

ROUNDTABLE/WORKING MEETING
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DISCUSSION
BETWEEN THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

DATE Tuesday, October 10, 2017

TIME 6:37 PM

LOCATION SULLIVAN CHAMBER

ATTENDEES Mayor Simmons, Councillor Carlone, Councillor Cheung, Councillor Devereux, Councillor Kelley, Councillor Maher, Councillor Mazen, Vice Mayor McGovern, Councillor Toomey, Louis DePasquale, City Manager, Lisa Peterson, Deputy City Manager, Ellen Semonoff, Assistant City Manager, Neal Alpert, Chief of Staff, Mayor Simmons, Sandra Albano, Executive Assistant to the City Council, Paula Crane, Deputy City Clerk and Donna P. Lopez, City Clerk.

School Committee members: Manikka L. Bowman, Emily Dexter, Alfred B. Fantini, Vice-Chair, Richard Harding, Jr., Kathleen Kelly, and Patricia Nolan, Doshia Beard, Confidential Secretary, School Committee, Dr. Kenneth Salim, Superintendent of Schools, Carolyn Turk, Deputy Superintendent of Schools, Maryann MacDonald, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, Anda Adams, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, Jean Spera, Interim Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Lori Likis, Chief Planning Officer, Claire Spinner, CFO, School Department, Tony Clark, Education Liaison for Mayor Simmons and LeiAnn Ellis, Early Childhood Director of Birth-Third Grade Partnership.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Mayor Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:37 PM. She stated that the meeting is being audio and visually recorded. This is an important meeting. She thanked all in attendance. Mayor Simmons introduced Dr. Salim.

Dr. Salim stated that the first report he received was the Early Childhood Task Force and spoke about the importance of their work. He spoke about the research that shows the importance of early childhood education. He spoke about the partnership between the School Department and DHSP and their collaboration. He stated that the Steering and sub-committee members were present.

City Manager DePasquale stated that he was on the Early Childhood Task Force and praised the work of the members of the task force and their commitment. Everyone needs to be involved in this effort. He stated that \$1.3 million was put into budget and \$1 million was added. He stated that getting the information out is important.

Mayor Simmons stated that this is the reason for the Early Childhood Joint Roundtable. She stated that this topic belongs to both the City Council and the School Committee.

Maryann McDonald, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, outlined the work done, shared lessons and all will engage in a dialogue of the work ahead. There are 50 individuals leading this important work. She stated that the priority goal is to improve the access to early childhood education. There are 4 strategies that are used. Maryann MacDonald, Ellen Semonoff and LeiAnn Ellis gave an overview of the PowerPoint Presentation (ATTACHMENT A).

Ms. Semonoff spoke about the year one accomplishment. She stated that 2 additional classrooms were created and 1/2 of the slots are for families in public housing developments. "Find it Cambridge" was created. Ms. Ellis stated that there are 22 low income children who have scholarships. All the children are of color and English learners. They are assessed by the Lesley Center and attend full days. A research program was created. The goal is to take 9 students from QIS from level 1 to level 3. The model is multifaceted and offers coaching and mentoring. This is intensive and offers 215 hours of support per site. Ms. Semonoff stated that these workshops are open to educators. There is support for families. There are over 40 programs that have received support and children exhibiting behavior that may make them successful are provided support. She spoke about Baby U that provides support to fathers and mothers. Family Resources Center and CEOC provide the support. She spoke about lessons learned. Slots to high quality programs need to be provided and to expand access and outreach. She spoke about providing support to preschools and families which needs more planning. The hope is to place 3-5 children receiving scholarships at each preschool.

Ms. MacDonald wanted to increase the amount of scholarships provided and options to expand access.

Ms. Spinner stated that there was a recommendation that all CPS students be in only Junior Kindergarten classrooms. She spoke about the feasibility of this. This scope was increased to include children that are 4 years old. How will Cambridge define equity? There is funding in the Early Childhood budget for a study and they are putting out the RFP.

Ms. MacDonald spoke about early childhood providers. Home visiting programs have been reviewed. There are no recommendations now but the work is on-going. The importance of prenatal care and beyond three years old, this foundation is important. She stated that guiding questions were created to look to expand options to high quality child care.

Councillor Cheung stated that he was previously frustrated with the lack of progress. He was very impressed with the independent assessment. This has an impact in not just the 34 children's lives. He spoke about looking for schools for his daughter. This started with Councillor Decker in the City

Council and Marc McGovern on the School Committee with establishing the joint task force. He stated that every resident of Cambridge should have the expectation that 3-4 years old should get into the program. He was happy to be in the Tobin. The instruction is incredible and the experience is so positive. He stated that Cambridge knows how to do education and there is no better preschool than the Tobin. Early education should be a universal right. Tobin is a full day program. This experience and opportunity needs to be given to every child. He encouraged expanding the Tobin School program for PreK. The focus study is moot because Cambridge educators provide the best program. He stated that universal PreK should be the goal and fix the tools for all children 3-4 years old in the City.

Patty Nolan loved the progress on this. She stated that she was glad that family day care is in this report. She wants to ensure that this meets the needs of kids. She spoke about the multimodal delivery system for children is very important. The early scholars program and all schools have preschool that provides education. She hoped that there is a model that provides PreK and could be in a play system. She spoke about the space in the schools and the pressure of children being treated as scholars outside the school system. The success of Baby U focuses on providing services to the whole family. She stated that the more that can be done to ensure that we are providing a well-rounded set of services, the better. This should be part of the vision. She spoke about home services that look at children that have special needs and providing these services to families as early as possible leads to a successful outcome.

Vice Mayor McGovern stated that he is excited to see this moving along and happy to see professional development for home care providers. He asked how are the children identified who are home with grandmother, aunts etc. to ensure that they are receiving services need. He spoke about scholarships and the achievement gap and the importance of the partnership. He spoke about families in need that are outside the income level and will not qualify under federal government. As it relates to the RFP for 4 years old - will space be looked at to create a space to educate young people. He stated that with all the new development in Kendall Square would the development be providing early childhood space. Home visit program and Find IT Cambridge is a way to provide services. He suggested a map for parents for their services. Vice Mayor McGovern asked Ms. Semonoff for a waiting list for those waiting for early child care. Ms. Semonoff stated that the wait list was frozen because of the challenges. There were 800 on the frozen wait list. There was not a diverse group of students seen. All 800 were contacted and 500 were reached and they are told that the wait list is frozen. When new policy is developed it is highly unlikely that a one year old put on the wait list will get a slot in a child care program. This is a big challenge but it is important to ensure that we are serving an economically diverse group of families so that they modify the way they accept students. In 6-8 weeks, a plan will be formulated.

Vice Mayor McGovern stated that if we are going to get to the point of having universal preschool, he questioned how the City's programs can be expanded and noted that it is a budget issue.

Councillor Carlone stated that little kids are special to all. He stated that he lived with his grandmother during the week and he was behind when he entered school and it took him three years to catch up. He is concerned with the "very low-income families". Universal PreK is a right. The

priority should be that every school should have a pre-primary program in it. He spoke about the need for a new school in the city. He feels that this will take forever to serve those on the list. He asked what are the immediate projections two years out? This is critical to close the gap. The City will fall behind for another generation. The City is becoming a City of wealth and low income. Ms. Semonoff stated that in terms of how many slots relating to scholarships, the number is probably about 40. When the research was done about where are the four years old in Cambridge and whether it is a high-quality program and whether it was affordable, it was learned that most four years old are currently being served in a program. Ms. Semonoff stated that she is taking all the programs that the City has and trying to figure out how to enhance the quality. The gap is small for the 4 years old - the issues are affordability and where are the 4 years old being served by the existing programs. Councillor Carlone stated that he is talking about 2-4 years old. The Cambridge Street School has two preschools. He stated that this a serious program and it is not being dealt with seriously. He asked what is the big picture — more space is needed and it is not being built. Deputy City Manager Peterson spoke about what can be built at Tobin and how many additional classrooms can fit on the space. Councillor Carlone stated that preschool kids prefer smaller spaces, not larger space. All the special permit projects need to be looked at throughout the city.

Councillor Maher thanked school personnel for moving this conversation forward. If Cambridge goes to a system that is different than what is available, it may have some unintended consequences because the housing prices will go up. He stated that this issue is not simple. The Capuano Center is the long-term look. Cambridge is built out and there is no space. He spoke about the Longfellow School in the long-term picture. How is this done without unintended consequences. The goal is to have a quality program and have the program be available to low income families.

Fred Fantini stated that the baseline is serving all four years old. He spoke about the non-profit day care providers and noted that it is important that we do not put them out of business. He spoke about the best practices and the twelve elements that every child should learn. The part-time program could be a full-time program. He stated that when the Foundry building is resolved this could be moved further. He asked about the immersion program built into the program.

Manikka Bowman stated that her child did not qualify for the three year old program. She stated that for a family this is frustrated. She spoke about the city versus school side. She spoke about the need for communication on this. She spoke about how long it will take to get to universal PreK and it makes sense to partner with a business owner to meet the needs of the children. She was concerned with what progress will be made on this. She stated that child care affordability is the same as housing affordability. There are people missed when the focus is on low income. She emphasized the urgency for the families on these lists.

Emily Dexter spoke about improvement to all the preschool programs in the city. The policy needs to be determined by the City Council and the School Committee and to establish a deadline and a goal. She wanted more information on the numbers. She stated that the Junior Kindergarten program is egregiously unfair because one extra year is offered to one-half of the population. She spoke about childcare programs offered to residents and employees. She spoke about funding for full day

programs. Kennedy/Longfellow could be used for swing space. She suggested that three members of the City Council and three School Committee members and the administration come up with a goal by the end of the year.

Councillor Devereux stated that she wanted to see this go faster. She asked how many home day care operations are there and can scholarships be given to these children. She asked can an RFP be expanded to serve all three years and a sliding scale fee. She stated that this is a gender equity issue also. The envision plan are children and families projected with the housing. School aged children may not include three and four years old.

Richard Harding stated that no one wanted to own this. He spoke about the number of slots and noted that DHSP has accepted residents and employees of City Hall and the School Department. Mr. Harding stated that he wanted to know who is living here who is not getting a slot. He wanted to know that this will be moved forward quickly. He stated that the affordability question is an issue and that Cambridge is changing. How is the word getting out about this in the neighborhoods? He suggested outreach to the churches. How is their feedback received?

Councillor Mazen made observations and stated that he has not heard of people coming into the city to take away these resources. A means testing suggested by Ms. Dexter should be done. There should be no cut off in time or income.

Councillor Kelley stated that the City is not making universal PreK free and are doing means testing. Ms. Spinner stated that the cost of the universal PreK and space needs and what does affordable mean - this is what will be learned from the study. She spoke about scalable concept, learning in the home and spoke about expanding programs by Baby U.

Mayor Simmons spoke about cultural competencies or bias training; this is huge to her. She is happy that family based day care is being reached out to. She stated that it would be good to have collected information on all day care facilities available in the city including multi-lingual. She wanted more information on the wait list. She stated that low income families may be in subsidized housing. She stated that camp night is done every March but noted that there are another bunch of parents that do not think about camp until the summer. She stated the City could be better. If Boston and NY are doing universal PreK, Cambridge needs to do universal PreK. She stated that the City must do better about forecasting. She spoke about the number of child care programs that will not take vouchers.

Councillor Cheung stated that the City Council would approve vouchers and asked how can additional parents be in the program. He stated that addition space needs to be created for universal PreK. He stated that PreK is shown to be the most advantageous to kids. There is no downside to building more space.

Emily Dexter stated that the City Council and the School Committee should join the working group and be part of process.

Patty Nolan stated that Alewife is an open plan; PreK could be done here. East Cambridge development requires a special permit and the City could state that universal PreK is needed.

Richard Harding stated that we must keep in mind the equity lines. He stated that kids from the east side could not get into the Tobin Montessori. He stated that he never understood that fact that people are planning their children around when they are born. This is serious business. We must have more clarity so that expectations can be aligned with the City.

Manikka Bowman stated that this challenge cannot wait based on the needs of space. A whole generation of students will be missed. She wanted something done short-term and leverage the system we have for universal PreK and have a long-term plan.

Fred Fantini stated that he wanted regular updates. The work of the 25-member working group needs to be respected.

Councillor Kelley stated that NY has universal PreK and has financial issues.

Councillor Carlone stated that US society has those who have and those who do not. This is a great opportunity and he would like this done quickly.

Councillor Devereux suggested using vacant store fronts and buildings for this space.

Dr. Salim thanked all for this meeting. He stated that it is important to have this conversation at this point in the work, to refine and to move forward.

City Manager DePasquale stated that this structure works. It is helpful.

On a motion of Councillor Mazen the meeting adjourned at 8:27 PM.