



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL  
BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**January 18, 2023**

The Boston School Committee held a virtual meeting on January 18, 2023 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: Chairperson Jeri Robinson; Vice Chairperson Michael O'Neill; Dr. Stephen Alkins; Brandon Cardet-Hernandez; Quoc Tran; and Student Representative Diego Mehta.

School Committee Member Absent: Lorena Lopera; and Rafaela Polanco Garcia.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Meeting Minutes: January 11, 2023

Student Representative's Report: Boston Student Advisory Council Update

Grants for Approval Totaling \$762,300

Memorandum of Agreement, Effective July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022

Bus Monitors Equity Impact Statement

Supplemental Appropriation Request in the amount of \$1,079,770 to support a Memorandum of Agreement for Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement for FY23

Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) Safety Review and Recommendations Memo

CGCS PowerPoint Presentation: Schools Safety Memorandum of Agreement, Effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025

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## CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Jeri Robinson called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Ms. Lopera and Ms. Polanco Garcia were absent. All other members were present.

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) and provided instructions 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 January 11, 2023 School Committee meeting.

## SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

*As prepared for delivery.*

Thank you Madam Chair. Good evening everyone. Given the full agenda, I will be brief with my remarks.

I wanted to share that we have had several losses to the BPS community, most recently Heidi Cahoon McEwen, an Assistant Director for the Office of Special Education and Alice Aviles, a paraprofessional at the Rafael Hernández Dual Language School. Principals and special ed colleagues all describe Heidi as incredibly passionate, a tireless worker and 1000 per cent dedicated to making sure special education students received everything they needed throughout her career. Alice's most recent position was as a para in the 3rd Grade and volunteering at the school after her recent retirement last January providing support with whatever the school needed, and was often seen at breakfast with Las Traviesas. Even in retirement, she never left the Hernandez School or BPS! Alice's service with us spanned over 33 years, and the legacy she left was inspired. It has been a difficult few weeks with these losses. I want to thank our social workers and all of those who are helping to provide much needed support and holding space for our students, families and staff as we grieve the loss of these two extraordinary educators. Please join me in a moment of silence.

*[Moment of silence]*

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Thank you. I would also like to acknowledge a matter that some of our dedicated Boston Teachers Union (BTU) members will be speaking to in public comment- the delayed retro pay for members of the Boston Teachers Union as a result of their collective bargaining agreement voted on this past fall. We had an opportunity to provide a written update at last week's BTU membership meeting and are also sharing the information here to ensure the update reaches everyone. President Tang has been a strong advocate for her members of the issue and we recognize it is an issue. We have received a large data file from the city that lists out pay data for every BTU employee for the term specified in the MOA. We are now reconciling this data to process retro for the eligible populations and in the correct amounts (for both current and former employees). This process is complex but is well underway. Given the sheer volume of records it is taking even longer than anticipated. Upon completion, the retro payments will be issued. Unfortunately, the retro pay will be issued after the 1/20/23 check date despite the Office of Human Capital's efforts to make the January 20th payroll. We are optimistic that we will get this retro paid out by the second paycheck in February (2/17/23). We will regularly update our BTU partners with our progress toward this goal and notify you of any changes. We understand that this delay could impact you and your families, and we want you to know that we share your frustration and are doing everything we can to ensure that you receive your retro pay as soon as possible and we sincerely apologize. We are actively examining how to evolve our Human Capital processes and systems moving forward to make things more efficient internally and in conjunction with the city when it involves a large number of staff.

In terms of a Covid19 update, I just want to publicly thank everyone for their support in the temporary masking effort. I appreciate everyone's cooperation and commitment to keeping their school community safe. This year, we've seen staff absences range from a high of approximately 500 on January 6th to a low of about 200 on January 9th with student absences ranging from a high of 8,700 on January 4th to a low of 5,200 by January 10th. As the data shows, we saw a 40% decrease in student absences over the course of the first five school days after the holiday. Similarly we saw a 60% decrease in staff absences over the same time period. At this time last year, the average daily attendance rate on the first Tuesday after MLK Jr. day for all schools was 86%, this year we saw an average daily attendance rate of 90%.

I wanted to provide an update on the proposed school mergers. As you know, we have proposed merging the Sumner and Philbrick into one school and the Shaw and Taylor into one school. We believe that combining these school communities will produce stronger outcomes for our students – by creating continuous preK-6 pathways, and by freeing up resources to reinvest in school programming. We are still in conversations with these school communities to flesh out the details before bringing any formal proposal to the School Committee.

One of my top priorities for the district is getting family and community engagement right, which is why when I started my tenure as Superintendent, I decided to delay any vote on these proposed mergers, which was originally intended for last fall. We know there are ways we can improve our family engagement, reaching people where they are and in their native languages, and we are actively working on it. We understand the frustration that families are feeling and are committed to sending out communications to the entire Sumner, Philbrick, Shaw, and Taylor communities no later than February 1st. We will update families on the status of the mergers, upcoming meeting dates, details on timelines, and the use of the Racial Equity Planning Tool.

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My team is also working closely with the public records office at the City to close out any outstanding records request as soon as possible. I will be sure to keep this body updated on the proposed school mergers as we continue engagement through this spring.

It was great to join Mayor Wu on her announcement of the Office for Youth Engagement and Advancement. This office will work with non--profit organizations, community organizations and city departments to help reimagine youth work and how our young people experience the City of Boston from childhood to adolescence. We look forward to working with them as they begin to establish the department's priorities in the months to come.

Congratulations to Boston Latin School Guidance Counselor Andrea Encarnacao who just won Massachusetts Guidance Counselor of the Year. She was recognized at a Martin Luther King Jr. school assembly on Friday January 13. Andrea will represent Massachusetts in Washington, D.C. at the National School Counselor of the Year Gala next month and compete with other state winners from around the country for the 2023 American School Counselor Association's School Counselor of the Year award. I am proud of Andrea's commitment to young people and all of our counselors who play a key role in helping to support our students' social emotional well being.

A word of thanks to Tony Beatrice and the BPS Arts Department for supporting the MLK Celebration on Thursday evening, January 12th at the Burke High School. Thank you to Mr. Silva, the school leader at the Burke for opening the school and for hosting this wonderful event. It was so great to see students from the Burke, Boston Arts Academy, the Kenny, Edison, Kilmer, Orchard Gardens, Philbrick, Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, O'Bryant and Boston Latin School share how Dr. King inspired them through dance, song, step and essays.

Later tonight, you will hear another report from the Council on Great City Schools around their findings on safety. This report was initiated as a requirement of the Systemic Improvement Plan, and we submitted the report to DESE this afternoon. I am grateful to Dr. Ray Hart and his entire team for the countless hours they've spent with us to understand and help us improve critical systems and services for our students. We will continue to update you on the progress of the implementation of this work.

Thank you for your time. This concludes my formal report.

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Student Representative to the School Committee Diego Mehta presented an update on the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC). BSAC is comprised of 46 active members from across 20 BPS high schools

School Represented: ABCD High School, Boston Arts Academy, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School, BCLA-McCormack, BInCA Community Academy, Dearborn STEM, English HS, Excel HS, Fenway HS, Henderson K-12, Horace Mann, JQUS, Lyon HS, Madison Park HS, McKinley South End Academy, Muniz Academy, O'Bryant Math & Science & Snowden International HS.

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All BSAC members are in paid positions with the support of the Department of Youth Engagement & Employment- Successlink.

BSAC meets weekly on Tuesdays from 4-6 p.m. and Fridays from 3-5 p.m.

Subcommittees:

- Code of Conduct:

This subcommittee intends to make it obligatory for schools to inform their students about the Code of Conduct. By creating adaptable and forward-thinking community outreach strategies, this committee empowers students by teaching them about their inherent rights.

- Mental Health & Social Media:

This subcommittee seeks to conduct research to comprehend better the effects of social media on academic achievement and health. The information enables flexible strategies that better assist structures and faculty to better students' health.

- Participatory Budgeting:

Thanks to a generous donation, we received \$9,000 from EdVestors to distribute to youth-led projects. This subcommittee seeks to gather student opinions, which will dictate how these funds should be utilized.

- Adultism Development:

This subcommittee is dedicated to dismantling adultist rhetoric and structures that disenfranchise students. Through informative workshops, they are enabling adult allies to better accommodate their students in numerous settings.

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Dr. Alkins requested an update on the district's plans for programming during February break. Chief of Family and Community Advancement Denise Syder said that 33 schools are participating in February Acceleration Academies. BPS also partners with community organizations to provide students with February and April vacation programming.

Dr. Alkins asked if BPS leaders will utilize the Racial Equity Planning Tool (REPT) when considering the possible expanded use of metal detectors. The Superintendent confirmed that her team would use the REPT. She spoke about her commitment to using de-escalation training and trauma-sensitive practices. She said that her team is looking at a variety of mitigation strategies to best serve students.

Mr. Cardet Hernandez asked for the district's definition of community engagement and what stakeholders should expect from that process. He also asked for more clarity about the reasons for the proposed mergers and decision points. The Superintendent said that some mergers will

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need to happen because school buildings are outdated. She said that mergers will enable the district to direct resources in a more concentrated way, so that all students in that merger are able to benefit from it. She said that the community can weigh in on the timing of the mergers and what the merger process looks like. She spoke about the importance of transparency and clear communication. The Superintendent spoke about numerous departments working together and working with school communities to support the many components of the merger process.

Mr. Tran asked members to share their personal definition of community engagement and what criteria and procedures should be involved. Ms. Robinson suggested that the Committee discuss the topic at a future meeting.

Mr. O'Neill asked Mr. Mehta how the district can help BSAC become more robust. Mr. Mehta said that additional outreach could help increase membership, noting that not every high school has a BSAC representative. Office of Youth Leadership Manager Dennisse Rorie said that the district has experienced challenges with capacity and is working to add staff. She said that full representation is the goal. Mr. Mehta asked about metal detectors. The Superintendent clarified that some schools already use metal detectors, having completed the process outlined in the Superintendent's Circular. She said that she is not making any formal recommendations with regards to metal detectors at this time. Having received the Council of Great City School's safety report, she and her team will examine the use of metal detectors as one part of a body of possible strategies to keep school communities safe.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the Superintendent's Report.

## GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

The following people testified regarding delays in the payment of retroactive wages and stipends and hiring delays:

- Jessica Tang, Dorchester resident and Boston Teachers Union President
- Antonietta Brownell, East Boston resident and BPS teacher
- Caroline Jones, Brockton resident and UP Academy Dorchester teacher
- Aaron Johnson, Milton resident and Boston International High School teacher
- Monique Bynoe, South Boston resident and Condon K-8 School teacher
- Chris Buttimer, Cambridge resident and BPS Teaching Fellowship Specialist
- Theodore Smith, Warwick, Rhode Island resident and JROTC instructor
- Tyron Francis, Middletown resident and Madison Park Technical Vocational High School teacher
- Nathan Eckstrom, Jamaica Plain resident and Boston Adult Technical Academy
- Hani Murad, Newton resident and BPS school psychologist

Mike Heichman, Dorchester resident and Boston Education Justice Alliance member, testified regarding racial equity.

Cheryl Buckman, South Boston resident and Dever Elementary School parent, testified regarding transportation.

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Shery Keleher, Charlestown resident and BPS parent, testified regarding a variety of education-related issues.

Eric Esteves, Roxbury resident and community advocate, testified regarding police in schools.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved grants for approval totaling \$762,300.

Mr. Cardet Hernandez expressed concern that the wages agreed upon in the district's collective bargaining agreement with the United Steelworkers Local 2936 (Bus Monitors) are not competitive enough to address the current staffing shortage.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a Memorandum of Agreement between the Boston School Committee and United Steelworkers Local 2936 (Bus Monitors), effective July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2022.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a Memorandum of Agreement between the Boston School Committee and United Steelworkers Local 2936 (Bus Monitors), effective July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a Fiscal Year 2023 Supplemental Appropriation Request to the Boston City Council in the amount of \$1,079,770 to support a Memorandum of Agreement For Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period of July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025 between the United Steelworkers Local 2936 (Bus Monitors) and the Boston School Committee.

## **REPORT**

**Council of Great City Schools Safety Review and Recommendations** - Dr. Ray Hart, Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), and Willie Burroughs, the Council's Director of Management Services, summarized the findings and recommendations of the Council's report on student and staff safety: "Review of Safety Program of the Boston Public Schools." The report is required as part of the BPS - MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP).

Ms. Robinson said that in accordance with past practice, portions of the safety report are confidential and will be discussed in executive session at a future meeting. Some of the report's content related to its findings and recommendations on the topic of Emergency Management, if disclosed publicly, could compromise the safety of staff and students. She said that the Committee does not want to share any information that could potentially jeopardize the safety of students and staff.

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The Superintendent explained that per the SIP, the Council was commissioned to provide a high level management view of the district's student and staff safety operations. Specifically, the district asked the Council to assess student and staff safety protocols at schools, and to make recommendations to ensure safe learning environments across the district, including an evaluation of coordination and communication between BPS and the Boston Police Department. It does not discuss in detail strategies such as restorative justice, increasing and supporting school counselors, or wrap-around, supports, all of which are critical to supporting school communities.

The recommendations fall into two major areas: Safety Services, which includes the district's relationship with the Boston Police Department (BPD), and the staffing, retention, and ongoing development of the Safety Services team, and Emergency Management, which will be discussed in executive session at a later date to ensure the safety and security of students and staff.

Recommendations include:

- Encourage the Superintendent and BPD Commissioners to work collaboratively on developing and implementing a shared MOU/IGA that involves input from community stakeholders. At a minimum, the agreement should
  - Prioritize opportunities for police to build positive relationships with students; and
  - Design a process for sharing information.
- Create a focus group of appropriate stakeholders and administrators to consider if BPS should form an internal, sworn police department.
- Require BPS Security Services to be more involved with the hiring process to help reduce the time it takes to select and onboard candidates.
- Mandate that law enforcement records, as identified by FERPA, reside under the management and supervision of Safety Services.
- Acquire an anonymous reporting system hotline or software product to encourage the reporting of inappropriate and anticipated dangerous behaviors.
- Address low morale issues in the Safety Services department by encouraging team building, skip-level meetings, and professional development opportunities.
- Prioritize roles and responsibilities in all department units to ensure that personnel focus on school-based safety and policing practices, not duties customarily associated with municipal or county policing functions. Recruit or promote mid-level management who will champion school-based policing approaches.
- Partner with the Human Resources to



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- Monitor turnover rates, establish exit interview protocols for department employees who voluntarily separate from BPS, and identify and track the causes for leaving to identify opportunities to make or recommend changes in policy;
- Revisit, rewrite, update, and distribute job descriptions to reflect current roles and responsibilities to ensure accountability and performance;
- Invite the Communications and Human Resources Departments to plan and staff ongoing recruitment opportunities and leverage mass communication and social media approaches so the district can successfully fill current vacancies

The district has begun work in these areas in the past year, which includes the following:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BPD: BPS is currently in discussions with the BPD regarding an MOU.
- Safety Specialist Recruitment: The Safety Services team has been engaging with the community on an ongoing basis. We are currently exploring recruitment opportunities through more formal channels such as career fairs.
- Team Morale: Team building activities have been ongoing throughout the year. In addition, the department holds partnerships with community organizations, and Specialists have the opportunity to engage in meaningful work with students through activities such as mentoring.
- Adopting Best Practices: The district routinely engages in conversations with other districts in the country through forums like national conferences.

The Council for Great City Schools will then present the remainder of the report in Executive Session at a later School Committee meeting. The District Team will update the School Committee regarding implementation of the work at future meetings, including the use of the Racial Equity Planning Tool for any recommendations and decisions made. The report has been submitted to DESE and the slides from tonight's presentation and a redacted version of the report will be made available on the BPS website at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/strategicprogress).

Deputy Chief of Operations Sam Depina said that some of the work outlined in the recommendations is already underway.

1. Formalizing and refining work that is already underway
  - The district has a Safety Committee, which is a cross-functional team made up of representatives from Operations, Safety, Facilities, Technology and Schools. This committee is in the process of synthesizing feedback from school leaders to inform the implementation plan recommendations to update security at schools.

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- BPS has refined and held multiple updated trainings on communication protocols for responding to incidents
  - The Safety Services team has launched a strategic planning process in conjunction with the Office of Human Capital to ensure that it's recruiting and retaining a highly qualified, diverse workforce.
  - Under Chief Coakley's leadership, the Safety Services team has fostered partnerships with community organizations, such as Big Sisters, which provide Safety Specialists the opportunity to mentor students and engage the community in other meaningful ways.
  - BPS leaders routinely engage in national conversations around best practices by attending conferences, and participating in forums hosted by CGCS.
2. Forming new partnerships or re-engaging partners across the city to ensure that students and staff are safe.
- BPS is engaged in ongoing conversations with BPD regarding an MOU.
  - We meet weekly with city partners and agencies to ensure that we are working collaboratively and effectively as we deploy supports as part of citywide responses to incidents and refine specific resources available to our most vulnerable families.
  - Mayor Wu yesterday announced the creation of the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement, which will support the development, engagement, and empowerment of the city's young people. BPS staff look forward to working in close collaboration with this team.

Mr. Depina said that BPS is committed to using the Racial Equity Planning Tool throughout this process.

Dr. Alkins asked questions about the use of surveys, the Superintendent her thoughts on the district's relationship with the Boston Police Department, the status of community representation on the district's Safety Committee, and support for the Office of Human Capital (OHC). The Superintendent explained that OHC staffing was not sufficient to support the increased volume of work in recent years. OHC will continue to make hiring and onboarding safety specialists a priority. Dr. Hart said that the Council relied more on expert observations than surveys when conducting its review.

Mr. Cardet Hernandez requested clarity about the problems that need to be solved. The Superintendent said that the district is looking at what high-level systems are missing that would improve safety, and as well as what protocols should be strengthened or expanded. Dr. Hart said that school districts should strive for continuous improvement. Mr. Cardet Hernandez asked how

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the safety review came to be included in the SIP. The Superintendent said that she would have Chief of Schools Drew Echelson follow up with more information.

Mr. Tran asked clarifying questions about how the district handles student records. Legal Advisor Lisa Maki said that under the 2021 Police Reform Law in July 2021 school resource officers or school police officers lost their special police powers and no longer had the ability to create incident reports. The current School Committee policy on writing school safety reports dictates what safety service specialists can write in terms of incidents.

Mr. Mehta asked if the Council is recommending that BPD be more involved in BPS. Dr. Hart said that the Council is encouraging BPS to formalize its relationship with BPD to lessen confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. Mr. Depina said that once the MOU is finalized, BPS will work with BSAC to engage with students.

Saying that data and technology are critical, Mr. O'Neill encouraged the district to use ESSER funding to make technology investments that will improve efficiencies in the Office of Human Capital. Mr. O'Neill asked Dr. Hart for more details about Atlanta's approach to student safety. Dr. Hart explained that Atlanta has social-emotional learning (SEL) specialists who work with safety officers in schools. He offered to put BPS leaders in touch with Atlanta officials.

Mr. Depina confirmed for Ms. Robinson that all schools have safety committees. He said that the district is currently engaging with school leaders about safety concerns and protocols.

Mr. Tran asked about the Council's recommendations for an anonymous reporting system. Dr. Hart cited as an example the work being done in Clark County Public Schools which provides students with a safe place to share their concerns.

Mr. Mehta asked about the Council's data collection process. Dr. Hart said that the team engaged in multi-faceted data collection that included school visits, interviews and observations.

Mr. Cardet Hernandez how the district's relationship with the BPD will improve outcomes for students. The Superintendent said that BPS does not have data to compare student's attitudes towards school safety officers pre- and post-pandemic. She spoke about the importance of having clarity regarding safety roles and working together in partnership to build relationships with students.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON REPORTS**

None.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Cardet Hernandez requested that district staff follow up on concerns raised during public comment about delays in paying employees promptly and accurately. The Superintendent said

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that the concerns raised are multi-faceted, with some involving numerous BPS departments. She said that she will provide the Committee with a progress update at the next meeting. Mr. Cardet Hernandez suggested that the district explore hiring a subcontractor to expedite payments.

Mr. Tran volunteered to be part of the Superintendent's Safety Committee.

**ADJOURN**

***Approved*** - At approximately 8:40 p.m., the Committee voted unanimously, by roll call, to adjourn to the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth Sullivan  
Executive Secretary