

September 10, 2026

GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE

**Governance Subcommittee Meeting
Thursday, September 10, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Arts Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02138**

Called for the purpose of discussing School Committee rule changes for 2026-2027.

Subcommittee Members Present: Mayor Siddiqui (Chair); Chair Weinstein; Member Jaikumar

Other Members Present: Member de Paula Santos; Member Hudson

Also Present: David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools

Mayor Siddiqui in chair.

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m. **Mayor Siddiqui** read the call of the meeting noting that the subcommittee would review previously proposed rule changes and discuss additional updates related to public comment procedures and School Committee governance. She outlined the anticipated order of business, including review of proposed rule revisions discussed at the previous Governance Subcommittee meeting, consideration of motions referred to the Subcommittee, a summary of conversations with members of the Arlington School Committee regarding educator participation in School Committee meetings, and discussion of alternatives proposed by the Superintendent.

Mayor Siddiqui began with public comment. Each registrant was limited to 3 minutes to allow for ample time for an open discussion.

- Sarah Rosenberg, Cambridge Education Association (CEA) Vice President of Community Relations, encouraged the Committee to make its meetings more welcoming, accessible, and relevant to families and educators. She asked the Subcommittee to consider allowing public comment on topics beyond those appearing on the meeting agenda; establishing a non-voting CEA representative on the School Committee; providing regular opportunities for educators to present directly to the Committee; and restoring additional public comment time for the CEA president or representative.
- Laura Clawson, a CPS parent, supported expanding public comment and providing additional speaking time for the CEA president, and strongly supported establishing a non-voting educator representative on the School Committee. She emphasized that educators bring direct classroom expertise and argued that their perspectives should regularly inform Committee deliberations and policy decisions.
- Jess Goetz offered several suggestions related to School Committee governance, including requiring referred matters to be placed on Subcommittee agendas; establishing expectations regarding the frequency of Subcommittee meetings; considering speaking-time limits during meetings; developing a more structured speaking order for members; reconsidering the order of business so that policy matters are not consistently addressed late in meetings; and adding expectations and responsibilities for School Committee members to the rules.
- Carolyn Magid, a member of the Our Revolution Cambridge Education Committee, spoke in support of a non-voting educator representative on the School Committee. She stated that educator perspectives and frontline experience should be incorporated into ongoing Committee deliberations and expressed concern that occasional educator presentations would not provide the same continuous opportunity for participation.
- Sheli Wortis, a member of Cambridge Retired Educators United and the Our Revolution Cambridge Education Committee, supported including an educator representative or representatives in School

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Committee meetings. She emphasized the value of hearing directly from educators regarding curriculum, professional development, classroom implementation, and student experiences.

Following public comment, **Mayor Siddiqui** reviewed an annotated version of the School Committee rule changes previously discussed by the Subcommittee, including removal of repetitive or outdated language and updates reflecting the change from the Mayor automatically serving as School Committee Chair to the Committee electing its Chair.

The Subcommittee reviewed existing language requiring an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the School Committee to cancel or postpone a meeting. **Mayor Siddiqui** noted that this does not reflect current practice and proposed striking the provision. The Subcommittee agreed that the language should be removed and that the rules should reflect the current process for notifying members when a meeting is canceled.

The group discussed the distinction between an individual member's request for information and a formal request requiring the administration to prepare a report. Superintendent Murphy agreed that the administration has a responsibility to respond to reasonable requests for information from individual members. **Member Jaikumar** agreed that the existing language limiting outstanding reports should be revised. The Subcommittee generally agreed that the rules should distinguish between ordinary requests for information and formal Committee requests for reports and that a Committee directive should require approval of the body.

The Subcommittee discussed who should preside over a meeting if both the Chair and Vice Chair are absent. Options discussed included the Mayor, the longest-serving member, or selection of a presiding officer by members present. Following discussion, the Subcommittee agreed that the members present should select a presiding officer by vote.

Mayor Siddiqui had been asked by another Committee member if the School Committee should adopt language similar to the Cambridge City Council rules restricting signs, posters, and placards in the meeting room. She explained that the City Council has used such a practice to reduce distractions and ensure that attendees' views are not obstructed. **Member Jaikumar** questioned whether such a restriction was necessary and raised free-speech considerations. Chair Weinstein noted that signs have generally not interfered with School Committee business but asked what authority the Chair would have to address an unusually large or disruptive sign if a problem arose. The Subcommittee discussed the difference between limiting what people can say and setting reasonable rules about when, where, and how they may speak. Rather than recommending a rule change at this time, **Mayor Siddiqui** suggested referring the legal question for further review before revisiting the issue.

The group reviewed the distinction between withdrawing a motion before it has been acted upon and rescinding an action previously adopted by the Committee. It was noted that the current rules contain limited language regarding rescission and recommended clarifying the terminology and procedure. The Subcommittee agreed that this section should be revised for clarity.

The Subcommittee reviewed Chapter 2, Section 19, concerning reporting of contracts and staff travel under \$25,000. Superintendent Murphy clarified that the administration currently provides the Committee with information regarding vendor agreements under \$25,000 and recommended maintaining that practice as an important fiscal transparency measure. He questioned whether the requirement belonged in the Committee's rules rather than in policy and also suggested that the Committee may wish, at a future time, to review the \$25,000 threshold for contracts requiring Committee approval. **Chair Weinstein** and **Member Jaikumar** agreed

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that the reporting requirement may be more appropriately addressed through policy rather than the Committee's procedural rules. Both expressed support for maintaining fiscal transparency regarding contracts. The Subcommittee agreed that the placement of the provision should be reviewed and that the contract approval threshold could be considered separately.

Mayor Siddiqui raised Vice Chair Dube's suggestion that the rules more clearly identify the Vice Chair's role in coordinating the Superintendent evaluation process. **Chair Weinstein** supported clarifying the role, noting that the Vice Chair's involvement has been reflected in past practice and in Superintendent contracts. The group agreed that language should be developed to clarify the Vice Chair's role while maintaining the responsibility of the full School Committee for the Superintendent's annual evaluation. **Chair Weinstein** suggested consulting legal counsel before finalizing the language because the evaluation process may also be addressed through Superintendent contract negotiations.

Mayor Siddiqui summarized conversations that the three Subcommittee members had held individually with members of the Arlington School Committee regarding Arlington's practice of providing space on its agenda for a representative of its educators' association. Members reported that Arlington officials described the practice as largely positive. The arrangement is not formally established in Arlington's School Committee rules but developed as an organically as an ongoing practice. An educator association representative provides updates, feedback, and educator perspectives and generally does not remain for the entirety of the meeting. Collective bargaining matters remain separate from this process. **Member Jaikumar** stated that the Arlington representatives spoke positively about the arrangement and indicated that it had strengthened communication and provided useful educator perspectives. **Chair Weinstein** emphasized the importance of Committee-wide support for such an arrangement. **Mayor Siddiqui** also noted that Arlington members had identified potential challenges, including questions about providing a designated role to one stakeholder group when other groups, such as families or special education parent organizations, may also seek regular representation. Subcommittee members then discussed alternatives previously outlined by Superintendent Murphy, including strengthening existing partnership structures, creating additional public hearings or forums, and establishing designated agenda opportunities at particular meetings for educators and other stakeholders. Superintendent Murphy discussed the administration's existing structures for educator engagement, including joint labor-management committees, and emphasized the need to balance opportunities for direct educator input with the respective governance and administrative responsibilities established for the School Committee and Superintendent. **Chair Weinstein** expressed interest in expanded public hearings or other formats that would allow the Committee to hear directly from educators, caregivers, and other stakeholders. He suggested that hearings could potentially be held in different locations and structured to encourage more direct dialogue. **Member Jaikumar** supported providing educators with a regular and direct opportunity to address the full Committee. He stated that the alternatives under discussion did not necessarily need to be mutually exclusive and that public hearings, designated educator presentations, and other opportunities for stakeholder engagement could potentially be used in combination. The subcommittee members agreed that the matter could be brought back to the full School Committee for further discussion and that individual members could propose additional rule changes or motions for consideration.

Mayor Siddiqui shared that she and Executive Secretary Christo would revise the draft School Committee rules to incorporate the changes and clarifications discussed during the meeting. The Subcommittee agreed to move forward and present the rule changes that members supported at a future Regular Meeting, while continuing to discuss issues where they had not yet reached agreement, including educator participation and other proposed governance changes. **Mayor Siddiqui** noted that additional Governance Subcommittee discussion could be scheduled as needed and that individual School Committee members remained free to bring forward additional proposed rule changes for consideration by the full Committee.

Mayor Siddiqui adjourned the meeting with a roll call vote of subcommittee members. (5:30 p.m.)