

**Cambridge Kids' Council Meeting: November 18, 2010 at 6p.m.**  
**344 Broadway**

Present: Mayor David Maher (chair), Kenneth Reeves (co-chair), Humbi Song, Tina Alu, Sally Benbasset, Pasang Lhamo, Steven Swanger, Robel Phillipos, Nancy Tauber, Neal Michaels, Cheyenne Jones, Ellen Semonoff, Bob Haas, Barbara Kibler, Betty Bardige, Jessica Daniels, Andrea Collymore, Mary Wong

Absent: Louis DePasquale, Susan Flannery, Robert Healy, Dennis Keefe, Samuel Seidel, Jeff Young

Guests: Patty Nolan, Carolyn Turk, Claude Jacob, Youth Involvement Subcommittee (YIS), Allentza Michel, John Clifford, Bridget Rodriguez, Daniel Ruben, Lenny DiPietro

**A. Call to Order**

Meeting is called to order at 6:13 pm on 18 November 2010 by Mayor David Maher.

Mayor Maher welcomes those present, and invited all to introduce themselves. He also asks any students present to include their year in school.

Those present introduce themselves.

Mayor Maher begins by asking the students present how they're enjoying the new school year, and specifically of the 10th-grade students whether they're enjoying being at the main campus of Cambridge Rindge and Latin School.

The students respond affirmatively.

Mayor Maher reminds the students, and also the Council, that the high school renovation will be complete in September 2011, coming at a cost of \$100 million.

**B. Updates and Announcements**

Mayor Maher asks if anyone has announcements to share. He also inquires about the recent CRLS play.

A YIS member responds that CRLS staged a musical which had been written by Dr. Corey, that he did not enjoy it, and that it contains good acting and is funny. He adds that it showcases what CRLS drama is all about.

Mayor Maher seeks to confirm that it is running through the coming Saturday.

Cheyenne Jones confirms this.

**C. Public Commentary**

Mayor Maher asks if there is any public commentary. Hearing none, he moves to the next item.

**D. Review / Adoption of Minutes**

Mayor Maher asks for a motion to adopt the minutes from the Council's meeting of 23 September 2010.

*Action Taken: Neal Michaels moves the adoption of the minutes from 23 September 2010. Nancy Tauber*

*seconds the motion. The Kids' Council adopts the minutes from 23 September 2010 by unanimous voice vote.*

Mayor Maher suggests skipping to the item on Kids' Council Memberships in the agenda, which happens without objection.

#### **F. Kids' Council Memberships**

Mary Wong informs the Council of Andrea Kramer's recent resignation. She points the Council to the resumes of the candidates who had been approved by the Council at the September meeting, but not appointed by the City Manager, for the most recent vacancy. She confirms those individuals are still interested in a seat on the Council.

Mayor Maher confirms that the suggested action is to forward the three candidates to the City Manager.

***Action Taken: Betty Bardige moves the nomination of Charlotte Avante, Avra Goldman, and Sandra Nunley to the City Manager for membership on the Kids' Council. Steve Swanger seconds the motion. The Kids' Council adopts the motion by unanimous voice vote.***

Mayor Maher confirms to the Council that the names just nominated will be forwarded to the City Manager.

Mary informs the Council that the ordinance creating it calls for an Executive Committee, comprising the same proportion of community members to government representatives as in the Council at large. Given the committee's current composition, it requires two additional community members. The membership, says Mary, must be voted on by the full council. She asks if there is any interest among those present in joining the Executive Committee.

Bridget Rodriguez asks as to the duties of the Executive Committee and its members.

Mary responds that historically the Executive Committee would plan the agenda for the Council meetings. Upon the Council's undertaking of its Strategic Plan, Mary notes, the Executive Committee expanded its duties and membership to form a Working Group to focus on the development of that plan. Mary then reads from the ordinance which created the Council, which states that the Executive Committee is to be no larger than one-fourth the size of the Council, and reiterates that membership is subject to a vote of the entire Council and is required to maintain the proportion of community members to government representatives present in the Council at large. She adds that the Executive Committee is responsible for addressing to urgent matters between meetings of the Council.

Upon sensing no immediate interest, Mayor Maher suggests that any members interested in the Executive Committee can contact Mary or Bridget at a later time.

Mayor Maher returns the Council to a previously-skipped item on the agenda.

#### **E. Presentation & Discussion**

Mayor Maher begins the presentation:

The School Committee and the City Council worked on this presentation. We've been soliciting viewpoints from different stakeholders and want to present it all here. There are many people here tonight who are involved in this. We hired our new Superintendent in July 2009, and tasked him with investigating our middle grades, and with looking at current structure and future improvement. The School Committee gave him 100 days to look at the issue. It quickly became clear this would not suffice. The Superintendent came forward with four options, among them the status quo, having one middle school for grades six through eight, having two middle schools, and a

hybrid option of having some schools remaining K-8 and having some transition to K-5. We realized we would need a more holistic approach to this process, including an inventory of our current space available and a look at the Controlled Choice plan. Essentially, the proposals were sent back. Since then we've been working with the Superintendent to develop and implement a process that could look at all of these factors, and not address them one at-a-time. School Committee members are heading three teams, each team including a senior administrator from the schools as well as parents, teachers, and experts in the community. An extraordinary amount of work has been done. The basic process has been to begin by gathering information, and then soliciting input, and then reporting to the Superintendent. We've gathered information from the late summer and will continue into the middle of December, then the Superintendent will receive the reports and, in turn, report his recommendations to the full School Committee and to the public at large around the middle of January, with full vetting and, hopefully, adoption of the plan by the middle of February. As an example of the kind of thinking in which these teams are engaged, one of them is looking at buildings. Four elementary schools were built between 1990 and 2005, three being renovations and one including new construction. Looking forward, many of the school buildings are from the 1960s, and the quality of the construction wasn't the same as it was for our buildings from the 1930s and the 1940s. We will need new buildings or capital improvements. The buildings from the 1950s have not yet had significant work done since they've been built. We're not talking about renovating four schools in the space of a year, but about trying to develop a long-term plan. These are not necessarily overnight changes.

Mayor Maher then asks Nancy Tauber to begin with the facilities plan.

Nancy first makes sure to note her general high regard for things begun in the 1950s. She also emphasizes that though the three teams are separate, they have been collaborating. She stresses that this is important because none of the issues can be addressed in isolation as they are interrelated. She states that the focus must be the best interests of the students, that they can move forward and succeed.

Mayor Maher concedes that the challenges being discussed are the same as have been discussed for many years. Among them are the achievement gap, raising expectations for everyone, and ensuring the offerings available are ones in which the City can take pride. He reiterates that those involved in these discussions know the goal isn't just to build buildings, but to ensure the content is right.

Nancy Tauber continues talking about facilities:

Now is the time to talk about elementary schools. The renovations at CRLS are finishing up. One of three guiding principles we've had on this committee is that our needs should drive our building choices, not the other way around. The others are that we design for optimum use now and in the future, and that we commit to sustainable building practices. The members of this committee include myself, Jim Maloney, Ellen Semonoff, Rich Rossi, and other representatives. At our second meeting, the Community Development Department joined us and shared some maps and zoning information. We noticed that not all the buildings were included here. What we do have are individual maps of each building. Notice that, except for the King Open School, all the buildings are too big for their lots based on current zoning regulations. There's no other land on which to build.

We're looking to identify four or five that need renovation or replacement. We also want to inventory our existing resources, such as how many classrooms we have, how many gymnasias we have, etc. We also want to ensure we have adequate space for our out-of-school-time partners, as they use our space daily.

This will take time. If we're lucky, a school can be finished in three years. We also need a plan for those buildings not being renovated, keeping in mind the idea of swing space. We also have to think about central administration offices, as they need a new home. That's been our focus. We want to make sure all our ducks are in a row that when the plan is in place, we can come up with facilities.

Jessica Daniels asks if the needs of three- and four-year-olds are being considered.

Nancy responds affirmatively.

Ellen Semonoff adds that the task force is looking at what the building space will be. She notes that expanding the schools to all four-year-olds would require large increases in classroom space and in budget. She emphasizes the importance of making sure existing programs for four-year-olds are maintained and well-served by the facilities.

Nancy mentions that there has been talk of creating an early childhood center.

Betty Bardige points out that though the state framework requiring publicly-funded programs for three-year-olds does not require that programs be housed in school buildings, some coordination would probably be positive.

Nancy mentions that this is a good example of the importance of broad representation in these discussions.

Mayor Maher states that Ellen has been great at offering her expertise to the teams, and points out that it would be much more expensive for the School Department to run early-childhood programs than for the Human Services Department to do so.

Nancy reminds the Council that it can serve as a good audience to instruct the working groups in how best to communicate their ideas.

A student asks if the construction and renovation will be multiple projects at different times or if they will be simultaneous.

Nancy responds that they will be done one at-a-time over several years.

This student then notes that at CRLS, with the current renovations, there are constant disruptions from the noise and changes relating to the current projects.

Nancy mentions that what the working group is considering is moving an entire school into a swing space during renovations.

Mayor Maher points out that the Longfellow school and the old Graham + Parks school will be vital in providing available space.

Nancy clarifies that just the ninth-grade students were moved to Longfellow for CRLS renovations, but the current plan would involve moving an entire school there.

Fatima Shields recalls there had been a library in the Longfellow space before it was the CRLS ninth-grade campus.

Mayor Maher points out that this was while the main library was being renovated, and suggests that this offers a good example of how the City has used such swing space in the past. Mayor Maher expresses that eventually there may be long-term plan for the Longfellow building, but in the meantime it's useful to have a space available and various temporary uses have been planned for the space over the next ten years.

Neal Michaels asks about outdoor space, and whether all the buildings have access to it.

Nancy responds that some buildings have more outdoor spaces than others, and that it is one of the factors being considered. She mentions that the presentation the working group received from the Community Development Department was helpful in thinking about this issue.

Patty Nolan reiterates that it is different in different schools.

Nancy also states that each school has different resources, and the working group has a list of which schools have which resources.

A student inquires as to the sustainability of future construction, noting that the new library was designed and built with this in mind.

Patty points out that the CRLS project has had sustainable pieces involved.

Mayor Maher notes the awards that the restoration of the City Hall Annex, in which the Council is meeting, has won many awards related to sustainability, and that LEED certification is a priority to the City.

Barbara Kibler wonders how priorities are being set regarding which buildings get renovations when.

Nancy answers that the working group is currently thinking through those criteria.

Claude Jacob states it would be interesting to see the algorithm of what's taken into account.

Mayor Maher points the Council to the second page of the working group's handout, which shows the current state of affairs in the City. He reiterates that only one school site could be built today given current zoning regulations, as the City Council has adjusted zoning requirements in neighborhoods to allow for space. He also mentions that a building being built in 2012 will not be meeting the same needs as one that was built in 1955, as there have been innovations in education, in school layout, and in other things. He shares that City planners have been supporting the working group in looking at this issue, and have gone to the City to suggest that some zoning changes may be needed to help this plan move forward. He also notes that some of the older schools don't have adequate lunchroom or theater space.

Nancy indicates the broad criteria being considered in determining which schools to renovate and when, including location, space flexibility, interior size, open space, and condition of the current building.

Claude highlights a page he likes in the handout, and wonders about trend data regarding number of students. He mentions it's hard to discern if space is tight because there are too many students or because there is not enough space.

Nancy notes that the chart will list both interior space and exterior space.

Claude turns the Council's attention to after-school, and wonders about the amount of traffic, the ecology of the neighborhoods, and what else might be around.

Mayor Maher informs the Council that the City Manager has appropriated \$200,000 for a formal feasibility study in the current fiscal year's budget, and that there should be \$2 million in next year's budget for designing the first school. He goes through a rough timeline, with the planning and design of the second school happening concurrent with the construction of the first, and so forth. He states that the City feels good about how it is thinking ahead and planning for the future.

John Clifford asks if the School Committee will have to approve these plans.

Mayor Maher backtracks, noting that the Facilities working group and the Controlled Choice working group can't make final decisions until seeing what the JK-8 group will be presenting.

John expresses his concern over what he's seen of who shows up to these meetings, specifically that minorities do not. He suggests that the committees must find a way to hear the voices of minorities, as some people will propose their preferred program at the exclusion of another program.

Mayor Maher agrees, noting that the JK-8 committee has held two meetings, both at City Hall, with both being well-attended but not well-rounded.

Nancy states that the "silent majority" needs to be found, and asks how that can be done.

Barbara Kibler asks if the meetings are ever moved out of City Hall and into the neighborhoods.

Mayor Maher mentions the "World Café", to which every school council was encouraged to send representatives. He notes that Bridget Rodriguez is hoping to talk to some people about how to do this.

John notes the upcoming meeting at the Margaret Fuller House.

Barbara elaborates, and informs that there's going to be a meeting at the Margaret Fuller House to introduce the idea of the Kids' Council and its goals to residents of that neighborhood. She continues that one thing being shared is the notion of the middle schools, as some people have no idea this is being discussed.

John notes that Councilor Ken Reeves and School Superintendent Jeff Young will be attending this meeting.

Mayor Maher accepts that there are improvements to be made regarding communication, and notes that an outside expert may be needed.

Jessica Daniels mentions that, though she is a parent of a student at CRLS, she hasn't heard much about these things. She suggests that parents who have already guided their children through K-8 in Cambridge may have some insight to share on the middle school issue.

Patty asks Jessica if she has received the phone calls that have been made.

Jessica responds that one of them came too late. She also notes that she received an email, but she suggests that to bring new people in, the phone calls and emails aren't going to be enough.

John points out that in the recent election, there were not robocalls. Volunteers went door-to-door and pulled in a massive turnout. He posits that robocalls may be useless.

Claude wonders if the Council has tried using the television and radio stations in the Haitian community.

Mayor Maher credits the communications experts with having brought this up immediately.

Steve Swanger suggests that the Housing Authority has community rooms at the larger developments, and would be happy to make them available.

Mayor Maher notes that the process is cumbersome, and suggests that some people might be waiting to see results before becoming invested in the conversation. He predicts more engagement once there is a plan with which to engage.

Mayor Maher asks if there are any other questions on the issue of facilities, and hears none.

Mayor Maher introduces the next working group, which is focusing on controlled choice. He notes the pride everyone takes in the attempts to have a desegregated and diverse school population, but also that it works better in some schools and communities than in others.

Patty Nolan shares that of those who register on-time, 17% of students don't get their first-choice school and 10% of students don't get a school in their top three.

Mayor Maher refreshes the Council on the controlled-choice policy, through which families in Cambridge choose schools.

Patty continues:

The students here probably don't remember this decision because they were in kindergarten when their parents chose a school. Controlled Choice is the program Cambridge uses to assign students to schools. For the most part, Controlled Choice acts on students entering in Kindergarten, but were a family to move in tomorrow, the child could be assigned to any elementary school, and the child would be assigned by Controlled Choice. It was developed as part of a desegregation plan. It had been designed to create racially-balanced schools, though we switched the focus to socioeconomic balance about ten years ago.

Our working group has representatives from the school administration and staff, from Harvard, from Boston University, from the business community, and three parents and a teacher. We believe in diversity because there is evidence that it improves achievement, which is the goal. Controlled Choice does have its problems, which cause frustration. As much as we try to maintain the socioeconomic balance across the schools, only half the schools have the balance for which we strive right now. We also have some schools that are more popular than others. We have uneven satisfaction with the controlled choice program. We have uneven communication and we're fighting some misinformation in the community, so there's an information gap in addition to an achievement gap.

Among the challenges we face with Controlled Choice are the following. One is geographical proximity. Families want to send their children to schools close to their house, and they want to send their children to the same school their neighbors attend. There's a question of should there be a proximity preference. There's a question of if we should continue striving for a specific socioeconomic balance. And if so, how far away from our ideal balance will we allow one school to fall? One challenge with the balancing is that there are some schools with empty seats and kids on the wait-list, and it's hard to explain this situation to a parent. There's a question of the mid-year transfer policy. Of course, the big issue is that the schools are unevenly chosen. If there were no schools that any students would want not to attend, then Controlled Choice wouldn't cause a problem for students and families. Our role in this working group is to write up a report on these issues and deliver it to the Superintendent.

Mayor Maher invites Claude Jacob to ask his question.

Claude shares that he finds even the term "controlled choice" foreign. He wants to make sure that the consumer, the parent, is going to have a role.

Patty responds that the team deliberately has one parent from the most-chosen school, one parent from the least-chosen school, and one parent from a school with special circumstances. She also shares that there was public forum that was reasonably well-attended.

Nancy Tauber jumps in to share that the public forum was very informative.

Patty admits that more could be done. She hopes that so far, this working group has done the best it can with the resources available.

Mayor Maher agrees that the hearing was interesting. He shares his appreciation that, unlike at many policy meetings where the focus is self-congratulation, this meeting allowed for the working group to hear from those who have not been well-served by Controlled Choice. He notes that those who get the school they want think the system works well, and those who don't tell everyone they know of their frustrations. He shares a story he heard at the meeting:

A parent moved to East Cambridge from out of state. There is a school right around the corner from her house, but all her neighbors suggested that sending her children there would be a bad idea, without giving a reason why. Upon investigating further, this parent learned that the school near her was, in fact, an excellent school, and she didn't understand why all the other parents would have such negative perceptions of it.

Mayor Maher suggests this gives a lesson as to how common knowledge from decades ago can still be repeated even if it has long since lost its validity, and that this communication problem needs to be addressed.

John Clifford argues the main problem is that different schools achieve at different levels. If all the schools achieved high academic success, he says, Controlled Choice wouldn't be an issue.

Mayor Maher notes there are many ways to break down the data. As an example, he points to the group of African American boys in middle school ages. At King Open School, this cohort shows poor growth. At Fletcher-Maynard Academy, on the other hand, which does not measure as well in most measures, this cohort displays excellent growth. How, he wonders, do we broadcast this information?

Ramsey Beckett shares her experience attending Graham & Parks School. She loved her school, and her parents were adamant that she attend Graham & Parks. She notes that she thrived there because it's an alternative school, and that was the right environment for her. She wonders how "fit" can be factored into the Controlled Choice program.

Claude is interested by Ramsey's comment, and notes that even without formal market analysis or reams of data, it is possible to get these kinds of perspectives by holding public hearings and focus groups and finding other ways to hear the public's voices.

Jocelyn Cox-Jakimczyk shares her experience of being assigned to Cambridgeport School along with her twin brother. Cambridgeport is also an alternative school, and she tells that her brother was transferred out after fourth grade because he needed more structure. She wonders if there could be some assessment to help match students to schools.

Cheyenne Jones suggests that students could help to spread accurate information regarding the various schools to the community.

Mayor Maher suggests another World Café, involving various means of fostering dialogue and interaction among different groups, and wonders if students from CRLS would be interested in joining for that event.

Cheyenne responds affirmatively, mentioning that in high school the students are more open to meeting new people and interacting with different groups than they were in elementary school.

Mayor Maher tells Cheyenne that the two of them will be in touch. He says that he has a facilitator in mind who can come in to help get a more broad discussion going.

Another student says that every student in the system has a story, whether or not it's one of success. He thinks there's a lot to be learned by tapping into the knowledge and the stories of the students currently at CRLS.

Robel responds to what Jocelyn had said regarding an assessment of fit. He shares that he attended King Open School when it was King/Amigos, and this was because it was conveniently-located. He thinks his mother considered this more than school fit. In light of this, he suggests that a fitness assessment could be a valuable tool for parents choosing the best school for their children.

Mayor Maher asks to hear from Claude, and then from Jessica Daniels, and then to return to the main discussion.

Claude wonders if there is an entity to help parents navigate the school choice decision. He knows that choosing a college can be a nightmare for many immigrant parents, and wants to know how such a parent might be guided through the process of choosing an elementary school.

Mayor Maher responds that there is a Family Resource Center, and that each school has a Family Liaison, though he admits that different Family Liaisons view their roles differently.

Patty adds that the schools are only equipped with liaisons capable of serving the main language groups in the system.

Jessica shares that for various reasons of school change and school fit, her children attended four different schools over time. She worries how the perceptions people have about certain schools can reinforce themselves and grow out of all proportion to reality. She wonders if the teachers are receiving enough professional development to help share best practices across schools, noting that there are challenges at the popular schools and strengths at the less-popular schools. She also worries that parents are too quick to think of “their” school, when it is, in fact, their child’s school, and wonders if this attitude of personal identification with a school helps maintain outdated conventional wisdom.

Lauren Brunet remembers hearing from the Superintendent about a plan to re-educate teachers on how to educate children, and wonders about its implementation.

Mayor Maher sees this as a good opportunity to begin discussing the JK-8 Education working group. He introduces Carolyn Turk for this, as she is in charge of curriculum for the School Department.

Carolyn says:

First, to respond to Lauren, she may be referring to a conversation about professional development regarding differentiated instruction. This is happening with multiple groups - with lead teachers, with paraprofessionals, with administrators. The dialogue is about sharing concepts as well as best practices. It is happening. What we’re hearing from this is very helpful, both in helping the individuals involved in the program and in helping us learn what is and is not working. This has a lot to do with the JK-8 working group in general.

There are three terms to highlight regarding the mission of this working group: cohort sizes; program and policy anomalies; and school configurations. I thank Marc McGovern and Alice Turkel who are co-chairing this working group. We’re working with teachers who represent various age groups, school principals, community representatives, curriculum coordinators, and out-of-school time representatives. We’re all taking a look at how to best support teaching and learning to advance academic outcomes.

The title of this working group is misleading. “Educational plan” makes it sound like we’re thinking about what happens in the classroom. Certainly day-to-day work is an important component of our discussion, but our main focus is a precursor to that. We’re studying how we organize the district to best support the classroom.

We have identified three areas of concern. Cohort size matters both to students and to teachers, as not only do students need opportunities to interact with a variety of other students, but teachers need an opportunity to learn

what works for other teachers. Programmatic and policy anomalies are facets of our system worth keeping in mind as we move forward. As examples, the Montessori program is the only entry point for three-year-old children in the district, the Haggerty School is the only one which stops after sixth grade, and special-education and sheltered populations have to switch schools more often than other students. Configuration entails how we organize ourselves to best support the needs of our students.

At our most recent meeting we put together a list of guiding statements. These are the things we think are important, and any plan we come up with should make sure to address these concerns. One is that we want the fewest transitions possible. Another is entry-age consistency. We also want to take care with the office of special education and of sheltered English immersion. We want to have a district capable of supporting multiple teaching philosophies, and we want to be able to support that variety while maintaining consistency with Massachusetts frameworks. We want outcomes more uniform than those we are currently seeing. We don't want to preclude programs of looping or multi-grades.

I was at a forum with some of our teachers, and they had the idea of having an 8th Grade Academy, similar to the one currently in place for 9th Grade. Another idea is to simply close some of our current schools and remain K-8. Another is sister schools, with a K-5 school sending its sixth-grade students to a paired K-8 school. Another is pairing each JK-4 school with a 5-8 school. These are some of the ideas that have surfaced, and more keep coming in.

Ramsey asks of the effect of splitting into younger and older schools on the interaction of younger students with older students.

Carolyn responds that, no matter the model chosen, those relationships and concepts are values they want to perpetuate.

A student mentions his appreciation of the concepts that try to keep the same cohort of students together after fifth grade, even if it's not in the same building.

Cheyenne Jones is curious as to the thinking behind the suggestion of an eighth-grade academy, as she knows many students who did not enjoy the ninth-grade academy.

Carolyn responds that this suggestion was more of a question than an idea for consideration.

Jocelyn asks about how to make decision within certain models, such as which schools to close if some schools are to close, or which schools will have which age group if the paired-school program is adopted.

Carolyn responds that the working group is beginning to craft guiding principles to use as criteria for making such determinations. She mentions that she has been pushing for a consideration supporting various teaching philosophies as a part of these decisions. She understands, also, that it is sometimes a difficult balance to respect various learning styles while maintaining a cohesive school district.

Robel recalls when King Open, which he attended at the time, moved. The main reason he had stayed with King Open was the friends and emotional ties he had there, and a desire to not have to cut all those ties and create new ones at a different school. He wants to know, if going to a split model, if kids would be split up when moving from the JK-5 school to the 6-8 school?

Carolyn mentions that a priority of the working group has been keeping students as a member of a community where kids are known, but accepts that Robel is speaking more of kids knowing each other, rather than of the school knowing the kids.

Tina Alu asks about how to communicate these different plans with the parents. She worries that many parents wouldn't have a clue as to how to judge the different models being presented. She suggests that some rationale behind each model be included with whatever communication may be broadcast.

Carolyn assures the Council that these concerns are valid, and the working group has already thought of many of them, though they did not make it into the snippets of the presentation she gave to the Council tonight.

A student tells of when he was a student at Tobin Elementary (to which Mayor Maher interjects that he did, as well) there was a cohort of students who joined the school in seventh grade, and there were difficulties, both social and academic, involved with that transition.

Another student shares a concern regarding the possible effect on class size of closing some schools.

Michael McKeown supposes that the elementary school environment is as important to a student's growth as the education provided in that environment. He suggests that remaining with the same cohort allows a student to focus his energies on his academic life because he doesn't have to constantly come to terms with a new social life.

Mayor Maher gives an example of one of the challenges with the current system. Some eighth grades have 70 students, which provide a rich and full experience. There is one eighth grade, however, that is projected to have ten students next year. He is concerned with how to ensure for those students the richness of the experience that the students in the larger schools will be receiving.

Ken Reeves, who has recently arrived, apologizes for his tardiness, which was due to an unavoidable conflict. He points out that this is still a preliminary phase of the process. He thinks these configurations do not address the root problem, which is the achievement gaps among the various schools. He suggests the overall focus should be on the outcome of the project, not on the various configuration possibilities. As he sees it, the only reason to go with any one model over another is because that is a model that will raise achievement.

Carolyn assures Ken that the working group does have achievement and results at the core of their mission.

Ken accepts Carolyn's assurances, but shares that he's heard School Committee members saying that the buildings the City has can't accommodate the programs the City wants. He wants to focus on what these programs are, and expresses his hope that the conversation, which he says he's been hearing for 21 years, can become more weighty and acquire more depth. He states that the schools shouldn't guarantee nor even suggest a tailor-made experience for each student. He says that the world is tough, and one needs bumps to get along.

Carolyn agrees with Ken.

Robel offers that the bumps come in high school, and in college, and beyond; that they should be phased in.

## **G. Next Steps**

Mayor Maher closes:

Thank you, especially, to Carolyn, who's been working really hard, and has been trying to run a school system while engaged in this process. We'll continue to gather input; we'll be back in touch with students. We'll be in touch with Steve about community meetings. There are different ways of talking about this, but I was at a meeting once where there were two people of color present. The woman standing next to me stood up and said, "This is not the most colorful crowd".

**Meeting adjourns at 8:14pm.**