

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday November 2, 2015 – Regular Meeting**

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

**Members present:** Mr. Roix, Mr. Futrell (8:01 p.m.), Ms. Rafal, Ms. Pitone, Mr. Bockelman, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Sweeting

**Members absent:** Mayor Curtatone and Alderman White

**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 7:10 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 – 6 – Roix, Rafal, Pitone, Normand, Bockelman, and Sweeting, and ABSENT – 3 – Futrell, White and Curtatone.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**II. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Our Student Representative, Joshua Ojo, provided an update on happenings around Somerville High School:

- Senior Class Survey
- House Cup – although initially students were excited about the House Cup, interest has dwindled so now an event each month is being planned to get students enthused again. Once the kids got their t-shirts that seemed to be about it. Hopefully, these events will generate excitement again!
- Senior Halloween Day was last Friday and students had awesome costumes. Members of the Senior Class were commended by Mr. Oteri for their behavior. This year, students were not rowdy or out of hand, they continued with their day-to-day class work and the administration was very happy.
- New Somerville High School – students are hearing about the new Somerville High School project and are very interested and curious. There are lots of questions and they would like to know more about the project. Mr. Sweeting and Mr. Roix provided information and Mr. Roix informed Mr. Ojo when the next meeting will be and let him know that all meetings are open to the public. Mr. Roix, Mr. Sweeting and Mrs. Skipper also let Joshua know that input from students is very important and that, in the near future, the project planner will be setting up times to meet with staff and students for their input. There will also be a means of providing input electronically. Lastly, Mr. Roix shared the website address for more information – [www.somervillema.gov/highschool](http://www.somervillema.gov/highschool).
- AP Classes – once again, students are feeling pressured into taking AP classes and have been told that there are no honors options so they would either have to do AP or standard. Many students are now struggling with the AP but feel they have no options. Other Department Heads who are not in favor of the AP push are considering starting a petition regarding the AP issue. Mrs. Skipper reported that she has been in touch with Mr. Oteri around this issue and that he is working on the matter.

*Mr. Sweeting announced that, if there are no objections, he would like to take Item IV. A. - out of order.*

**• After and Out of School Programs Presentation**

Ms. Jennie McGoldrick, Director, and Ms. Rosanna Paribello, Assistant Director, of the Community Schools Program provided a PowerPoint presentation on their program (included at the end of these minutes). Included within their presentation was a wonderful video, developed by students, which gave an overview of what goes on after school in the program. Following the presentation, discussion ensued relative which included the following:

- Vouchers for Smile Students
- Middle Grades programming and site locations
- Start date for clubs (October 1<sup>st</sup>)
- How clubs/activities are selected
- Capacity – waiting lists
- Future plans

*The listing of items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.*

- Communication with parents, as well as teachers and other staff

Members thanked Ms. McGoldrick and Ms. Paribello, as well as ESCS Site Coordinator Adriana Guereque for a great presentation.

### III. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

#### A. Rules Management Subcommittee: Oct. 5 (Mr. Roix)

Mr. Roix presented his report on the Rules Management Subcommittee meeting of October 5, 2015: The Rules Management subcommittee met in the second floor conference room at City Hall on October 5, 2015. In attendance were myself, Christine Rafal and Laura Pitone. Also superintendent of schools Mary Skipper, head athletic trainer Michelle Kelly, assistant director special-education Christine Trevisone, Dr. McKay and School Committee members Adam Sweeting, Carrie Normand, Paul Bockelman and Dan Futrell.

We had five items on the agenda which were, in order:

- File JJ I F and JJ IF-R, the concussion policy - which is why Michelle Kelly was there -
- File JKAAA - physical restraint - which is why Ms. Trevisone was there,
- also Files - GBEB gift to an solicitation by staff, -
- File IK academic achievement -
- and File IKB homework.

To be brief, we did not pass any revision to policy and forward it to the School Committee as we typically do, and the reason for that is not that revision is not needed - it's really that we looked at draft documents of both of the first two agenda items: the Concussion Policy and the Restraint Policy; both are substantial revisions that require our staff to do a lot of writing to make sure that our policy is up to snuff with what we now need to do by law – so what we saw really, were draft revisions both by Ms. Kelly, in the case of the Concussion Policy, and Ms. Trevisone in the case of the Physical Restraint Policy. These of course are in response to how we're handling these important issues to be in compliance with the latest laws and regulations in both cases, and although we can play with our policy our staff really cannot do anything but what the law requires – in other words: if our policy is not in compliance, it will not change what our staff should be doing or is doing, but it is in everyone's best interest to make a policy that makes sense and is in compliance with the laws. We appreciate our staff's effort in both drafting these policies based on revisions to the law and their own expertise, and coming to the Rules Management subcommittee meeting to really enlighten the School Committee about these important policy changes on important student health and wellness issues. I'm not going to get too down into the weeds about the proposed changes on these, because as I said we've just seen a draft and we haven't voted as a subcommittee to forward any of these yet, but just so the public has an idea, I believe the changes to the concussions policy among probably other things basically take a concussion policy that we've had for athletics and make it applicable to all students with regard to how we treat concussions or potential concussions with all students in our district, not just those engaged in after school varsity or club athletics. So this is a very important topic and I will have more information on that in my next report because we will be revisiting this at our next meeting which is currently scheduled for November 17th. Likewise for the Physical Restraint Policy, which Ms. Trevisone was kind enough to attend our meeting to share her expertise and explain what she has drafted as far as revisions to that policy. Now this policy in particular, as with many things with Rules Management in School Committee policies, the draft that was only shared with us was large and extensive and still very much labeled as a draft and it's in response to some changes in the law that will be coming in January 2016. I believe it's very timely but again we may really be looking at administrative policy and we may look to the MASC version, which was also in our packet on this October 5 meeting – to see if that has been updated, and if it needs to be updated with regard to these changes in the law – I can't speak for the committee because we're still going to deliberate this but I think there was a sense that the policy that Ms. Trevisone presented to us may have been more of administrative to policy and by that I mean far more detailed than we want to include any school - however it was still a work in progress and we do appreciate the work that Ms. Trevisone already has done on this and again I don't want to go into a lot of detail because we didn't take any action yet.

These items will be on the agenda for our next meeting which is now scheduled for Tuesday the 17th of this month. That is unlike other Rules Management meetings typically held over the past couple of years at a 6 o'clock here at City Hall but that will be a separate meeting night and that will give us more than an hour, if necessary. We have this backlog that we need to plow through because we missed a few meetings. I appreciate my colleagues on the Rules Management subcommittee and Superintendent and staff's willingness to change our regular schedule to give us our own meeting night so that we can try to knock out some of this backlog, and hopefully at our next meeting I will have some policy revisions for

first reading if we make some of those revisions at the very least we can close some items out and catch up a little.

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to accept the report of the Chair of the Rules Management Subcommittee for the meeting of October 5, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**B. Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:** Oct. 13 (Ms. Pitone)

Ms. Pitone provided her report from the Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee of October 13, 2015:

Members present: Christine Rafal, Paul Bockelman, and Laura Pitone

Others present: Dan Futrell, Carrie Normand, and 2 audience members

SPS Administrators present: Mary Skipper, Vince McKay, and Melanie Kessler

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

1. SHS Matriculation Report

Melanie Kessler presented the post-secondary plans of the SHS Class of 2015. Highlights included:

- SHS Class of 2015 received acceptances to 149 post-secondary institutions.
- SHS Class of 2015 students have chosen to matriculate to 61 post-secondary institutions in 12 different states.
- 59% of 4-year college bound students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch.
- 50% of 4-year college bound students do not speak English as their home language.
- SHS graduates received over \$3 million dollars in financial aid and scholarship.

Working with Naviance, a college and career readiness software platform that supports students in the college application process from transcripts, college research and recommendations, has been a huge asset for students. We discussed career and college preparation as part of the SHS Advisory curriculum. There has been an increase in students taking AP exams. 103 graduating seniors took a total of 239 AP exams in 2015. Additionally there has been an increase in PSAT participation in the last 3 years.

Erika Del Rosario the uAspire coordinator at SHS was introduced. This program provides SHS students the financial information and resources necessary to find an affordable path to – and through – a postsecondary education. The goal is to meet with every student at least once and provide additional support to those who are most at risk for not attending post-secondary education due to finances. Student needing additional support both self- identify and are referred to uAspire by guidance counselors. The uAspire coordinator is at SHS 2 days per week, but there will be discussions to explore additional time at SHS.

2. MCAS Data Update 2015

Kenya Avant presented an overview of the MCAS data from spring 2015. Highlights for Somerville include:

- Ranks among the top 12% of all Mass school districts as measured by Student Growth Percentile (SGP.)
- Only urban district to rank among the Commonwealth's top 15% in growth.

More detailed data for ELA, Math and Science was shared and challenges were discussed. Our special education students show the largest gap in outcomes and energy will be focused on understanding the challenges and providing the appropriate support for these students. Our administrators and teachers are using this data to inform their work with students.

3. Approval of Minutes

Paul Bockelman made a motion to accept the minutes for the 9/10/15 meeting, Christine Rafal seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. Updates and New Business:

- A memo submitted by Steve Simolaris, new Supervisor of Health and PE, provided a brief update on the sexual education curriculum. This topic to be presented in more depth along with a broader update on Health and PE in a future Educational Programs subcommittee, tentatively scheduled for the December 8th meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday November 10th at 7:00 p.m. at 42 Cross St. The agenda will tentatively include the SHS Program of Studies, Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and social and emotional programming. Please check the call for the week of 11/9 for a final agenda.

At 9:15 p.m. Ms. Rafal moved to adjourn. Mr. Bockelman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to accept the report of the Chair of the Educational Programs Subcommittee for the meeting of October 13, 2015.  
The motion was approved via voice vote.

**C. School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning: Oct. 21 (Mr. Sweeting)**

The School Committee met for Long Range Planning on Wednesday, October 21 in the conference room at 42 Conference Street. School Committee members present were Adam Sweeting (Chair), Carrie Normand (Vice Chair), Steve Roix, Christine Rafal, Laura Pitone, and Paul Bockelman.

Members of the Central Office staff in attendance were Superintendent Mary Skipper, Assistant Superintendent Vince McKay, and Director of Grants and Communications Susana Hernandez Morgan.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.

There were five items on the agenda.

1) School Committee Vision Statement. At the School Committee retreat of October 3 members agreed to adopt a vision statement that would address the overall vision that addresses what Somerville Public School students can be expected to know and master during their time in our district. The Superintendent indicated that our current system of goals and goal setting should be connected to an overarching vision for the district, one that did not change from year to year. Mr. Futrell volunteered to compose a first draft of the statement. The full School Committee discussed that draft at the Long Range Planning meeting. Members agreed that the statement needed additional revisions and made suggestions to the Chair and Ms. Morgan. A new version will be circulated to the School Committee in mid-to-late November with the goal of approving the Vision Statement at a meeting of the full Committee in December.

2) School Quality Beyond Testing Project. The School Committee received the report of this project by Professor Jack Schneider of the College of the Holy Cross during the summer months. It was discussed at length during a previous meeting of the Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee. The Superintendent was seeking guidance from the School Committee as to how to proceed to the next steps of Professor Schneider's project.

All members present expressed enthusiastic support for Professor Schneider's work, particularly for its emphasis on capturing and describing school quality data that cannot be directly connected to MCAS or other state-mandated tests. The School Committee hopes to use the report to enhance discussions about what constitutes quality schools and education.

The School Committee directed the Superintendent to work with Professor Schneider to determine how best to move the project into a new round of data gathering and/or implementation at one or more schools. The Superintendent thanked the School Committee for the continued support of this important initiative.

3) STEAM Academy. The Superintendent updated the School Committee on discussions she recently held with the applicant for the STEAM Academy Innovation School and representatives of the Somerville Teachers Association. She sought guidance from the School Committee before committing to additional discussions with the parties. The School Committee expressed strong support for continuing the discussions and encouraged the Superintendent to continue working with the applicant and the relevant bargaining units.

4) Technology Update. The Superintendent briefly outlined plans for a new technology committee that would conduct a complete review of the District's technology current needs and plans for the future. The committee will begin working in January 2016.

5) Governance and Self-Evaluation. Ms. Normand asked if the School Committee should invite the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) for a training session on the respective roles and responsibilities of School Committees and Superintendents. With a new Superintendent in place and the likely addition of several new members to the School Committee in January, the members agreed this

would be a good time for a refresher course on these issues. The Committee agreed and asked Mr. Sweeting (who will not be a member of the SC in January) to work with MASC to set up such a training session in January, shortly after the new School Committee is sworn in.

School Committee Self Evaluation. Ms. Rafal asked if the School Committee should conduct a self-evaluation before the end of the calendar year. Many other School Committees perform such an evaluation. The School Committee agreed that this is something it should do. The Committee directed Mr. Sweeting to work with MASC to develop an evaluation instrument that could be used a pilot this year with the expectation that future School Committees would revise it as needed.

With no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.

MOTION: Mr. Sweeting made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to accept the report of the Chair for the School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning of October 21, 2015

The motion was approved via voice vote.

#### **IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

##### **Personnel Report – Employee Demographics**

Human Resources and Diversity Administrator Mariana MacDonald presented a PowerPoint presentation on the demographic makeup of our staff. Her report is included at the end of these minutes. Following the presentation, discussion ensued that included the following:

- Limits on hiring around salaries
- Does having 30% of our teachers without a lot of experience create an issue?
- Comparison to our neighboring districts
- How to recruit minority candidates
- Partnerships with local colleges

##### **District Report**

- Congratulations to long-time Somerville High School science teacher Joe Tarello, for earning a place in the prestigious Massachusetts Science Educators Hall of Fame. Mr. Tarello was one of only five educators from across the Commonwealth to be inducted into the Hall this year. He began his education career as a chemistry teacher at SHS in 1964, and since then has demonstrated an exceptional and unwavering commitment to his students, serving many roles during his tenure in our District, including as the SHS Science Fair coordinator for the past 51 years! We appreciate Joe's exemplary career as an educator and a mentor in our District, and are incredibly proud to call him a Somerville High School Highlander! Congratulations, Joe!
- We're celebrating Family Literacy Month with Storywalks posted in outdoor locations throughout the City. Take advantage of the beautiful fall weather and enjoy some outdoor activity while at the same time supporting literacy for young children. Storywalks will be posted throughout the month of November at the following locations: Capuano Early Childhood Center (150 Glen St.); Cummings School (42 Prescott St.); Central Hill Park/Somerville Central Library (79 Highland Ave.); Hodgkins-Curtin Park (Holland St.)
- Please save the date for a great annual event, the Somerville Early Childhood Literacy Fair, which takes place on Saturday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10:00am to noon at the Healey School Gymnasium. This is a FREE family event that offers fun literacy activities for kids 6 years and younger, and provides families with young children the opportunity to learn about programs, activities, and resources available to them in Somerville and the surrounding area. Families can participate in a wide variety of literacy activities, arts and crafts, and enjoy presentations by local museums. The theme of this year's event is Health and Wellness. Be on the look-out for our visiting veggies. It's a great event; we hope you'll stop by.
- Plans are under way for the 2015 Somerville Hour of Code event. Thanks to a tremendous community effort, last year's Somerville Hour of Code event resulted in every student in our District having the opportunity to learn the basics of computer science and participate in coding during the week-long Hour of Code event. The phenomenal success of that community partnership also resulted in Somerville being awarded the Distinguished Leadership Award from the Mass Technology Leadership Council. This year's Hour of Code event will take place from December 7<sup>th</sup> through December 13<sup>th</sup>, and we're hoping that you will want to be part of it. Please join us a volunteer and help our students gain important 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that can help them on their paths to lifetime success. Visit our District website home page ([www.somerville.k12.ma.us](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us)) to access the link to this volunteer opportunity.

- On Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00-7:30pm the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative, Mystic Learning Center, and the Physical Education Program (PEP) are partnering to offer a Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds workshop at the Mystic Learning Center. The workshop, sponsored by a U.S. Department of Education PEP grant, will offer a variety of activities that promote health and wellness for participants of all ages. This is the first in a series of four workshops planned for the year.
- I continue to be humbled and impressed by the commitment of our families to support their students and be partners in their educational journeys. It’s been an absolute pleasure for me to meet and visit with parents, guardians, and community members in a variety of venues as I’ve explored our schools and the city. Last week, I had the opportunity to converse with about 60 parents and guardians, most of them from the Hispanic and Portuguese communities, to learn from them what’s working, what we can improve upon, and how we can continue to strengthen our partnerships. I look forward to continuing these conversations. I’ll be hosting a conversation with parents and guardians in English and Haitian Creole on Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00-7:00pm at the West Somerville Neighborhood School. Please join us. Interpretation to other languages is available upon request by calling the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative at (617) 625-6600, ext. 6966.
- We have a few NO SCHOOL days coming up in the next couple of weeks. Tomorrow, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, is Election Day and a Professional Development day for educators. There will be NO SCHOOL for STUDENTS. We look forward to having students back in our classrooms on Wednesday. Please be sure to make your voice count, and get out and vote on Tuesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Then next week, all schools and district offices will be closed on Wednesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, for Veteran’s Day.
- Mrs. Skipper also announced that she had the pleasure, last Friday, of watching the students, staff and parents of the East Somerville Community School during their Harvest Parade. There were wonderful costumes and everyone was having a great time. The parade led the group to the Cross Street Senior Center where they participated in a concert. Mrs. Skipper is already thinking about what costume she will wear next year!

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Acceptance of Donations** (recommended action: approval)

The Superintendent recommends the acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donations:

| <b>Donation</b>     | <b>Donor</b>                | <b>City, State</b> | <b>Value</b> | <b>Program donated to</b>           |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Monetary            | Mr. & Mrs. Cloutier         | Somerville, MA     | \$5,000.00   | SHS for two scholarships            |
| Helix Sculpture     | Christopher Barr            | Cambridge, MA      | \$3,500.00   | SHS Science Department              |
| Monetary            | Alexandre and Valerie Rafal | New York, NY       | \$ 500.00    | SFLC for book/toy lending libraries |
| Books and gift bags | Candlewick Press            | Somerville, MA     | \$TBD        | Jump Start to Read Day at Capuano   |

Ms. Rafal read each donation and made an amendment to the donation to the SFLC that the donation be used for a toy lending library (not book).

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bockelman, to accept the donations, with gratitude.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**B. Field Trips** (recommended action: approval)

**Apr. 1-3, 2016**

Somerville High School Orchestra to Pennsylvania and New Jersey for workshops and performances. Transportation via coach bus with a cost to students of approximately \$75-\$125 each.

MOTION: Mr. Bockelman made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve the field trip.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**VI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Mr. Futrell**

Mr. Futrell provided members with more information relative to the two amendments to the MASC’s by-laws that are up for a vote at the Joint Conference later this week. Mr. Futrell stated that, as the voting delegate, he plans to support these two amendments.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjourning, Ms. Normand expressed the School Committee's condolences for the following relatives of staff members who have recently passed away:

- John Collins, father of Matt Collins, teacher at the Winter Hill Community School.
- Marcus and Mason McCann, infant grandsons of Denise Puopolo, Cafeteria Helper at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m. via voice vote.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

1. Agenda
2. Four (4) Donation request forms
3. One (1) overnight field trip requests
4. Three (3) condolence letter
5. Two (2) thank you letters for donations
6. Employee Demographic Report