

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 2, 2015 – Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. - Board of Aldermen's Chambers – Somerville City Hall

Members present: Mr. Sweeting, Alderman White (7:10 p.m.), Mr. Roix, Mr. Futrell, Ms. Pitone, Mr. Bockelman, Ms. Normand and Ms. Rafal.

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Adam Sweeting called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the Board of Aldermen's Chambers at City Hall at 7:00 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Mr. Sweeting asked for a roll call, the results of which are as follows: - Present – 7 – Sweeting, Roix, Rafal, Pitone, Normand, Bockelman, and Futrell, and ABSENT – 2 – White and Curtatone.

I. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL – Mr. Ojo was not present this evening.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- February 23, 2015 Regular Meeting minutes

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to approve the minutes. The motion was approved via voice vote.

III. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. Special Meeting of Executive Session Feb. 25 (Mr. Sweeting)

Mr. Sweeting announced that this report would be tabled until the meeting of March 16.

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- MCAS testing schedule extension. DESE approved our MCAS testing window extension request. Schools will be communicating the new testing windows to P/Gs. Dates are also posted on our District online Calendar of Events.

Test	Administration Date
ELA Composition (Grades 4, 7, and 10)	April 2
ELA Composition Make-Up (Grades 4, 7, and 10)	April 8
Grade 10 ELA Reading Comprehension, Sessions 1 and 2	March 31
Grade 10 ELA Reading Comprehension, Session 3	April 1
Grade 10 Mathematics, Session 1	May 19
Grade 10 Mathematics, Session 2	May 20
High School STE, Session 1	June 8
High School STE, Session 2	June 9

- SPED Focus Group for P/Gs – Tuesday, March 3rd, 4:15pm, SHS Highlander Café. The District hired Public Consulting Group (PCG) to complete an in-depth study of Somerville's Special Education Department. PCG will be conducting a number of interviews and focus groups as part of the review process.
- A visiting team from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will be in the District next week conducting an audit of our English Language Learner, Special Education and Career and Technical Education Programs. The Coordinated Program Review is conducted every five years and is an assessment of how well we meet our obligations – it is about compliance, not assessment. This audit reviews programs funded by federal funds and evaluates specific components.

Alderman White arrived at 7:10 p.m.

We are preparing staff this week and the preliminary oral report regarding the engagement piece of the audit should be very positive.

The Superintendent deferred to Assistant Superintendent Vincent McKay for his report on curriculum-related matters. Dr. McKay's report included the following:

- This Friday, Dr. McKay will join students from various schools at Groundworks Somerville's Maple Sap Boil down. This is held at the Community Growing Center on Vinal Ave.
- Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Bockelman, the District will host Educational Ministry officials from the Netherlands next week.

The Superintendent deferred to Finance Director Patricia Durette for a quick report on financial matters. Ms. Durette's report included the following:

- The Finance and Facilities Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday night. Packets for this meeting have been placed at everyone's seat this evening. The meeting will take place at 7:00 p.m. at Central Office on Cross Street.

The Superintendent continued his district report:

- Summer Camps & Activities Fair – Wed., March 4th, 5:30-7pm at the Healey Gymnasium. Stop in to learn more about local summer camp and activity options for your children. The event is free and open to the public.
- City-Wide Swim Meet – Saturday, March 7th, 12:00-4:00pm at the Kennedy Pool. Somerville families are invited to stop in and cheer on their favorite swimmers and teams at this great annual event. Saturday at the Kennedy Pool.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences Coming Up:
 - Tuesday, March 3rd, 2:45-4:15pm: Argenziano
 - Monday, March 9th, 2:45-4:15pm and 5:00-6:30pm: Capuano
 - Tuesday, March 10th, 2:45-4:15pm: ESCS
- Superintendent Awards Coming Up:
 - Tuesday, March 3rd, 8:45am: West Somerville
 - Thursday, March 5th, 8:30am: Healey
 - Tuesday, March 10th, 8:30am: Kennedy
 - Tuesday, March 10th, 1:30pm: Brown School

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. School Calendars

• 2014-2015

To recap the reasons for the calendar discussion, Mr. Pierantozzi provided the following information:

- Scheduling issue due to historical amount of snow and nine days closed due to weather-related issues.
- 180 day mandate by the State Department of Education
- We are one (1) day short of meeting the 180 day requirement
- Some possibilities for makeup dates are April 3 (Good Friday) and all or part of April vacation week
- In this week's packet is a large amount of information to, hopefully, guide the decision. The packet includes Contract language as scheduling makeup days on a previous holiday or vacation is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining, historical attendance data for the last weeks of school, School calendar history, MASS/MASC survey of districts, Survey results

The Superintendent's recommendation:

To authorize the Superintendent to enter into negotiations with the Somerville Teachers Association to change Good Friday to a half day of school to enable religious unit members to attend work and also participate in religious activities in the afternoon.

Discussion:

- Not possible to add hours to the day
- Three other districts have submitted waiver requests to Commissioner of Education
- For clarification purposes, 3/17 and 6/14 are already school day, no longer holidays
- Impact of school during April vacation for staff and families who have already planned and paid for vacations
- Request to move remaining half-day Wednesdays to the last week of June
- Developing a contingency in case more days need to be canceled

The School Committee recessed at 7:47 p.m. to convene in Executive Session for the purposes of strategy regarding collective bargaining.

The School Committee reconvened in open session at 8:34 p.m.

Mr. Sweeting announced that the School Committee just met in Executive Session and there are no votes to report. The 2014-2015 item is still on the floor.

After further explanation and recommendation by the Superintendent, the following motions were moved:

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to request a waiver from the Commissioner of Education for the three days lost due to the Governor's declaration of a State of Emergency and to send a letter to Commissioner Chester on their behalf.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix to declare Friday, April 3, 2015 as the 180th day of school as a half day.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Mr. Bockelman made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to enter into negotiations with the relevant unions to discuss the impact of April 3 including the loss of learning time and other issues regarding the school calendar, including the possibility of additional days closed.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

- **2015-2016**

The School Committee discussed possible ways to reconfigure the calendar for 2015-16 which would not require collective bargaining. The Superintendent provided the following options:

- Make 9/1/15 a school day, instead of a Professional Development (PD) Day
- Make 9/4/15 a school day, rather than a day off for staff and students
- Change 10/9/15 from a PD Day to a school day
- Change 11/3/15 from a PD Day to a school day

Though the changes in these days do not need to be negotiated, the resulting scheduling of PD Days lost would need to be.

The following are possible changes that would require collective bargaining:

- Changing from three vacations (12/24/15-1/1-16, 2/15/16-2/19/15 and 4/18/16-4/22/16) to a December vacation and a March vacation
- Working on 3/25/15 (Good Friday)
- Starting school prior to September 1st

Discussion ensued and included:

- The fact that 9/4/15 does not need any bargaining, at all
- Looking at the possibility of March vacation beginning in the 2016-2017 school year
- The value of holding PD early in the year
- The reality that many districts are now starting the school year in late August

The decision was made to table further discussion of the 2015-2016 calendar until our next meeting on March 16.

VI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Pitone

The PTA council will sponsor a Flashback Friday dance on Friday, March 6, 2015 at the Somerville City Club to generate more money for scholarships.

Ms. Rafal

Congratulations to the Music Department for the wonderful production of the musical, Aida!

Mr. Bockelman

The Summer Camps and Activities Fair is a great opportunity for parents/guardians to find ways to occupy their children this summer. A lot of work goes into the planning of this event.

Mr. Sweeting

The School Committee will meet for Long Range Planning on March 30th.

Ms. Normand

Reminded everyone of the Higgins Trivia Night at Tufts University's Cousens Gym on March 19th.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m. via voice vote.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

Agenda

Minutes of February 23, 2015

2014-2015 School Calendar

2015-2016 School Calendar

School Calendar History Report

Attendance History for last weeks of school 2010-2014

MASS/MASC School Year Survey results

Results of the Somerville Public Schools Make Up Day Poll with details

2015-2016 Statewide Testing Schedule

Pages from the Collective Bargaining agreements of the STA, SAA and Paraprofessionals Units regarding holidays