiqui and good evening everybody. And -- and yeah, I just wanted to say a couple of words for -- for, um, for new and existing members of -- of both the City Council and

School Committee and the public in general. Just I wanted to remind all of us of why we're having this -- this call tonight. And -- and that's because, um, several years ago, um, the -- the school council passed a resolution saying that they wanted to have round -- budget roundtables, um as -- as a way to have an opportunity to discuss the budget early in the process so that the first time they said the budget was not when the budget was referred to them for approval.

So if I was to have these conversations early on, so we could have a productive conversation and -- and then make the actual presentation of the formal presentation of the budget more, um, less of a formality and, and more of a conversation. Um, so yeah, as member -- as Vice Chair just mentioned, I -- I look forward to the conversation tonight and thank you. [inaudible 00:06:03] Yeah, the Mayor.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Great. And Vice Mayor Mallon has also joined us and our Student School Committee members, uh, Vera DeGraff and Member Killian, uh, are also trying to join. Um, so if you could promote them as, um, panelists, that'd be great. So with that, uh, we will go ahead to Doctor Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Great. Well, good evening everyone. It's so nice to see you, um, and thank you for welcoming us and giving us this opportunity to, uh, share with you an update and an overview of the FY 23, um, budget process and the -- and the budget activities they have taken place thus far. Uh, I'm joined tonight by, uh, Ms, Claire Spinner, who is the chief financial officer, as well as deputy superintendent, uh, Dr. Turk and also our assistant superintendent, uh, Dr. Madera. There will be others also, uh, possibly joining us as the evening goes on. Um, I want to recognize the School Committee and thank you and the chair of the -- um, of -- of the budget -- uh, budget and -- uh, budget planning committee.

I want to thank them for their time and also their collaboration and support as we've been moving through this process. Um, so Mrs. Spinner and I have a brief presentation, um, and Mrs. Spinner, if you can give -- if she can share her screen.

CLAIRE SPINNER: Yes, I can and I will do so right now.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Um, and you can go to slide 2 and it's -- uh, it's just, um, important that we want to make

sure that we leave enough time for, uh, there to be a thorough and thoughtful, uh, discussion in regards to the work of the school department as it relates to our budget. So we will do a quick overview of Mrs. Spinner. We'll do a quick overview of the budget and also our enrollment projections. I will talk a little bit about, um, the findings from my entry planning process, the budget guidelines, and then also our overall process and timeline moving forward. So I'll, uh, stop here and turn it over to Mrs. Spinner so she can, uh, do our budget overview and enrollment projections.

CLAIRE SPINNER: Uh, thank you, Dr. Greer. And, uh, good evening to School Committee members and City Council members. Um, we do appreciate this opportunity to have this annual conversation at this point in our planning process. Um, so I am going to just run through a few slides really to talk about our budget sort of from that 10,000 ft level. Um, and so just to sort of frame, um, for, um, individuals who, um, uh, about where we are budget wise in the current year. So our FY22 budget is about \$250 million. We are a very well resourced district. Um, our per pupil expenditure, uh, overall, uh, is \$31,000 per student and in

district about \$28,000 per student. This is based on FY20 data.

Um, so 89% of our budget is our general fund, our adopted general fund and this is a process that we go through each year as we develop our -- our general fund budget for the upcoming year. As well though, as we're talking about our budget, we are really looking at that all funds budget. Um, in the current year, we do have funds -- um, federal grant funds from the, um, elementary, uh, and secondary emergency relief funding, our COVID funding of about \$11.5 million. This was what was appropriated in the current year, but it may be spent through September of '24. We also have our school meals revolving fund and other federal grants, federal and other grants.

So the elementary and secondary school emergency relief or ESSER funds, um, that the district has received, um, these were federal funds, um, that were, uh, allocated to districts to really support the COVID-19 impacts or response to those impacts in the realm of health and safety, as well as, um, academic and social, uh, emotional learning are sort of academic recovery. Um, as well this funding was allocated, um, over a multiple year planning

and spending cycle.

So we've received actually three allocations of our ESSER funding. Um, we received our ESSER 1, uh, which was \$1.1 million, uh, in -- in 2020, actually, in April of 2020. The expenditure deadline, um, is in September of 2022, but, uh, currently that is fully, uh, expended. ESSER 2 and ESSER 2, we, uh, appropriate it this year, uh, and you can see here that we still have through 2024 really to spend the remainder, um, of this funding. Uh, we are in process of spending some of it this year, but we are projecting a balance, um, as of 6-30-2022, so this coming June, um, of about 8.5 million, just under 8.5 million, um, still remaining to spend over the, uh, remaining two years.

So just to give you, um, a sense of how we have spent that, um, some of the ESSER funding this year, um, towards our, um, recovery. Uh, part of it has been spent on, um, COVID operations and COVID, um, mitigation. So really our health and safety, uh, focus and so we spent, um -- in summer, uh, 2021, we -- we spent on some nursing staff and testing supplies. Uh, we have tents, uh, as well as health aids. Uh, we've purchased, um, student and staff masks. We've done HVAC testing and we've actually rented some

additional space, um, for the school district, um, to house a recovery team of special educators, uh, as well as some other -- um, some other staff.

In addition, on the academic and social emotional learning side, we've -- it's -- the funding has been used to support, um, last summer's full day program, uh, which included a partnership with DHSP, uh, you know, things such as, uh, funding so that our schools could do some planning during the summer to, um, plan for the reopening of school in the fall. Um, additional staffing and especially in our elementary schools, math and literacy interventionists, pair of professionals, health teachers, uh, some additional special educators supporting our AP and honors programming and CRLS, um, as well as some professional development and that is just really sort of an overview of our -- of our spending, um, and our use of funds.

So in general, um, this is just really a overall, um, how do we allocate our budget? So staff is our most important, uh, resource. And so in the general fund, and this holds to really, you know, essentially for all of our funding, but about 82% of our funds are spent on salary and benefits. And then you can see here, um, some of the other

larger areas, transportation, um, maintaining and -- and providing the energy for our facilities, et cetera. So our staff, um, includes more than, um, 1,700 full time equivalent, uh, FTEs, um, and 77% of our employees, um, is either a teacher or an aide. So just last week, we shared with the School Committee, um, and it's something that we typically do every year at this time, um, our enrollment projections, um, for the upcoming school year, uh, which is really, um, some of the basis of the analysis that we do as we're thinking about our budget for the upcoming year. As well, we update our five year projections.

Um, so as you can see here, um, we, um -- I have begun to have, uh, a decline in enrollment, um, because we like other communities across the state have experienced a decline in enrollment since, um, school year '19, '20. Our -- our -- our enrollment fell about 14 -- 418 students last year and then, um, uh, declined another 81 students this year. And this was really after a decade of -- of -- of, uh, pretty significant enrollment growth in the district. And this slide here really sort of shows, um, you know, how that decline has impacted our various um programmatic levels by grade band. So our elementary, um, pre-K to grade

5 enrollment has really, um, had the most significant impact, um, with being down about 8.7%, uh, this year, a two year -- not in one year, but the two year look back. Uh, our middle schools, um, have not declined quite as much in those two years and our high school, um, at a 5.7% decrease, uh, in those two years. And looking forward to next year, um, we are projecting a slight increase, um, over this year -- um, this year's enrollment and you can see here too, looking back over the two years, you know, what has been the shift, um, in our student demographics. Um, so we are, um, our pre induced lunch, um, student, uh, population has remained stable, but our English language learner population, um, has declined, um, slightly and our -- but our high need student population has increased, uh, slightly. And now I'm going to turn this back over to Dr. Greer and she is going to, uh, take over.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Okay. Thank -- thank you. Um, as many of you all know, um, I've, uh, developed a, um -- and I implemented a comprehensive entry plan and planning process, um, starting and -- when I started here in July of '21. That process was intentionally designed in order to help me engage the community as quickly as I could and as

early as I could, to learn as much as I could about the district and what the, uh, condition of the district, uh, is and was -- was and is at that time. Um, and that process was, as I said, designed intentionally, but it was intentionally also designed to do to --to -- to align with our FY 23 budget process along with our future district planning, um, process as well. Um, you can go -- uh, you can remain here, Ms. Spinner. So if -- as you can see, um, it -- the -- the green arrow points out some of the things that I did during -- during the entry planning process and that occurred from July through November.

I had multiple engages my opportunities with, um, various stakeholder groups did a deep dive into, um, the research and data and other program reviews and information that was on hand for me to review including policies and I also had ongoing discussions and engagement with the School Committee. Um, in December, I rendered a comprehensive, uh, findings report, uh, that was made public at, uh, one of our meetings in December and have had ongoing discussions in the community around, um -- around those findings. Those findings have been used to form our budget guidelines, which has led into our budget planning process. Even

throughout this whole budget planning process, we have continued to engage, um, internal and external stakeholders. We've had meetings with both our school and district level leaders. We've conducted and are in the process of, uh, getting the survey results from the survey that we launched, uh, a few weeks ago.

Um, our -- our, uh, finance department has been doing the analysis as Ms. Spinner shared around enrollment and also projections. And we've had ongoing conversations over the course of these last several months with our School Committee and also our former budget co-chair and also our most recently, um, appointed budget co-chair. You can go to the next slide. The entry plan, uh, was organized in five broad categories in each, uh, of those identified areas of strength, areas of, um, needed growth and improvement as well as, uh, opportunities, uh, areas of -- of opportunities for the district. Those five categories that I identified, uh, were around governance, organization -- um, organizational alignment and capacity, student success, communications, and engagement, as well as culture and climate.

Um, the -- the plan and the way we have worked is to

build on our strengths, optimize our opportunities, and strategically address the needed, uh, growth areas in a cycle of continuous improvement. Some of the highlights from my findings and I won't go -- you can remain here for a minute, uh, Claire. Some of the highlights from my findings and I won't go into each and every one of them. I hope if you have yet to read the findings report that you will -- you will, uh, take a look at it. It is posted on our website. But what I did find, um, is that we have a dedicated and also experienced league of leaders and educators at all levels of our school district. Also, uh, discovered that we have, uh, a fairly low student to teacher ratio. On average, we have a 10 to 1, uh, student to teacher ratio. We have a high number of school based staff with a direct focus, um, on students in servicing our students as Ms. Spinner, um, shared as she shared them, uh, 70 -- over 77% of our staffing is directly, um, engaged with students directly.

Um, we also have very strong out of school time partnerships that help connect our students from school to after school programs that conti -- there's a continuation, um, into our community areas. We've also launched

improvements over the -- the last year in instructional approaches district wide that are rooted in our use, uh, stronger use of data in our data practices to help inform our instructional decision making. We've also impro -- had improvements around language access and communication and also family and community engagement through our, um, family engagement and communication -- our family engagement office as well as our communications office. Some areas of our, um, needed improvement are innately in rooted, uh, across the district is rooted around coherence, alignment, and capacity. Um, from there needs to be a clearly articulated instructional vision for our district that is something that we are lacking at this point.

Um, there's -- there's a lack of clear, um, reporting structures and supervisory structures at all levels in the district. Um, there's a need for better alignment of curricular areas and delivery of our interventions as well as our special education programs and coaching for our educators. Uh, there are inconsistent practices around -- across schools and departments around our processes and our procedures. Um, also, we -- we need to identify and articulate a strategy for addressing the needs of our

struggling learners as well as our students who are excelling, um, academically, that includes the development and the implementation of a comprehensive framework for multi tier systems of support, which oftentimes you -- you probably in the past have heard it responded to or referred to as, um, RTI or response to intervention. Um, and then there's a need for a comprehensive strategy to address college and career readiness that is inclusive of intern and externship opportunities for our students. Ms. Spinner, you can go to the next slide. Thank you.

Um, as I shared earlier, the budget guidelines are aligned to four of our, uh -- or of the five categories that were outlined in the entry plan and also the entry plan findings report. Um, we've implemented and utilized these guidelines in our conversations and in our meetings with various stakeholder groups as we are in the development of our FY 23 proposed budget -- budget. All of our budget conversations and community engagement activities are grounded in these budget guidelines and we have several guiding or -- or -- or -- or -- or questions. These questions also guide our discussions and guide our thinking and our development of our budget. Um, and this is

to ensure that we, uh, continue to build upon our strengths but also address the areas of needed improvement. And these are -- these are the -- these guidelines anchor, um, our discussions, they -- and they anchor our decision making for our budget, um, initiatives and totals. And you go to the next line, Ms. Spinner.

Um, where there is a -- while there is a clearly, um, defined budget process timeline, I want to point out that our planning process or our planning for improvement is ongoing. It happens throughout the entire school year and then through action throughout the entire year. Um, it's my plan, um, to lead us on a path to continuous improvement. What that means is that we are constantly and consistently reviewing our practices, the impact of what we do educationally, um, for our students, and then revising and improving upon those as we go along. Um, we are trying to be intentional, we are working towards being intentional, being planful in our work and how we go about, um, implementing various initiatives and improvement efforts. And one of the reasons I think, uh, vice -- and I know vice chair -- um, Vice Chair Rachel alluded to this earlier is to really think, um, strategically and thoughtfully about

what we do.

What I found in my entry is that, um, as a district for many, many years, we focused on everything and we've -- and we've been challenged in doing all of those things well, and it has not necessarily had the impact that we would want or need it to have. So what I have been recommending spending and what I continue to recommend in the work that we're doing is to really be thoughtful, use data to anchor our discussions and our decisions, and focus intently on several areas. Focus go deep into those areas, make sure we have improvement across those areas before moving on. Making sure we're not taking on too many things and overwhelming our educator staff as well as our students and families. Um, our annual -- annual budget development process follows the established timeline that the city has outlined for us.

Um, the annual cycle for the school's budget is done in three phases. Um, as I've talked about before the fiscal department, uh, starts with a budget analysis that's, uh, focused and supported with our strategic planning process and/or action planning across multiple years for our initiatives and the focused initiatives for those

particular years. Then it moves to, um, the work in which we engage our various stakeholder groups in order to -- for me to be able to re -- render a proposed budget, a draft proposed budget to the School Committee that then goes up for their review and further and adoption at a later date. Uh, you can go to the next line Ms. Spinner.

As you can see, um, by our calendar and our, um, engagement calendar here that there has been multiple opportunities for community members to engage in our process. We actually have welcomed their feedback. We've worked really hard to make adjustments where we have received thoughtful input around our process. We have added earlier dates. As you can see, we started, um, around the second week of January with community engagement meetings and have continued those along the way over the last several weeks and we'll continue and we have a-- a few more. Actually, we have one on -- on Saturday and then, um, another one with our students at a lighter date in the next coming weeks. So with that, I will turn it back over to Mayor Siddiqui. Thank you all for your time and thank you for listening.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thank you, Superintendent and

-- and, uh, CFO spinner for the overview. Now, open it up to questions, um, from the City Council, uh, on the budget presentation. I asked that you keep the question related to the slides and the budget, um, uh, for the interest of time.

And I think we can start with two questions each. Uh, and if there's an area where my colleagues on the School Committee, uh, also want to answer and chime in, you know, feel free to, um, do so. So I have, uh, uh, uh, Councillor McGovern's hand. I see. And if we can use the hand feature, that would be great. And then I will go to Councillor Nolan and then Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you, Madam Mayor, and -- and thank you, Dr. Greer, and bunch of Co-Chair for the -- for the presentation. Um, I would say welcome to City Hall, but we're -- we're all home. So, uh, welcome anyway. Um, my two questions. Uh, one was around, uh, enrollment and one of the things that, uh, both Councillor Nolan and I talked a lot about when we were on the School Committee were trying to get exit interviews with people who left the district. Um, I don't know if that's being done or not at -- at -- at -- at this point and -- and --

or if it's not.

Could we just -- I'm sure there's multiple reasons people move, people -- all kinds of things. But I'm also curious to -- I know some people have liked what the district has done around COVID, have not liked what the district's done around COVID. And I'm just curious if we're doing any exit interviews with the families that are leaving to get that data.

CLAIRE SPINNER: Uh, yes, uh, through you Mayor Siddiqui. So yes, we are continuing to collect our, um, our information as, um, uh, families exit, um, the Cambridge public Schools. I do want to say as context, of course, that, you know, the statewide, um, there -- this -- the school districts have experienced this, um, decline in enrollment and actually, um, you know, statewide, I think the decline is about 4% over the two year period, um, that we're looking at, um, but when I looked a little closely at communities a little closer to us, um, Belmont, Brookline, um, very similar or more uh or -- or a -- a higher rate of decline. For example, um, Brookline has had an almost 11% decline in those two years. Um, Belmont 7.3%, Newton 6.3%. So really what we're -- we're moving to do now because then

we don't -- you know, COVID obviously has had an impact on many things, right?

You know, um, when you think about the fact that we're very much, um, in an area where there are universities and medical schools and medical programs that people come to at various points in their life. Um, uh, so what we're doing now is we're, um, you know, actually trying to, not even trying, we're -- we're working towards a contract with, uh, Universe, uh, with the, uh, UMass Donohue Institute with the University, uh, Massachusetts at Amherst. Um, they actually provided us a population and enrollment study two years ago, uh, or in 2019, maybe that's almost three years ago now. Right.

As part of that uh universal pre-K, uh, study that we were doing. So we have actually reached out to them to update that study. Um, there's now the 2020 census information. Um, there is just, you know, more information and we're hoping to get sort of a more nuanced look at, um, what is -- what are the trends and, you know, is, um, this a moment in time or is this a trend that's going to continue for a while? So we've just decided that our best bet is to -- to get some more expert, look at these trends.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Great. Thank you.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Um, Mayor, can I also --

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Go ahead, Doctor.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Uh, thank you for that question.

And also I would like to add that we do realize also we have seen an increase in some -- in some of our homeschoolers and I think Dr. Turk may have those numbers. Over the course of COVID, the at home school numbers have increased a little bit.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Doctor.

DR. CAROLYN TURK: Sure. Thank you, Madam Mayor. And good evening, everybody. Good to see you all. So yes, as Dr. Greer, uh, mentioned, um, we have seen over the last two years during this COVID period, uh, an increase. It certainly does not explain all of the numbers. Uh, as Councillor McGovern said, there are a range of -- of reasons why people may have made choices. I would say that tip -- in a typical pre-COVID year, we would see maybe 10, uh, home school applications. And oftentimes, those were from folks who were new to the community and had been homeschooling, uh, their children, uh, wherever their residence was prior to arriving in Cambridge.

Uh, in '19 -- in 2019, 20 -- in 2020 -- in 2021, we saw a jump and, uh, I actually, uh, read through and met with folks, uh, corresponding with 63 home school applications as an example. Uh, so that jump from the typical 10 to 63 is -- is pretty significant. And then this year, in addition to those 63, there were an additional 24. So those numbers are up and I would anticipate that as we begin to get back to, um, uh, closer to a -- a-- a pre pandemic type of school year that we will see a decline in those numbers.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Great. Thank you. Uh, and then my second question and maybe it's a little bit too early in the process to -- to get into specifics. But obviously, I think, you know, we're all, um, concerned about some of the data that came out of the student health survey and the social emotional health of our young people. It's, um -- you know, kids can't access the academics if they're, uh, going through social emotional and mental health issues. So, um, what are you anticipating in the budget, uh, in terms of any increased support for kids around mental health, uh, maybe increased training for

staff around how to help kids around trauma? And is there -
- have you gotten that deep into the budget yet or is it
still too early to get to those specifics?

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Sure. Um, it's a little too early
to get to those specifics. But I would like to point out in
one of my -- and one of the findings that I do think that
we need to address and address fairly quickly. Um, we have
added a significant number of, uh, ins school supports
around social workers and also SEL, uh, provision even to
pair professional support and things such as that as well
as professional development where we have a gap in our, um,
um -- in our model is a wrap around service model and
that's where we have gaps.

And so that is definitely something that we are trying
to plan around, think thoughtfully around what the
community resources are, and what additional resources and
how to partner to make sure that we're able to, uh, provide
a robust wrap around service delivery model. So, um, it's
definitely something that we're having conversations
around, but I can tell you the area of greatest need is
around wraparound supports and services specifically for
mental health.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thank you a quick follow up Madam Mayor. Just, um, I know that the district has done a, you know, a really great job of adding social workers and, you know, over the years. Um, at the high school, you know, we have guidance counselors who are really not -- they're not doing as much around the mental health stuff, you know, typically. And then I know there are some social workers there. So are we adding social workers at the at the high school too? I know they've been added in the elementary and -- and upper. But what's the outlook on the, uh, high school?

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Yes, they have been added. They - - they -- there was an addition last year and there's proposal for, uh, an additional this year as well.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Great. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: We will go to Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you, Mayor Siddiqui. Thank you everybody. Even though we're not in person, it is nice to see everybody. So I won't, um, wax on too much about that. I will start with, uh, a question

which will surprise absolutely no one, which is how is it that we can be assured that this astonishing budget will tie to greater achievement and making good on those goals of achievement. And in particular I'm interested in, um, uh, following up on on what Dr. Greer said and -- and welcome to the permanent position, by the way, Dr. Greer, it's very nice to see you, that while the school district, I agree having been, there has been sometimes scattered and starting lots of different things.

There actually has been a consistent theme since forever, probably 20 years before I was even on-- on third grade literacy, eighth grade math and to address that. It seems like there many of us have talked about the fact that to address that is a doable issue here in Cambridge because we're literally talking about the latest numbers I looked at today based on the state MCAS advanced proficient were about 150 kids in grade 3 who were not, um, uh, an advanced proficient. And I know MCAS is a terrible measure. But assuming that indicates about the level that we're talking about and about the same number for eighth grade math. So my question is, will we see eventually tying in those specific goals of student achievement to this budget as you

reallocate and rethink how it is that you're presenting the budget? I hope that makes sense as a question.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Sure. Thank you, Madam Mayor. Through you to Councillor Nolan, um, the answer to that is yes. Um, again, if you go into my, um, my entry finance report around student success, uh, we are specifically, uh, looking to address areas of inconsistency as it relates to our curriculum. Um, I won't get into it here. I think that there are many different reasons why we've not been able to meet the mark with our students.

I think, uh, one big one has to do with our multi tier systems of support. There have been many starts and stops over the years with that and MTSS not only is just for students who are struggling, it is also for students who have high aptitudes for learning and want to and need to advance, uh, forward. And our framework has not necessarily been comprehensively developed and move forward in a way that I think can get us the outcomes that we're looking for with our students in -- in across all curricular areas.

Um, we've also had a lot of silo, so when I speak to alignment in capacity, it has to do with aligning those

curricular areas because we have actually overwhelmed our educators with so many curriculum implementations. There've been a lot of starts and stops with curriculum implementations and these are things that we are working very, um, thoughtfully around in order to address those things because oftentimes it's not about how much you have, it's about how well you're implementing and -- and also the way in which we implement things. And I think that that's a big area of focus that we need to take in order to address many of the needs of our students.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Thank you. I look forward to delving into your plan, which I have not yet. Um, and I think following up on that, uh, the question is how -- how can we expect to see something that has been lacking for a long time as you noted accountability in the system to really and to build on -- use accountability, to build on stopping the things that aren't working and going forward with the things that are working. We have -- we know we have a couple of schools. I don't know if it's curricular or school leadership or other issues, but it is -- there is a -- a -- an incredibly clear connection between

some of our schools off the charts. Performing like the Tobin Montessori across all subgroups. I know programs do the same.

The Fletcher may has a success and then there's other schools that have not. So how do we build an accountability to ensure when you say Dr. Greer that the whole district is moving towards building on what's works to build in, to ensure that we'll be calling out and changing and adjusting very dramatically if necessary. It's really time to do that to so that we can all look forward to in a very short amount of time. Hopefully, within a few years to deliver on that promise that I -- I know when you were here earlier in your earlier iteration you worked on and many of us are looking to you to help, uh, take action to make sure that that this time we really move forward and see that accountability built into the system.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Uh, thank you, Madam Mayor. Through you to Councillor Nolan, um, I understand exactly what you're saying and I -- I -- you know the word accountability, huh? It can take on many meetings in many different ways. I think -- I think the best approach is to-

- to think about responsibility and expectations. Um, and we have to question where we are with expectations for each and every one of our students that grows through the doors of our schools and that's every school. I do believe that we have excellent -- excellent schools. Every one of our schools here in Cambridge is an excellent school and we have excellent educators in those schools.

I think that in order for people to work effectively, we have to create the systems, the approaches, and the supports for them and we should scaffold those supports based on the readiness levels of each and every one of those educators and folks in the buildings that are working, that's from the leadership all the way down throughout the organization throughout that school. And so, you know, I -- I -- I think that what you're speaking of is, um -- I think if you-- you read my report, we kind of lean into that around responsibility and accountability. But I think it's first of all developing structures in order for people to work their best. And I think that we -- I think many efforts have been made over the years in our district. I don't miss my words.

And so the one thing I have to say, we cannot focus on

a million things and think that people are going to do those well, it's just not going to work. And so we have to question whether we have created the conditions for people to work thoughtfully and work well and do their best work. And so I think the first area of responsibility falls with me in order to create those structures and also ask for the support from the School Committee in order to help me do that. And I think that that it starts there. So the first person you need to hold responsible is me and me -- holding to my word

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Yeah, thank you. I -- I -- I -- I hope you're right. I have to say the counter to that is many schools have had the same structures and operating in the same environment with dramatically different outcomes, for students, dramatically different success for students, which suggests it goes beyond those structures because the system has been there and yet there's -- again, we -- we -- we have not as much, but I -- I hope that you can provide that structure and support to move forward. Thank you. Um, those are my two, Mayor Siddiqui.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: We go to Councillor Carlone and then Vice Mayor Mallon.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you, Madam Mayor. Um, first of all, uh, I too, um, welcome Dr. Greer back and, um, I greatly appreciate what the School Committee did last year through the COVID meetings, uh, endless meetings. And, um, it was very impressive. So I too was going to ask about how we're helping underperforming students. But I think we've largely covered that. Um, Ms. Spinner, I remember some years ago before COVID different world, uh, we thought numbers were going to go up, um, as more and more people, uh, were joining the public school system. Um, I -- I -- what we've discussed really to date that Dr. Turk brought up on numbers doesn't really account for all the people we lost and I assume -- in this public school system and I assume the same as Belmont and other places they haven't all gone to private schools. Do we have a sense of what's happening?

CLAIRE SPINNER: Uh, thank you for your question, Councillor Carlone. Uh, I think as I mentioned, we are, you know, in the process of, of putting a -- a -- a contract in place with -- with, uh, the -- the Donohue Institute at

UMass, um, to take a look at everything. I know just some of my looking at it is, um -- and you're right, you know, our projections, um, prior to or up through '19, '20 was, um, a continued increase, um, of students that we had seen for more than a decade, uh, and looking pretty closely now, you know, we've had a couple more years of birth data. Um, and so, um, I've seen that, you know, sort of, you know, the five years leading up to '19, '20, you know, the-- the births in Cambridge five years before there's actually been a change in the number of births, uh, in Cambridge, um, in subsequent years. Um, but you met Donna will really be able to drill down because they can also take that -- that regional look of immigrations and out migrations and, you know, as they even in a conversation with me says that Cambridge has some very noisy data, you know, in the years of children between zero and five because people are coming into Cambridge for certain reasons, school, fellowships, moments in their career, and out migrating.

And so I think it is a -- a -- a good idea for us to have that look, you know. As well, they'll look at, you know, the housing pipeline and see, you know, what impact some of the development in Cambridge maybe having on that.

So, um, at the same time, you know, we're gonna be not only a -- a school enrollment projection, we're also looking for that population projection again, you know, in terms of, especially that 0 to 5, um, age group that we're interested in knowing what the population is in Cambridge.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Uh, I would say, uh, just about every council wants more housing in the city and we are constantly hearing about that. I think if our goals work toward that in zoning and in planning, um, it might help, uh, increase the numbers, which the reason I was asking that is I've been told that, uh, past School Committees were interested in a future additional school and with the numbers going down, I'm afraid we're gonna lose every opportunity to even consider that, um, with the projections because there's no pressure to buy land. Um, and that's a shame. Um, my other question is more general and related to underperformance and maybe kids being behind before they even start in our system and that's pre-K. And I realize you share with human services that responsibility.

I -- I hope in any future schools, I don't know if we'll be building future schools and we have many more pre-

K classrooms because, um, if we can't -- part of the issue might very well be that we're not starting early enough. And I know, you know, this better than I do so I won't even ask a question there. It's more of a comment. Thank you again for all you do as the -- one of the two co chairs of finance committee with my colleague, um, uh, who's already spoken, um, we look forward to the discussion and I think you'll find the council always -- we might have lots of questions, but we want the best just like you want the best for the kids. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thanks, Councillor Carlone. We'll -- we'll -- also, we'll have a virtual joint roundtable next Monday on universal pre-K. Uh, Vice Mayor Mallon and then whoever else would like to go.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Mayor, through you, um, and welcome too, uh, Dr. Greer. Nice to see you. Nice to see everybody here this evening. Um, I am looking forward to the round table next week on universal Pre-K because I do feel like this is a critical component of what we are going to be doing here in the city to support our families, to support our young people and ensure that equity of, um, a universal Pre-K experience for our young people and

leveling that playing field. So, uh, we'll move that conversation into next week, but I look forward to having it. The one question I really wanted to ask was, um, around RISTA and our technical arts high school. And I know that we are undergoing right now, a comprehensive review of our programs. I know that there's a leadership change opportunity. Um, I'm wondering in terms of the budget, what is being thought about, um, in terms of, you know, we're gonna have this report at the end of the -- at the end of the review.

Um, it's -- it's clear, I think to most of us that we need to be spending a lot more money on our technical arts high school and really beefing that up and making sure that we have as many robust programs as we -- we can to support our young people who want a nontraditional track. Um, how are we thinking about the budget for this school year to support any of the initiatives or programs or ideas that come out of that, uh, comprehensive review and maybe programs that might be coming forward?

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Thank you, Madam Mayor. To you -- uh, through you to, uh, Vice Mayor, uh, thank you for the

welcome. Um, So yes, we are in the midst of a review of our, uh, technical school program and, um, what I have, uh, shared with our co-chair as well as, uh, with, uh, the mayor is that we will not have a rendering of recommendations from that, um, at the time that we have to present a budget. However, we are estimating to put set aside funds to address any recommendations that come out of that program review. So that's -- that's how we're trying to address that. Um, a second part is we are also in the midst of course, uh, of starting a search for a new executive director of the program.

What-- um, there is a whole area around college and career readiness. Uh, I do not have the information to really share around what you're going to actually see in the budget. Um, but just now we are, uh, tagging funds to address any recommendations. But we've actually also have - - have had, uh, lots of conversations around, um, college and career readiness and -- and for me -- I -- I want to do -- I'm a teacher. So please bear with me.

The one thing is is that our, uh, career and technical program should not be for just non-traditional students. There's opportunity there for each and every student that

bridges and-- and walks through the doors of the ranch --
uh, Cambridge Ridge and land in high school. So I -- I want
to -- I want to make that very clear. There are a lot of
opportunities there for any student, whether they, uh,
choose not to go to college or not. And I hope that our
hope is that each and every student will be college and
career ready when they leave our high school.

Um, but with that, we're really looking to how can we
improve the opportunities for students to have intern and
externship opportunities. Um, we have been having quite a
few conversations around that. As you know, um, Mayor
Siddiqui and, um, and Member Fantini, uh, lead -- before I
even started here had led the charge to create early
college initiative in partnership with Lesley University.
So you're gonna see us do many, many things in this. Uh, I
shouldn't say many things. You're gonna see us do several
things in this budget that respond to college and career
readiness, not just about the risk of program, but really
ensuring that when our students leave Cambridge Ridge and
that in high school that they are prepared for whatever
they so choose when they leave there. And that will have
opportunities across the technical program as well as those

who are, um, are -- are trying to go to an Ivy League.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Vice Mayor

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Thank you, Madam Mayor. Through you, I hope that that set aside has a big ticket number attached to it, um, you know, like a seven figure number attached to it. I think we -- as I said, we need to make a significant investment into RISTA because you're right. I mean, my -- my son is taking, you know, computer science classes. I think there are classes at RISTA, um, that are for everyone and we should be trying to figure out what those classes are and providing them for our students and expanding them. Um, so I'd like to see a big ticket number, uh, coming forward.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Well, you know, I-- I pushed back a little bit of Vice Chair. Remember what Member Rachel said in the beginning, we can do all and everything. That I -- I will expect that we're gonna have a program review that will render -- render multiple, multiple recommendations. And I just continue to plead with the School Committee as well as the City Council. If we're gonna do these things and do them well and make a huge impact, we cannot do every recommendation within one year.

We need to think thoughtfully and strategically about what those are and we will put aside the funds in order to be able to fund the recommendations that make sense to implement in the course over a year -- over the next year.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: And I appreciate that. I just think this -- this has been underfunded for quite some time. So we're all a little chomping at the bit to make sure that we've got, you know, the proper funding behind it. And the other question I had was around the leadership change at RISTA. Um, thinking about -- I know we're hiring a new executive director. Um, I think it's an opportunity to really look at the executive office and figure out, you know, are there other positions that need to be in support positions, uh, at RISTA? You know, it's not just about the executive director but like who else is going to be supporting that person, um, to really have a robust program. So I don't know if, uh, you know, you guys have thought about staffing and changing any staffing for RISTA and the executive team over there. Um, but it does seem like this is a great time to revisit that staffing office.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Um, first, I would like us to have a leader moving forward and so that leader can also

have a say and who's chosen as part of the team and what their structure looks like. Again, part of the review also looks at what the running of the program and what components are needed in that and, and we will, you know, we will address, um, the staffing needs as it relates to what the review tells us.

VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON: Okay. Thank you, Madam Mayor. I yield back.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thanks, Vice Mayor, I saw, um, Member Fantini had a point. I'll go to Councillor Zondervan after.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ALFRED FANTINI: Ok. Yeah. Oh, thank you, Madam Mayor. Um, just a quick point and -- and -- and, uh, Vice, uh, Mayor Mallon have brought it up but, uh, the issue with vocational education and I'll just touch on it is, um -- but we're probably gonna need to build a facility, uh, either in Cambridge or a partner with Somerville or something. So I-- I was getting the Councillor Carlone's issue because there -- there is not, uh -- I -- I got a call this morning for a parent who wanted to get their child into a vocational program and I did, uh, some, uh, some quick research and told him there

wasn't any place else in Massachusetts that he could go. His only choice was the 12 programs that just, basically because every single chapter 74 program is -- is -- school is filled to the brim with waiting lists. So that's -- that's -- that's where we are at. So it's a very serious issue and it's, um -- you know, and -- and -- and -- and you know, that's -- that -- that-- that's -- you know, that's where vocational education is at.

So we are gonna have to, um -- you know, we are gonna have to be really creative to, uh, uh, and -- and -- and just so that people know Cambridge has 12 programs, but there are chap -- there are -- there are 40 -- at last count, there are 47 chapters, 74 programs that the state offers. We offer 12. The difference between 47 and 12 is what our kids are missing. So that's -- that's -- that's the size up where we're at with vocational education. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thanks, Member Fantini. We'll go to Councillor Zondervan and then Councillor Simmons and then Councillor Azeem

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thanks, Madam Mayor. Through you, uh, thanks for this presentation. I -- I had

the same question as Vice Mayor Mallon. So I'm glad she asked that and -- and that we had some discussion around RISTA and I just want to add my -- my voice to it. We've been saying this every year that we want to see more and we want to see improvements and -- and I'm, uh -- you know, the -- the information that Member Fantini just shared is -- is new to me.

I -- I think in the past we haven't heard that. So that's really interesting that we need to look at potentially even a -- a whole new facility to accommodate the demand. Um, so my question is -- is around, um, racial justice and -- and what we're doing specifically in the budget to ensure that our schools are becoming more anti racial.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer. I think we may have, um, Principal Fernandez as well. Um, so anyone who wants to chime in, but I'll start with Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Sure. And I -- and I will let -- uh, in -- in a moment, uh, defer to, uh, Mr. Fernandez. Um, as you know, uh, Councillor, we last year in the budget, the, uh, Office of Equity Inclusion and Belonging was created. And, uh, Mr. Fernandez, who is our interim, uh,

chief of equity -- uh, Chief Equity Office has been, um -- he and his team have been working thoughtfully with our school principals in order to design, uh, programs and opportunities that really help us dig into how we are, uh, creating equitable educational opportunities for all of our students. Um, in response to what the budget looks like, um, there are several ads but we've been doing a lot of work and we'll continue that work around engaging families, um, and in offering family voice engaging our students.

We had a wonderful, um, student form earlier in the year, we have some family things that, um, that the group has been working on. And a big part of our work actually has been around capacity building, capacity building in the form of professional development and coaching for principals, but I will defer here, uh -- defer, uh, any -- anything else you would like to add up, uh, Mr. Fernandez?

CEO MANUEL FERNANDEZ: Good after -- good evening, Councillor. It's good to see you. Um, any specific question you have for me?

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you. Through you Madam Mayor, I just wanted to understand in -- in this budget how we are ensuring that that the school system is

becoming more anti racist.

CEO MANUEL FERNANDEZ: Um, I -- I think the budget ref -- reflects the, um, information we've been receiving from our surveys, our one on ones, our visits to schools, our conversations with young people, with caregivers, with educators about what they need. Uh, as Dr. Greer referenced, we are doing a lot of professional development this year. We are doing, um, not only at the school level um but we are going to be, um, working with Dr. Greer on doing some professional development, uh, at the cabinet level. We are -- um, we are doing some, I -- I -- I wouldn't call it professional development as much. Well, I would. We're doing professional development on gender equity.

And then in addition, we are actually working with, um, families and -- and students to, um, to have a -- um, a, uh, uh, a community day around gender equity. Sometime in the spring. We're having a -- a caregiver summit in this spring. And -- and so I spend much of my week responding to inquiries, um, creating opportunities for conversations about what does equity look like in the elementary classroom? What does equity look like in a middle school?

Um, and et cetera.

So I've learned so much. I think I came to the job with -- with years of experience around equity prior to coming to Cambridge. And since I've been here and what I've learned is, I don't know enough, uh, about what -- what works in Cambridge in the sense that people keep enlightening about their own, um, experiences and perspectives and -- and, um, that will be reflected as it -- it's already been reflected in the work that we were doing, you know, continue to be reflected in the work that we do in the future. Um, so there are a lot of -- in next week, we will be presenting to the School Committee an update on, um, the equity, um, initiatives throughout the district.

As, uh, Dr. Greer alluded to, um, every school is currently, um, either launching or, uh, preparing to launch an equity audit at -- at the school level. Um, and from that audit, we're -- we're part-- part -- partnering with a group called, um, uh, Mid Atlantic, um, Equity Consortium who will assist us in, uh, um, analyzing the data. And then all schools will begin working on their individual equity plans to begin to, um, root out inequities that exist not

just around race, but around gender, around language,
around, uh, um, um, all -- all aspects of diversity in the
Cambridge public schools

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Great. Thank you so
much and it's always great to see you and thanks for your
work.

CEO MANUEL FERNANDEZ: You too, sir. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: And Madam Mayor through you,
my -- my second question is on -- on climate change in our
curriculum and how that's reflected in the budget and it --
it does relate a little bit back to Bristol and -- and some
of the work we're doing on the council on -- on a Green New
Deal, but really trying to understand how we're dealing
with both, um, making sure that our students are educated
on the climate crisis and -- and the future they're facing
and then also receiving, uh, opportunities in -- in terms
of jobs and -- and -- and further education where they can
work in the field of -- of climate mitigation.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: So through -- through you, um,
um, what I don't -- I don't know if you're gonna explicitly

see something in the budget around that I can say that I can speak to, uh, the work that our curriculum departments are doing in our science department. So I think the best way to share is probably share with you what our science curriculum does in order to have those conversations around climate change and, um, sustainable practices that -- um, to help -- to help us with our natural resources. And there is quite a bit of work in our science department that goes on around that. And so that's something that we're happy to share with you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor.

COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN: Thank you. Madam Mayor, through you, thanks, uh, Dr. Greer. And, uh, I'll be happy to follow up and -- and, uh, get more details from you. Thanks so much.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Simmons.

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Yes. Thank you. Uh, first, let me just say, uh, I appreciate having this opportunity to be with my colleagues on the School Committee. Uh, and so through the -- through the Chair, uh, congratulations and greetings to Dr. Greer. I'm so happy that you're with us. It's also very awesome and always very

good to see Dr. Turk, to see Claire and to see Director Fernandez. Uh, all incredible people. They are doing incredible work all the time.

One of the things that you said, Dr. Greer I thought was very important and I wish you much luck with it is -- and -- and I think it was reiterated or -- or introduced by, um, Ms. Weinstein is that you can't do everything. Focus on what that -- what you can do. Focus, focus, focus. And if that's something that's very hard to do in a -- in a school district that has gotten accustomed to trying to do it all all the time. So I wish you much luck.

I hope one thing that we can do start and continue is to be as collaborative as possible. The clearly school -- School Committee is -- School Committee and the superintendent's jurisdiction is -- is the schools. And so I'm hoping, uh, that we can increase our collaboration, particularly around anti racist work and community engagement. Uh, before I launch my question, I also meant to welcome Anthony to the -- to -- to the fray. I -- uh, congratulations. I've not had an opportunity to see you since the election, but it's a pleasure and I wish you well in your work. You know, one of the most anti racist things

that we can do as a district and as a community is to make sure our -- our students are educated.

Well, I've often said this and I'm sure people are tired to hear, but I want to say it again. You know, we can, if we want to educate all children whose education is important to us. And so I keep saying that because that's what I think is important, we have to show and I that educate our -- educating of all children is important to the -- to us. And so if we look through that lens and guide with that principle, I think that we'll be able to -- to move forward. The other question, uh -- so I'm -- I'm very interested, um, and thank you, uh, Director Fernandez on giving us an overview of what you're -- you're doing.

I'm pleased to see you this -- in this position, knowing your history of what you've done in other districts. And I'm so glad that you have chosen to stay with us and do it with us. And I hope that this, uh, City Council, uh, can, um, collaborate with you around some of the work that you're doing and maybe guide us because I think we could be far better at it than we are. Around my - my other area of interest from a budget perspective. I know on the city side, I'm gonna talk about that. Uh, is

that I think we spend far too little money on community engagement and connecting to community engagement in a way as to improve our, uh -- the education of our children.

And so, uh, through the Chair to you, Dr. Greer, can you talk to us a little bit about how you see some of those dollars, uh, supporting, uh, successful education for all children. And then the last thing because I'm gonna -- I'm in a busy environment with unstable, uh, connection. So I apologize to -- to all about that is. Uh, I -- uh, if there's time, I'd like to talk a little bit about RISTA. But my main question and more important to me is how we're using community engagement as a educating tool or supporting our children in -- in the schools because I think that the city, at least the city side which I can speak better on, uh, does not put enough money into it.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Superintendent.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Through you, Madam Mayor. Um, thank you, Councillor Simmons. Um, that is actually a wonderful question. Uh, we are very proud of the work that has been led by, um, about Ms. Harris in our parent and family engagement office. We've had many improvements over the course of the last year and a half, but we continue to

build on that. Um, we've done quite a bit of work with our, uh, family engagement specialist. Uh, we work very closely with our community engagement team. Um, we've invested just a lot of time as well as fiscal resources and creating opportunities for parent -- parents to, um, be part of focus groups, conversations with us.

There have been workshops, Mr. Fernandez and his team including, uh, Ms. Harris, uh, have designed the village, um, which is a concept of, uh, like a parent university where we're trying to better empower families with understanding information and knowledge. Um, our interim assistant superintendent, uh, Dr. Mullin is actually work working with her CPAC and her family, um, engagement specialist on creating opportunities and work -- continued workshops around how we teach families how to advocate for their needs. So when we start thinking about that -- that - - those are a lot of the monies that we are investing is in a lot of workshops, uh, allowing families in -- in trying to, uh, uh, give them time and opportunity to be part of, um, our school teams, our school councils.

We've rewritten the guidelines and a lot of things around our school councils and trying to make that more

equitable for all families to be able to participate in those. So we've been making some investments and we'll continue to do that even over the course of this budget.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Simmons.

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Thank you, Doctor. Again through you, uh, Madam Chair, to, um, the superintendent on RISTA, I -- I -- I hear what my colleagues are saying. Um, but I certainly want to lend my support to whatever you see as the leadership agenda for the schools. I think you can try to do too many things and not do them at all. Well, I certainly agree with you on that. I know RISTA has ever since we decided to make it, um, to change how it was operationally. And Mr. Fantini can thought to this being one of the senior members and I would call him the grill of the School Committee. Um, we-- we used to hemorrhage students to minutemen, which I think Mr. Fantini could probably talk a little bit about. But, um, I'm hoping -- I -- I -- I want to certainly say for me that I certainly lend my support to whatever your vision is. Um, and the discussion around RISTA, I think it could very well be held in conjunction with our -- the city side in terms of what can we do to help you do that particular piece of

work? So I'd love to have a more robust conversation around. How do we connect some of the services that are in RISTA or the academic platform you use in our RISTA? How can that link better with what we're doing on the city side to say DHSP and certainly our unions because it doesn't all -- all have to be held or had through the school department.

So, um, I -- I -- I'd be interested in that conversation but again, I understand clearly that the schools, we have no jurisdiction over the schools other than to vote up or down the budget. And so I-- I say that in that context, not trying to get into your lane at all. Um, there was one other thing I did want to say, but it has left me. Uh, I really do enjoy having this opportunity of talking to my colleagues who I see as equals and governing our city, particularly through our children. Um, this is a great start and I look forward to the other conversations that we'll be having. As soon as the other question comes to me and we have time I'll ask for the floor, but right now I'll yield. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thank you. We will go to Councillor Azeem.

COUNCILLOR BURHAN AZEEM: Uh, through you, Madam Mayor. Um, well, first of all, I just wanted to thank you for the presentation. Uh, I -- I'm the new guy here. So, uh, it's my first meeting and I appreciate listening in, um, and to see you all here today. Um, I just wanted to talk a little bit about, um, the projections around enrollment. I know it was hit, um, a little bit, uh, in some of the, uh, earlier questions. Um, but I'm not concerned that so much about the history. Um, it makes sense to me in that, you know, we were having slow increases in enrollment.

COVID hit some pa -- some parents pulled their children out of, um, the school system either because they were unhappy with COVID policies or because, you know, they had -- they were immunocompromised, um or, you know, a whole host of other reasons. And then we project like this year to have a slight increase in student populations, hopefully as COVID is abating. Um, but then for the next four years after this, we're seeing a pretty steady decline of 2% per year. Um, even during that period, you know, uh, we're expecting Cambridge's population to go up. Hopefully, COVID gets better, not worse. Um, and I know we have the

study coming, but I was just really worried like, uh really, um, wondering like what the rationale is behind this projection about having like such a steady decline -- a decline in population every year for the next five years.

CLAIRE SPINNER: Uh, thank you for -- through you Mayor Siddiqui, um, thank you for your, uh, question. So what we're seeing the -- the sharpest decline was in the -- uh, the junior kindergarten and kindergarten numbers. And that, um, happened both last year and this year. And we also, um, have some preliminary information, um, about the number of kindergarten students who may be enrolling for the upcoming year because of the deadline for registering for our lottery was last week. And so we -- we already know that are the number of people who have registered for our -- our kindergarten lottery is, um, uh, lower than it was two years ago, very much in keeping with last year, um, as well.

And so really what happens when a smaller cohort comes in, um, and so that cohort -- the -- the kindergarten cohort size is down almost 200 students in the last two years. And as that cohort moves through the years, right, it -- it is impacting. So the -- the -- uh, a couple of

years of a smaller cohort coming in will impact the overall enrollment for a number of years to come. And so that's really what you're seeing and I'm only projecting out five years.

Um, and so, you know, Cambridge is -- uh, Cambridge's overall population is such that, you know, we have less two year olds than zero year olds and less five year olds and three year olds, right. So that is, you know, I think if we -- once we do our, you know, update on this population, you will see that -- that the city of Cambridge does have a decline in -- in -- in -- in -- in -- in children by age group until all of a sudden it goes up dramatically at age 17, 18, right, as students are coming into the city of Cambridge to go to college. So -- so really that is the impact, um, is the projections really take into account the students who are in our system, who are coming into our system and then projects them out through those grades.

COUNCILLOR BURHAN AZEEM: Got it. Um, to follow up on that, uh, then, are you imagining that the kindergarten, um -- you know, first grade cohorts will increase in the next like four year period where the overall population is decreasing or do you imagine that they will continue to

decrease or stay steady?

CLAIRE SPINNER: This is one of the reasons why I am asking UMD I to take a look at it. But if I do look at the birth rates of for uh -- so we have birth rates through 2020 now, right? So we know how many children were born in 2020 and, you know, um, actually that was a very low birth rate like that was actually under 900, I believe. And -- and, you know, five or six years ago, we were seeing birth rates of 1200 plus. So those birth rates are also impacting. Although, it's -- that's not the full story because Cambridge obviously has a lot of in migration that comes, you know, people come with young kids as well as people moving out.

So this is just, um -- you know, our projections are really based on information that we have right now and we're just projecting forward using, um, a look back of a sort of a five year, um, weighted average of grade to grade progression and looking at our birth, um, five years and four years prior because we have some students who come in at age four-and-a-half and some students who come in at age five and we're projecting it forward. And so we do update these projections every year. Um, but the trend does seem

to be, you know, in a bit of a downward trend. Some of it really about those JK and Ks and the birth rates.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Azeem.

COUNCILLOR BURHAN AZEEM: Sorry. Um, that's all for me. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Member Rojas.

COMMITTEE MEMBER JOSE LUIS ROJAS VILLARREAL: Thank you, Madam Mayor. I want to thank Councillor Azeem and -- and the -- the for the answers on -- on the birth rate. And I just want to point out to -- to the group that there's actually a challenge for the whole country. I mean, the whole country for big in -- in birth rates during the pandemic. So it's interesting to see how that's playing out in our community. And, uh, I look forward to seeing what -- what the study does say about that for -- not just for Cambridge but for the region as a whole. It's really interesting. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Pleasure of the City Council and School Committee. Any further-- any other questions from folks we haven't, um, heard from? Councillor Toner.

COUNCILLOR PAUL F. TONER: Hi, Superintendent Greer. Nice to meet you. Um, I'm on the mass -- sorry, I've got

two things going here. Um, I am on the Mass Board of Higher Ed and I know that you've kicked off an early college high school program and I'm just curious how that's going.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: It's going well. I -- I'll just say that we, uh, Dr. Greer, um, invited us. Um, well, Dr. Greer is on the line too. She invited, uh, Member Fantini and I to the orientation and Member Wilson was there too and Member Wilson helped with, um, some of the recruitment. I did check in with Leslie and they're still, I think they're still remote. Um, and they're figuring out some COVID profiles but profiles -- protocols, but they've said that, uh, the engagement has been great for the students, uh, and professors are really enjoying it. Uh, students are really enjoying it. But member -- uh, Dr. Gittens can say more, um, but I'll toss it to Dr. Greer as well.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: I was gonna say the same thing. It's actually going -- it's -- it's going excellent. The students are super excited. Um, I -- I think that if they're -- you know, with so many challenges around COVID, this is the one thing that we really need to celebrate because it has opened a door of opportunities for our

students.

And it's -- we have a, a very diverse group of students who are in this program and that is also what is extremely exciting about it as well. When we say that we are invested in equity and we want to ensure equity for all, this program definitely has, um, been a great launch into us seeing all of our students, uh, being in college and career ready and so just looking forward to growing it and looking at further opportunities as well. Dr. Gittens, is there anything you would like to add?

DR. NICOLE GITTENS: You said it perfectly. I am so excited the kids are having a great time and we are working really hard to get them on to campus, um, within the next week or so.

COUNCILLOR PAUL F. TONER: I just want to thank you for pursuing it and, uh, I know that the Mayor and Fred Fantini have worked hard to get it going with you. And if I could be helpful with the Board of Higher Ed, let me know.

DR. NICOLE GITTENS: Absolutely.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Yeah, we're working on our state designation, so --

DR. NICOLE GITTENS: Thank you. We may be calling on

you.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Yeah, I was gonna say Councillor Toner. I, I definitely will follow up with you. I have some thoughts and ideas as well for, for many different things.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Any other comments? Questions? Councillor McGovern.

COUNCILLOR MARC C. MCGOVERN: Thanks. Um, first off, I do want to -- again, I want to thank you guys, uh, for all of your -- all of your work having -- having served five terms on the -- on the School Committee. I think three of those as budget co-chair. I know I know what goes into this and, um, and, uh, you know, I know that you get it -- you get a lot of input from a lot of different ways, but I -- I appreciate your role as the School Committee and the school administration in developing this budget.

And I, um, I agree with Councillor Simmons about, uh, you know, it's -- the role of the City Council in respecting your role as -- as the School Committee and the school administration. Um, but with that said, I'm gonna throw another two cents in, uh, for something to think about. Um, you know, I often have mentioned that, you know, we're not a really large district, right? When -- when --

when you think about it. We're not -- we're not Boston, we're not New York, we're not Chicago, we're not LA. Um, you know, we're not even Brockton.

Um, and as you think about the -- the -- the budget, I -- I -- I've often -- I've often been sort of perplexed about, um -- sometimes we don't provide the direct service to the children that we've identified as the ones who are struggling the most academically. Um, and it -- you know, it's not like we don't know who those kids are, right? Like, I mean, we know who those kids are and I -- and -- and so I'm wondering, as you think about the budget, you know, if you'd be thinking about or I -- I --- I hope you think about, um, you know, really, some more sort of direct service to the folks -- to the kids that -- you know, if you take the 50 kids that are sort of struggling the most academically and it goes back to Councillor Nolan's Point around third grade, you know, reading and -- and -- and -- and whatnot.

Um, and, you know, could we think about more, whether it's tutoring or -- or -- or -- or sports or something in - - in -- in their schedule to provide them extra support. They may not be on an IEP. Maybe they are, maybe they're

not. Um, but it's just something I've often talked about is -- is really more direct service to those kids that we identify. So I just wanted to throw that out there, uh, for your consideration and -- and hopefully, um -- you know, hopefully, we can -- Fred -- uh, Mr. Fantini often talks about, you know, every child, whether they're on an IEP or not needs a -- a learning plan, you know, of some sort. And I just think about those kids who -- who we know are having the most difficulty, um, and what direct services we're providing or not providing for them. So just -- just my two cents, not really more of a comment than a question there.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thanks, Councillor. Other questions?

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Madam Chair.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Yes, Councillor Simmons.

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Just very quickly. There's a point I wanted to make it through you to, uh, Dr. Greer. She mentioned this wraparound program idea. Um, very, very, very pleased to hear this. Uh, this is an idea out of which -- the whole wraparound idea is -- is where baby university came from -- of office of college success came from, um, and number of other programs and I just

meant -- I was -- I'm thrilled to hear you talk about it and to the degree that you would like to sit down and talk about how that started, I would only as a support, don't want to give you any more work. But I thought it was something that -- an opportunity that we really missed because we chose to do it more a la carte.

I mean, although what we do, uh, through Ms. Semenoff, who I think is on the call has been extraordinary, but Ms. Semenoff was there. Uh, I think Dr. Turk was part of this group. So I just say if we can provide any resource, help support around what you're trying to do, uh, I'll be -- I would make myself available to talk to you more about it. Thank you. I yield the floor.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thank you. Councillor Simmons. Councillor Carlone.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Thank you, Madam Mayor. Um, building on what Councillor McGovern mentioned, uh, you -- you probably know of the sole program called Say Yes to Education. I was part of it for a long time and, uh, Councillor Toner was actually a teacher in -- in the program and the transition that those kids went under, it - - it's just astounding, um, the success of the old

Harrington School students. And, um, and -- and some didn't go to college, some became beauticians very successfully, I might add, of all backgrounds and, um, almost all poor kids. And it was after school programs and summer programs and, um, uh, it -- it was so rewarding to be a part of it and we were just like the aunts and uncles. So we weren't in it on an everyday basis. I -- there's some things there that can be looked at.

Now, I realize building on what Councillor McGovern said 50 students and if they're in different schools, yikes, what do you do? This was all in one school but at least there's something there and there were studies done long term on the kids. We saw them about five years ago. They're now in their thirties. Just -- just wonderful. It would excite all of you to see these kids, especially Councillor Toner having known them. Take care. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Thank you. I think, uh, I have a new hand from Councillor Nolan and then Councillor Zondervan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Through you, Mayor Siddiqui. I want to build on what, uh, several people were just talking about. Councillor McGovern, Councillor

Simmons, Councillor Carlone. Is this a chance? And will we see or will -- are you working on in the budget some opportunities for changing the way we approach things? Because the reality is with what 6- or 700 fewer students, that means there will be additional funding in the budget that could be real allocated. We, um, will be having a -- since we're not reducing the budget, even though the numbers have gone down, uh, 7%.

The question is I'm thinking of things like I noticed in Dr. Greer's report or somewhere I read in preparation for this about out of school time, about summer, learning about addressing the loss about school vacation, about the kinds of opportunities we've talked about using additional time for students or is it that we have two teachers in every classroom in a particular school to see if that raises achievement? Or do we try a different model of education in a -- in a school and reallocate dollars into social work or mental health or physical health activity? I'm just -- I'm just curious as to whether that is part of the thinking as this budget, uh, develops to use the funding in a, um, bold and creative way.

Again, still focused on, as Dr. Greer said, a few, uh,

programs but to really move forward in a way to strategically, uh, place the investment dollars in a -- in different ways.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Dr. Greer.

DR. VICTORIA GREER: Sure. Through you Madam Mayor to, um, Councillor Nolan, I can say we are thinking thoughtfully, we are planning strategically, and creatively about how to move forward and that's structurally as well as on the ground implementations.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Councillor Nolan.

COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN: Great. Uh, as I say, I think this is the -- you're in the formation of the budget and we will at the end just see it. And I understand as Councillor Simmons says, our only role will be to vote it up or down. But as a member of the community I look forward to that development and -- and hope to see more, um, going forward. I have -- I do have a couple of questions on enrollment, but I -- I think I'll email them afterwards, so we don't get caught up in numbers here and there and I'll -- I'll let you know what those are.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Great. And I'll keep the council posted through my communications on any, um,

updates from our end. Any final questions and thoughts before we adjourn? Going once.

COUNCILLOR DENISE E. SIMMONS: Move to adjourn.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Oh, sorry, I have Member Wilson and then adjourn.

COMMITTEE MEMBER LISA WILSON: Thank you so much, Madam Mayor. And, um, good to see all of my colleagues on the City Council. Uh, I just wanted to add and just say a reminder to the community about our community meetings that are coming up, um, and to really encourage our City Councilors and everyone on the call to just invite the community to come out and, um, specifically on the Saturday meeting, um, to just share voice and share, uh, thoughts and opinion and insight to how we can better our budget and hopefully, you know, to better meet the needs of our young people.

Uh, so again, we have that meeting coming up this Saturday, um, two sessions, one from 10:00 to 11:00 and then 11:00 to noon. So just wanted to share that. Thank you.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Lisa, thanks for the reminder. Remember what [inaudible 01:30:27]. So on a motion by --

thank you, everyone for joining, uh, and for participating in the discussion. So on a motion by Councillor Simmons to adjourn, we'll do a roll call

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Councillor Burhan Azeem - Yes

Councillor Dennis J. Carlone - Yes

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Marc C. McGovern - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Yes

Councillor Denise E. Simmons - Yes

Councillor Paul F. Toner - Yes

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Yes

Mayor Sumbul Siddiqui - Yes

Yes-9, No-0. Motion passed.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Is it you gonna take the City Council School Committee?

CITY CLERK ANTHONY WILSON: Oh, yes.

City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:

Committee Member Bhambi - Yes

Committee Member Fantini - Absent

Committee Member Villarreal - Yes

Committee Member David Weinstein - Yes

Committee Member Rachel Weinstein - Yes

Committee Member Wilson - Yes

Yes-5, No-1. Motion passed.

MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI: Goodnight, everyone. Take
care.

COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE: Goodnight. Thank you.

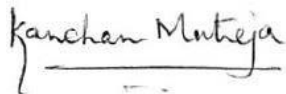
COMMITTEE MEMBER LISA WILSON: Goodnight, everyone.
Have a good night.

**The Cambridge City Council and School Committee's
Roundtable/Working Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.
approximately.**

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, **Kanchan Mutreja**, a transcriber for Datagain, do hereby certify: That said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 25th day of April 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kanchan Mutreja". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Transcriber