

## 11.18.2025 - School Committee Meeting

### Public comment:

- Christopher Montero
- Anne Coburn
- Mary Shillue-Goldberg
- Yann Dardonville
- Lilly Havstad
- Jess Goetz
- Anna Shin

**Student School Committee:** There's a scavenger hunt, they had homecoming, the no-cell-phone policy is going better than it was.

**Superintendent Remarks:** Big thanks to all for helping with the SNAP benefits – special shout out to COO Damon Smith. Also the lack of a budget process calendar was an oversight.

**\*\*AMC note:** was handed a paper printout of budget calendar\*\*

| Tentative Date                  | Meeting Type                    | Location                            | Description                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11/10/25<br><br><b>COMPLETE</b> | Joint roundtable                | City Hall                           | Joint meeting of City Council & School Committee to discuss macro-economic trends in Cambridge and the City's budget |
| 11/18/25<br><br><b>COMPLETE</b> | Regular meeting                 | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Approve prelim FY27 budget calendar                                                                                  |
| 12/? & 12/?                     | Community input days            | Multiple                            | Meetings with internal and external stakeholders in multiple locations, including staff and students                 |
| 1/6/2026                        | Regular meeting/budget workshop | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Budget process & key dates; enrollment & budget projections; proposed priorities to guide budget process             |
| 1/?/2026, 1/?/2026              | Joint roundtable                | Multiple                            | Meetings with internal and external stakeholders in                                                                  |

ANNE COBURN  
 EDITORIAL CONTENT – ALL MISTAKES & INTERPRETATIONS MINE.  
 Not an official document of the Cambridge School Committee.  
 Please direct all inquiries about *this* document to [anmatcoburn@gmail.com](mailto:anmatcoburn@gmail.com).  
 Please direct all official Cambridge School Committee inquiries to [schoolcom@cpsd.us](mailto:schoolcom@cpsd.us).  
[11.18.2025 - Cambridge School Committee Video Recording](#)

|           |                                 |                                     |                                                                         |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           |                                 |                                     | multiple locations, including staff and students                        |
| 2/3/2026  | Regular meeting/budget workshop | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Budget update                                                           |
| 2/23/2026 | Joint roundtable                | City Hall                           | Joint meeting of City Council & School Committee to discuss CPSD budget |
| 3/11/2026 | Special meeting                 | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Presentation of Superintendent's proposed budget                        |
| 3/17/2026 | Regular meeting                 | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Public hearing on proposed budget                                       |
| 3/25/2026 | Budget workshop                 | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | Review of proposed budget                                               |
| 4/7/2026  | Regular meeting                 | Henrietta Attles Meeting Room, CRLS | School Committee vote of adoption of FY27 budget                        |
| 5/?2026   | City Council hearing            | City Hall                           | City Council budget hearing on adopted budget                           |

#### **CRLS Outcomes Presentation:**

[LINK](#)

- This past year, students seemed to struggle with the MCAS.
- It seems that students are taking MCAS far less seriously, in line with MCAS not being a graduation requirement
- It seemed that this cohort had a jump in math scores – “impressive gains.” Possibly due to exposure to new math curriculum (Illustrative Math)
- CKLA may also be having a positive effect on students’ ELA – 5th graders are scoring better by percentage than older grades
- We have a significant chronic absenteeism problem in the high school – 50% of students with disabilities experienced chronic absenteeism.
- Murphy: “I want to emphasize in the strongest possible terms...” that the administration is taking this seriously.
- Competency determination: Gehant will review, looking to discuss this in December, we’re under a deadline for a competency determination by the state – have to have one by the end of the calendar year.

- Gehant: something something caregiver academies.
- HSEP: yes they need a new name and they seem awesome. D&D afterschool; art teacher is starting a school of rock.
- Murphy: “By any measure, this [CRLS] is our most complicated school community.”

### **Questions/comments**

**Student SC Member:** When is the competency determination taking effect?

Gehant: Class of 2027. Continues there forward, depending on the state guidance.

Murphy: Yeah this does seem a little rushed. Worth talking about further.

**Student SC Member:** How will you ensure that students take the MCAS?

Gehant: School pride?

**Member David Weinstein:** wait, you can use MCAS re graduation requirements?

Gehant: yes, depending on student needs. Depends on the student and whether or not they need to show the competency determination.

**Member David Weinstein:** what are we doing for data to show how kids are doing in ELA in 10th grade (for example)?

Gehant: I'm trusting the ELA department. [AMC: he said more, but I wasn't able to follow.]

Amigone: We have a new assessment platform. [AMC: didn't catch the name.]

**Member David Weinstein:** Chronic absenteeism – do these groups overlap?

Amigone: Yes.

**Member David Weinstein:** Student success planning (keeping his streak for mentioning student success planning every SC meeting during the 2023 - 2025 term!); also can we hear from HSEP?

HSEP used to be at 90% chronic absenteeism; now they're down to 40-some%. They're small and they work really closely with families.

**Member Rojas:** Worried that they're missing the mark for the lowest achieving students. Great that we're doing better with AP data. Something something RSTA program. Questions: drop-out rates? Great that they're so low overall, but Hispanic & Latinos rates are much higher than other demographic groups.

Gehant:

- Federal climate plays a part, at least in a few cases.
- It's also hard for families to find housing here.
- Older students feel a pull to join the workforce.

**Member Rojas:** Cool, can you confirm that? Competency determinations. Also biliteracy/ELL?

Gehant: Something about biliterate fluency is hard to achieve.

Murphy: Yes we need to heighten our standards.

**Member Hunter:** also am concerned re chronic absenteeism. Is this reflected in a differential by grade? Are these complete non-attenders or partial day?

Gehant: Yes, it's senioritis. Yes we need to continue to build out the CTE & internship opportunities. Yes, we have students who are both complete non-attenders and partial day attenders.

**Member Hunter:** Did you talk to student government?

Gehant: No.

**Member Hudson:** could this data be presented better/more simply? Student members, what's your perspective?

Student member 1: we're skipping class to do classwork, esp when we're not feeling prepared for the class we're skipping.

Student member 2: there's not enough makeup opportunities given by teachers.

Student member 1: there should be more emphasis on asking for help from your teachers in hard classes.

**Member Hudson:** can we disaggregate the data re full or partial absenteeism?

Murphy: yes we're going to look at that — schedules, other comparable high schools, there is no perfect schedule. But chronic absenteeism really has grown over time.

**Member Hudson:** AI impact on grading policy? Can we really nail the operational stuff?

**Member Harding:** so are we gonna talk about solutions here or are we just talking about the problem?

Murphy: kinda both, it's part of an ongoing conversation. There is a real need to focus on CRLS as our flagship school.

**Member Harding:** "I couldn't be more consistent about this..."

Murphy: "that's very true."

**Member Harding:** why are we not talking about failures in teaching? Lack of mastery? Are we measuring excellent instruction? What are we doing to promote professional development? It's both accountability and execution.

Murphy: improvement in utilization of time is a big deal. Educator effectiveness is a massive priority for us. It's going to be coming down to execution.

**Member Harding:** "I don't want to admire the problem."

---

## CONSENT AGENDA:

### **#25-280 Recommendation:** Approval of the FY2027 Draft School Committee Budget Process/Meeting Calendar

- Shoutout to the Solidarity Squad

ANNE COBURN

EDITORIAL CONTENT – ALL MISTAKES & INTERPRETATIONS MINE.

Not an official document of the Cambridge School Committee.

Please direct all inquiries about *this* document to [anmatcoburn@gmail.com](mailto:anmatcoburn@gmail.com).

Please direct all official Cambridge School Committee inquiries to [schoolcom@cpsd.us](mailto:schoolcom@cpsd.us).

[11.18.2025 - Cambridge School Committee Video Recording](#)

- Fixed costs are part of the operating budget
- Yes this calendar has some wiggle room, rather than locked dates. Want to be able to accommodate new SC members as well as other community/working group feedback.
- **Rojas** suggested that the new committee members should be trained prior to the full budget process. Also noted that we don't have a strategic plan. Murphy said that the strategic plan is also up to the new school committee – first part of the 2026 calendar year. Will recommend prioritization of 1) educator effectiveness 2) improved family engagement 3) stronger capacity re use of space esp re the pre-k program. He doesn't have a new bag of tricks, will be saying the same things.
- **Hudson**: how do you make the community budget meetings actually useful? The city is asking for a \$5M cut. Let's prep now. Let's put out the old budget and talk about what's gonna need to change. It's not going to be a good year.
- **Murphy**: I don't know if there's a huge difference between December and March. The biggest budget decision for FY 26 was made in December 2024 when the SC closed K-Lo. Expired collective bargaining agreements are also currently part [AMC: didn't get the rest of that.]
- **Hudson**: We need to be prepared to discuss the heart of people's questions.
- **Simmons**: Federal impacts are going to continue to press on the city and CPSD priorities – they will directly impact about 216 families. Suggest that the city manager and the city CFO come to CPSD budget hearing. City unexpended fund balance is what you leverage to borrow money at a reasonable rate. We need to level set with the public – let's add another opportunity to bring the city & caretakers together.
- **David Weinstein** move to adopt. **Rojas** second. Item passes.

#### **#25-282 Recommendation: Contract Award: The Equity Process: Professional & Tech Services**

- **Hudson** asks about the legality of the contract – especially the work not yet completed.
- **Simmons** – scope of work has changed, we should not vote on *this* amount. [AMC: what.] Let's have a governance meeting!
- **Member Rachel** reviews the process. She's not clear how the scope was expanded. She reached out to legal counsel. The city solicitor is looking into this. Will provide a written legal opinion. Recommendation for SC to send written questions to the city solicitor.
- **Hudson**: not all of the items on the contract have been fully completed. (Specifically 4th section.)
- **Member Rachel**: The SC never approved the contract in the first place. An amended contract would make more sense and we should consider asking the city solicitor to readjust.
- **Harding**: Buyer's remorse – not super interested in anything the Equity Project can offer. What have we paid the Equity Project now?
- **Member Rachel**: Yeah we don't know what they've been paid yet.
- **Simmons**: wildly squirming out from under her own actions.
- **Harding**: "I don't understand how we got here. I don't want to pay them anything that we don't absolutely have to."
- **Rojas**: Can we push this to next time? **Weinstein** seconds.
- **Simmons**: rules lawyering.

- **Hudson:** Yeah but we literally did not know about this contract until someone FOIA'd the accounts and there was a \$40K negative amount in our books. We should also clearly communicate to our vendor. If we table, let's make sure that we're prepared to discuss this.
- **David Weinstein:** something something alt coaching strategy [AMC: huh?]. "I don't want to pre-judge, but it looks like mistakes were made." How shall we prevent mistakes like this in the future?
- **Hunter:** The process began with purchasing via the city. Normally this comes via the district. The city doesn't always show their work. Welcome a convening of the governance committee.
- **Harding:** Did the city solicitor know our rules and whether or not this contract adheres to our rules? Who's the chair of the governance committee? [AMC: the mayor, the vice chair, Member David Weinstein are the members of the governance committee. **Follow-up:** As of 11/19/2026, the governance subcommittee has been convened for 11/21/2025 at 12 p.m.]
- **Member Rachel:** The contract was signed by multiple people. It is so critical that the next committee review all the rules together so that they can follow the rules with fidelity. Doesn't really know what the best way forward might be.
- **Hudson:** The contract may say "subject to the approval of the school committee" but it also says "school committee approval attached." I'd like to see that attachment.

Meeting is extended until 10:30.

**#25-284 Recommendation: Contract Award: Avidex Industries, LLC: Instructional Equipment**

- **Hudson:** This is big, what is it?
- **Murphy & Smith:** They're display boards, we need to upgrade.
- **SC:** Cool.
- **#25-284:** It passes.

**#25-287 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Fair Share Earmarks (SC26866)**

- **Harding & Weinstein:** Thank you, Senator D. Dimineco, for directing these earmarks our way!

**#25-285 Recommendation: Contract Award: Apple: Staff Devices, Student iPads & Other Apple Accessories**

- It passes.

**#25-289 Recommendation: Grant Award: FY26 Mass. Cultural Council Creative Experiences Grant (SC26894)**

- **Hunter:** This is cool, where did it come from, can all the schools participate?
- **Murphy:** Will follow up.

**Announcements:**

**D. Weinstein:** The high school musical is coming up, get your tickets.

**R. Weinstein:** First meeting since the election; congrats to some, regrets to others; school climate subcommittee meeting was very informative, watch the meeting.

**Rojas:** Buildings & grounds subcommittee meeting coming up 11/20. Various cool things around the district.

**Late Orders:**

**Hudson:** submitted to Ms. Christo.

- To the Equity Project. Please stop all work.
- Signature page: "Subject to school committee approval. Approval attached." Can we review that please.

**Passed:**

**#25-281 Recommendation:** Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department

**#25-283 Recommendation:** Contract Award: Lift Works Corp.: Instructional Materials for the Auto Tech Program

**#25-286 Recommendation:** Contract Award: Michael P. Mulligan-Blind on the Move, LLC: Instructional Materials

**#25-288 Recommendation:** Grant Award: Influence 100 (SC26167)

**#25-290 Recommendation:** Grant Award: FY26 Targeted Tiered Math Off Ramp Grant (SC26867)

---

**AMC Public Comment**

**#25-280 Recommendation: Approval of the FY2027 Draft School Committee Budget Process/Meeting Calendar**

- What is the timeline to have a new lawyer in place so that CPSD can negotiate with the CEA?
- Could you please provide the draft budget process & meeting calendar to the public? There is currently no attachment in the consent agenda item.

ANNE COBURN

EDITORIAL CONTENT – ALL MISTAKES & INTERPRETATIONS MINE.

Not an official document of the Cambridge School Committee.

Please direct all inquiries about *this* document to [anmatcoburn@gmail.com](mailto:anmatcoburn@gmail.com).

Please direct all official Cambridge School Committee inquiries to [schoolcom@cpsd.us](mailto:schoolcom@cpsd.us).  
[11.18.2025 - Cambridge School Committee Video Recording](#)

- I request that this calendar add budget subcommittee meetings to the yearly budget approval process. I also request that this process include an annual review of past fiscal year budgets' over & under-expenditures.

**#25-281 Recommendation: Day & Residential Program Services not Available from the Cambridge School Department**

- How is the district monitoring progress towards goals on an IEP for kids with out of district placements?
- How has the cost of out-of-district tuition and transportation changed, especially as federal policies affect special education?

**#25-282 Recommendation: Contract Award: The Equity Process: Professional & Tech Services**

- I would also like to request that the MA State Auditor conduct an audit of School Committee expenditures and all no-bid contracts for the past five years.