



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE REMOTE  
FY23 BUDGET HEARING AND BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**March 23, 2022**

The Boston School Committee held a remote meeting on March 23, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

**ATTENDANCE**

School Committee Members Present: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill; Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Lorena Lopera; Rafaela Polanco Garcia; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Xyra Mercer.

School Committee Members Absent: None.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: March 16, 2022 FY23 Budget Hearing and Meeting

In-Kind Donation with a Total Estimated Value of \$20,020

Grants for Approval Totaling: \$883,650

Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Accelerated Repair Projects PowerPoint

FY23 Superintendent's Final Budget Letter To School Committee, March 16, 2022

Updated FY23 Budget Tables 2022 03 16

FY23 Budget Recommendation Equity Impact Statement

Additional FY23 Budget Documents

Memo re: Registration and Assignment Update, March 17, 2022

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Registration and Assignment Update Presentation

Registration and Assignment Equity Impact Statement

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. All members were present with the exception of Mr. Cardet-Hernandez and Mr. O'Neill who joined the executive session in progress, and Ms. Mercer who joined the public meeting at 6 p.m.

Ms. Robinson announced that the Committee would immediately adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union. She said that the Committee would return to public session at 6 p.m.

**ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn to an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union.

**RETURN TO PUBLIC SESSION AND CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Jeri Robinson reconvened the meeting in public session at approximately 6:08 p.m. She announced that the Committee has just returned from an executive session for the purpose of conducting a strategy session related to collective bargaining with the Boston Teachers Union.

Ms. Robinson said that tonight's meeting was being streamed live on Zoom. It will be rebroadcast on Boston City TV. It will also be posted at [bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) and on YouTube. She announced that simultaneous interpretation services were available in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cabo Verdean, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin and American Sign Language (ASL). The interpreters introduced themselves and gave instructions in their native language on how to access simultaneous interpretation by changing the Zoom channel. Translated meeting documents were posted at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/schoolcommittee) prior to the start of the meeting.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

**Approved** – On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the March 16, 2022 FY23 Budget Hearing and School Committee meeting.

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## **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

*As prepared for delivery.*

Thank you, Madame Chair, and thank you all for joining us tonight. I have a few updates that I want to share before we dive into this evening's presentations.

Our thoughts remain with our students and staff at TechBoston Academy after last week's tragic shooting outside of the school that injured a student and a teacher as they prepared for a school event. Our students must feel safe and supported and these types of brazen acts of community violence can have a lasting impact. I am grateful to BPS Safety Services and our partners at BPD who responded immediately and remained in support of the school. I am grateful to Mayor Wu who joined me at the school on the night of the shooting and stayed in close contact in the days following to ensure a city-wide coordinated effort of support. BPS remains deeply committed to providing safe spaces for our students to learn and will not tolerate these actions. I want to thank our amazing Safety Team and Crisis Team for this incredible work alongside BPD to respond and work on the investigation. I know I have discussed this several times during my updates, but I want to quickly address overall school safety and the working relationship with the BPD since there continues to be heightened media regarding safety in our schools. Our teams work hard to get to know students and the community to prevent as much as possible incidents from occurring in schools. Safety Specialists are in schools to manage incidents as they occur and to call in the BPD when needed. We believe this model, focusing on relationships - but acting quickly and decisively when needed - will promote safe and welcoming learning environments. As Chief Coakely discussed at a recent meeting, our Safety Specialists have undergone extensive training in both working with our young people but also resolving issues.

As I noted in my comments last week, BPS is still in close contact with BPHC on the indicators we need to meet in order to shift to a mask-option policy in our schools. While we remain in those conversations, we know that there are other mitigation efforts that we can begin adopting again or ramping up. Given that the weather is warming, we can begin opening our windows and start to shift more activities outside and we are ordering tents at the schools who want them. We have installed our air quality sensors in every classroom and one on top of each school to monitor outside air. We make this dynamic measure available in a dashboard on our website. These approaches matched with a rigorous review of the data will inform our decision-making. In the meantime, we are preparing new signs and messaging to ensure that all students and staff are supported in the decision they make. We will keep the Committee and our schools and families informed as we continue to monitor the data and get closer to making a decision.

Mr. O'Neill and I had the opportunity to connect with our peers from across the Council of Great City Schools this past weekend. Organized annually by the Council, the conference brings together Superintendents, School Board members, and staff for a weekend of planning, data review, and sharing of best practices. I am grateful for Mr. O'Neill's continued leadership on the Council and for the opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the country.

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As I communicated to the Committee last week, Commissioner Riley sent me a letter outlining an expedited district review. In his message, the Commissioner expressed a desire to complete the review on a shortened timeline in order to provide an updated report to the next Superintendent and document progress as well as areas of opportunity. I have stated several times that I appreciated the district review results that were delivered to me in February 2020 when I first arrived, outlining 300 pages of a thorough review of operations and academics. The team had one week to gather the documentation requested by the state and has been working around the clock all weekend to compile the documents and prepare for the visits starting next week. This shortened review will last three days and will include classroom observations at a subset of schools selected by the state. I believe we have made good progress despite a pandemic. We have adopted new policies, directed new investments, and seen increases in graduation rates and declines in dropout rates. We know we still have work to do, but I am confident that the reviewers will see our district has made strides and that it has begun to build a strong foundation that addresses longstanding systemic inequities within the system that have impacted student outcomes. I am grateful for the continued partnership with the state and will keep the Committee updated on the visit.

This week, March 21st to 25th, is the district's fourth annual 24/7 Respect Week! This year, all sixth graders will watch and discuss the BPS Office of Equity's Telly Award-winning video, "24/7 Respect" featuring student actors from Boston Arts Academy. Students will have the opportunity to learn how to prevent and address bias-based incidents and sexual misconduct, whether in person, by text, or on social media. The video is available in both spoken English and spoken Spanish, and closed captioned in over a dozen languages. Teachers, social workers, and other school staff have been attending the Office of Equity's information sessions to prepare for this year's rollout. I'd like to share a two minute video that highlights how effective this program is. We're so proud that this program has been recognized as a national model, and I look forward to hearing from our students and teachers about their participation this week.

I wanted to also share a quick reminder that priority registration for students entering grades K2, 1-5, 8 and 10-12 has started and will end next week on Friday, April 1. Families will be notified of their assignment by the end of May.

The priority registration round for K0, K1, 6, 7, and 9 has closed. Students assigned in that round will receive assignment notifications by the end of March. Families can still register for these grades through a Welcome Center and will be included in the second assignment round. All grade 7 assignment notifications for non-exam school assignments have been moved into the second round and will be released at the end of May. This action was taken to account for the exam schools admissions process which is still expected for the end of April. In an effort to keep all of our families safe and to limit exposure to COVID-19, all school registration is currently being completed by appointment only. You can follow the steps on our website at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/register](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/register) to complete the pre-registration process for your child. I quickly wanted to share a positive highlight story that took place last week. The BPS Office of Health and Wellness and the Boston Athletics Association teamed up to spread the message of physical literacy to BPS students. On Monday, March 14th, BAA brought Nell Rojas, a world-class winning marathoner, triathlete, and champion obstacle course racer, to present to students in Physical Education classes at New Mission and BCLA high schools. This visit coincides with a 2020 donation from the BAA of functional fitness equipment — such as dumbbells, bosu balls,

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medicine balls, plyo jump boxes and more — to every PE program at every BPS High school. During Monday’s visit, students got to participate in a circuit training workout using the equipment alongside Nell Rojas. Rojas also shared her own journey to becoming a professional runner with the students. I want to give a special shout out to the BPS Office of Health and Wellness and BAA for their continued partnership, and to Nell Rojas for the visit and teaching our students about the importance of lifetime fitness.

That is my Superintendent’s Report for this evening.

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Ms. Robinson asked the Superintendent if she had any concerns about possibly ending the mask mandate. The Superintendent spoke about the district hosting more than 100 vaccine clinics and ongoing efforts to vaccinate younger students. She spoke about the importance of respecting the choices of people who still choose to mask. Ms. Robinson asked for more information about indoor air quality sensors. Deputy Superintendent of Operations Sam Depina explained that the sensors monitor carbon monoxide levels, temperature and air quality in every BPS classroom as well as administrative areas. The information is publicly available through an online data dashboard and is monitored by the district’s environmental team.

Acting Chief of Family and Community Advancement Denise Snyder clarified for Mr. Cardet-Hernandez that the Welcome Centers are open for in-person registration by appointment as well as remotely. He asked if families are permitted to tour schools in person. Ms. Snyder said that visitors are now allowed in schools and that she will follow up with more information and share it on the BPS website.

Ms. Polanco Garcia said that parents are concerned with bullying in schools. She requested data on students who have been vaccinated. Senior Advisor Megan Costello explained the complexities of data collection, adding that the data is one hundred percent reliable. She praised Boston International Newcomers Academy (BINCA) for its vaccination efforts.

Ms. Mercer asked when BPS might lift the mask mandate. The Superintendent said when the city reaches 10 positive cases per 100,000 residents.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent’s report.

#### **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Lillianis Rodriguez Rivera, South Boston resident, BPS student, and member, Sociedad Latina, testified in support of the expansion of ethnic studies.
- Sarah Horsley, Jamaica Plain resident and member of BPS Families for COVID Safety, testified in support of keeping the masking requirement in BPS schools.
- Michael Heichman, Dorchester resident and member of the Boston Education Justice Alliance (BEJA) testified regarding the FY23 budget proposal.
- John Mudd, Cambridge resident and advocate, testified regarding the FY23 budget proposal and the superintendent search process.

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- Elise Pechter, Jamaica Plain resident and member of BPS Families for COVID Safety, testified in support of keeping the masking requirement in BPS schools.
- Cheryl Buckman, South Boston resident and member of BPS Families for COVID Safety, testified in support of keeping the masking requirement in BPS schools.
- Matthew Connor, Jamaica Plain resident and P.A. Shaw Elementary School teacher, testified in support of the school's grade expansion.
- Brian Ruka, Dorchester resident and Kenney Elementary School parent, testified regarding gender and sexuality assignments in school.
- Edith Bazile, Hyde Park resident, advocate, testified regarding the McKinley Schools.
- Suleika Soto, South End resident, BPS parent and member of BPS Families for COVID Safety, testified in support of keeping the masking requirement in BPS schools and the budget.
- Nora Paul-Schultz, Jamaica Plain resident and O'Bryant School teacher, testified regarding contract negotiations between BPS and the Boston Teachers Union.
- Ruby Reyes, Dorchester resident and BEJA executive director, testified against state receivership.
- Amy Gebo, Quincy resident and Holmes Innovation School teacher, testified regarding contract negotiations between BPS and the Boston Teachers Union.
- Anne Marie Brochu, Quincy resident and Murphy K-8 School teacher, testified regarding contract negotiations between BPS and the Boston Teachers Union.
- Wilmer Quinones, Dorchester resident and Sociedad Latina staff, testified in support of the expansion of ethnic studies.
- Mary Lee Marra, Hyde Park resident and advocate, testified regarding concerns and outcomes for BPS students.
- Alison Pultinas, Mission Hill resident and Fenway News reporter, testified regarding the availability of information about BPS athletics.
- Barbara Fields, Mattapan resident and advocate, testified in support of expanding the P.A. Shaw Elementary School.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the acceptance of in-kind donations (musical equipment) from Donald Perlo with a total estimated value of \$20,020.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved grants for approval totaling \$883,650.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about the district's utilization of the racial equity planning tool in the selection of Massachusetts School Building Authority Accelerated Repair Projects. Deputy Chief Financial Officer David Bloom explained how BPS uses data in its selection process and engages with school communities through the BuildBPS process.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the following Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Accelerated Repair Projects (ARP): Burke, Curley, Haley,

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and Warren-Prescott boiler replacements; Henderson Upper and Ohrenberger roof replacements; and English High School roof and window replacements.

Dr. Alkins asked clarifying questions about how budget documents are shared with families, as well about the use of the racial equity planning tool. Mr. Bloom explained the collaborative budget process with school communities and the incorporation of racial equity planning with the support of Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Charles Grandson.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez spoke about some elements of the budget proposal being exciting but expressed concerns about the Committee's responsibilities to the district's long-term fiscal health. Mr. Bloom clarified that the FY23 budget proposal adds 117 positions (99 school-based and 18 centrally-based). Mr. Cardet-Hernandez expressed concern that the budget may present future challenges when the district needs to constrict in size. He asked about current vacancies. Mr. Bloom said that BPS currently has 864 vacancies of which 20 percent were posted at least six months prior.

Chief Financial Officer Nate Kuder clarified for Mr. O'Neill that the budget proposal includes projections on federal education funding based on the best information available at the time. The Superintendent said that 4,000 fewer BPS students were categorized as high poverty students in the recent U.S. Census, which will impact the FY24 budget. Mr. O'Neill noted that there is currently a proposal to change the current federal education funding formula and that maintaining the current formula would be in the best interest of Boston.

Dr. Alkins requested more information about the district's investments in equitable STEM learning opportunities. The Superintendent said that staff will follow up.

Mr. O'Neill thanked the Superintendent for securing \$100 in education funding over three years from the City. He expressed support for the Superintendent's decision to put a significant amount of federal funding towards soft landings for schools that have experienced decreased enrollment and are recovering from the pandemic. He acknowledged that the situation is unsustainable and will present challenges in future years.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez asked about the district's plans to increase support for students with disabilities. Mr. Kuder outlined specific investments that the district is making in the area of special education, including new staffing positions and the expansion of inclusion opportunities. The Superintendent said that she has hired Dr. Nadine Ekstrom to serve as Senior Advisor to the Superintendent for Special Education.

Dr. Alkins asked how these investments will help close the achievement gap. The Superintendent spoke about making strategic investments in academics and wrap-around services to provide a multi-tiered, multi-disciplined approach to closing gaps.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez requested the dollar amount needed for the district to come into compliance with services for students with disabilities as well as English language learners. Dr. Ekstrom agreed to follow up. Mr. Bloom estimated that it would cost approximately \$6.5 million to provide COVID compensatory services.

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Ms. Robison encouraged the budget team to produce an FY23 budget book containing narrative.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee approved the Superintendent's FY23 General Fund Budget Recommendation in the amount of \$1,334,845,508. Mr. Cardet-Hernandez voted no. All other members voted in yes.

## REPORTS

**Registration and Assignment Update-** Acting Chief of Family and Community Advancement Denise Snyder and Senior Director of Welcome Services Sonia Gómez-Banrey presented an update on the Office of Welcome Services' work on registration and assignment, including updates on processes, enrollment numbers, and recent innovations. Welcome Services supports students and families in their school choice, registration, assignment and transition to ensure successful enrollment in Boston Public Schools. Support is provided in the district's nine major languages at four Welcome Centers. Ms. Snyder explained the school registration process which takes place in rounds. In School Year 2021/22, 80 percent of families who registered in their priority round received one of their top three choices. She apologized for an error on slide nine of the PowerPoint presentation, stating that the number of current year registrations is closer to 6,000 (not 8,851).

Exam School: Steps to Assignment

- Confirm Boston residency (for non-BPS families) - December 17
- BPS students submit choices - February 4
- Grades entered in ASPEN - February 11
- GPA verification - Feb 11-Feb 29
- Third Party Validation of GPA - March 1-11
- Calls to qualifying BPS students - March 11 - 18
- Eligibility Notices - March 11-18
- Composite scores finalized - March 21-25
- External Auditor Verification - March 28-April 8
- Finalize capacity at each school - Early April
- Run simulations/test for errors - Mid April
- Final run of assignment algorithm - End of April
- Load assignments and prepare mailers/emails - End of April/Early May

Innovations:

- Hired ASG Marketing to produce targeted communications campaign for families who tend to register late
- Hosted 15 Virtual and 13 in person Registration Information Sessions
- Scheduled three or more Virtual School Preview Times/ Tours in every school
- Roll out of school videos (via Communications Office)
- DiscoverBPS.org
- Online Scheduler
- Cross Departmental Workgroup to examine options to improve the Rounds timeline
- Potential partnership with Cradles to Crayons



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- Cold weather and school supply essentials for families in need
- Expanded outreach Campaign to support English Learner families in zip codes with low Round One participation.

Dr. Alkins requested data on the outcomes of the communications campaign when available. He asked about the possibility of aligning the district's registration timeline with other schools so that families can make informed decisions. Ms. Snyder spoke about the tensions involved when adjusting registration timelines.

Ms. Polanco Garcia praised the district's expansion of access for the families of English learners. expanded access for families.

Mr. O'Neill praised the district's collaboration with an external partner to verify the exam school data. He expressed concerns about the impact of the exam school schools notification timeline on families who might make other choices. He encouraged the district to send invitations as early as possible.

Dr. Alkins asked if adjustments to the registration timeline are possible. Ms. Snyder explained the complexities of the timeline.

Mr. Cardet-Hernandez suggested that BPS explore creative enrollment strategies during peak enrollment periods.

***Superintendent Search Committee Update*** - Mr. O'Neill, who serves on the Superintendent Search Committee, presented an update on the search process on behalf of Search Committee Co-Chair Ms. Lopera who was not feeling well and departed the meeting early.

The Superintendent Search Committee held its first remote meeting on March 22. The Committee plans to meet remotely every Tuesday evening until it fulfills its charge, which is the recommendation of final candidates to the School Committee for consideration. All meetings will feature live, simultaneous interpretation and include an opportunity for public comment. The zoom meeting links and meeting videos are posted at [bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search](https://bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search).

Last night's meeting was mainly a working session. The discussion primarily focused on questions and comments related feedback from the listening sessions held thus far. The Committee discussed the major themes that have emerged and the implications for an updated leadership profile/superintendent job description.

Some of those themes included:

- Qualities families want to see in the next superintendent:
  - Listener
  - Collaborator
  - Communicator
  - Bilingual
  - Committed to anti-racism

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- Equity champion
- Transparent
- Someone who has spent time in the classroom and understands Boston
  
- The Committee also heard feedback about areas for improvement in BPS:
  - Transportation
  - Facilities
  - Food services
  - School safety
  - Addressing learning loss from the pandemic

Responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Superintendent Search Firm were due on March 22 at 12 p.m. The original deadline was Friday, March 18; however, due to conflicting dates in various publicly available documents, the response deadline for the RFP was extended. An addendum was posted on the [Committee's webpage](#) on Friday, and firms that had submitted bids were notified. Seven proposals were submitted. The RFP Review Team will review the proposals, interview firms and present a recommendation to the Search Committee. The goal is for the Search Committee to make a recommendation to engage a search firm that emerges from the review to the School Committee for approval by early April. The initial review will be conducted by Chief Human Capital Officer Al Taylor as well as two search committee members assigned by the Co-Chairs: Jose Valenzuela and Mr. O'Neill. The review team will be assisted by Business Manager Naveen Reddy and his staff, who will be providing project support and guidance to ensure the RFP review process is completed efficiently and in compliance with all legal requirements.

The Search Committee has held two remote community listening sessions: A general session on March 9th and a Spanish speaking session on March 15th. There has been full attendance from the Search Committee at the listening sessions. In total, more than 450 people attended the two sessions. Videos from these sessions, as well as the chats, are posted on the Superintendent Search webpage. The Committee will host a listening session for students on March 24 from 6-8 p.m., and another general listening session on Saturday, April 2 from 10 a.m.- 12 p.m. Both sessions will feature live, simultaneous interpretation in all of the BPS home languages. People can register for upcoming listening sessions and submit video testimony and text submissions at [bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search](http://bostonpublicschools.org/supt-search). Feedback can also be emailed to [superintendentsearch@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:superintendentsearch@bostonpublicschools.org).

As of 3 p.m. today, the Committee has received about 350 survey responses. Survey respondents were asked to describe their relationship to BPS and select all options that apply. The overwhelming majority of responses have come from parents or caregivers of current BPS students, with 67% of respondents identifying as such. In addition, 28% are community members, 3% are students, 13% are BPS teachers, 2% are BPS school leaders, and 8% identify as other BPS staff members. Mr. O'Neill encouraged people to take the survey so that the Committee can hear from a diverse group of BPS stakeholders.

The Committee will collect and synthesize all of the feedback, look for themes, and share it with the community in early April. This input will help inform the job description and ultimately the candidates that are considered.

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On April 6, the School Committee is planning to vote on the search firm, as well as the Superintendent's job description and issue a call for qualified applicants. In April and May, the Search firm will complete initial vetting and background checks on candidates. The Search Committee will review applications and select candidates to interview in executive session. Following interview rounds, the Search Committee will select finalists for public presentation. When that task is complete, the Search Committee will have fulfilled its charge. In June, the School Committee will announce final candidates and hold public interviews. The School Committee will then vote on a candidate to offer the position of Superintendent.

Mr. O'Neill asked Ms. Mercer to help promote the superintendent search survey in an effort to increase the student response rate.

Mr. O'Neill clarified for Ms. Robinson said that the Search Committee plans to present its recommendation on a search firm and superintendent's job description to the School Committee for consideration and a vote on April 6. He said that the Search Committee is waiting to receive additional feedback from listening sessions and other sources before updating the job description.

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**ADJOURN**

**Approved** - At approximately 10:01 p.m. the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary