

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday December 7, 2015 – Regular Meeting

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

Members present: Mr. Roix, Mr. Futrell, Ms. Rafal, Ms. Pitone, Mayor Curtatone (7:08 p.m.), Mr. Bockelman, Alderman White, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Sweeting

Members absent:

ORDER OF BUSINESS

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 7:01 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 – 8 – Roix, Futrell, Rafal, Pitone, White, Normand, Bockelman, and Sweeting, and ABSENT – 1 – Curtatone.

A. Somerville Teachers Association, Unit A, contract

Mr. Sweeting announced that the School Committee had recently negotiated a successful collective bargaining agreement with our largest unit – the Somerville Teachers Association, Unit A teachers. Mr. Sweeting also announced that STA President Jackie Lawrence was present this evening to do an official signing of the integrated contract. Mr. Sweeting commented that this is a good, fair agreement that recognizes the work of our teachers while being fiscally responsible. Mr. Sweeting asked Ms. Normand to assume the Chair and requested that Ms. Lawrence join him at the podium for the signing. Ms. Lawrence thanked the School Committee members for inviting her to the meeting and commented that she is happy to be signing the agreement this evening.

• Somerville High School Project Design Update

Building Committee Chairman and former Superintendent Tony Pierantozzi gave a brief overview of the process and pointed out the importance of adhering to the submission deadlines to the MSBA. He will share a copy of tonight's PowerPoint presentation with the School Committee and reminded all that the next submission date – that of the Educational Plan submission – is February 15, 2016. Mr. Pierantozzi introduced Mr. Alex Pitkin, an architect from SMMA, the firm contracted to design the new high school provided an update on the progress thus far on the project. Also in attendance was High School Headmaster John Oteri. Mr. Pitkin shared a PowerPoint presentation with the School Committee and the audience which highlighted the following:

- The Building Committee membership
- MSBA Planning and Project Process
- Anticipated Project Schedule
- Feasibility Study Steps
- Educational Planning and Programming
- Guiding Principles
- Site visits
- Physical analysis of Somerville High School
- Available parcels of land
- History of Somerville High School from 1852-present
- Next steps

Following the presentation, discussion ensued with members on the following:

- A request for the School Committee to have draft copies of the educational plan well in advance of their needing to vote on them.
- A request for examples of completed educational plans from other districts for comparison/review.
- The MSBA's new template for the educational plan
- Having a student on the Building Committee

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bockelman, formally requesting that the necessary steps be taken to have a student appointed to the Somerville High School Building Committee through the MSBA.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

II. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mr. Ojo provided the following report on happenings around the High School.

- The Pep Rally was a huge success. There was a great turnout and discussions are already underway about possibly having a rally after the winter sports season.
- The lockdown drill was very successful. Students were attentive and took the whole procedure very seriously.
- A new App – After School – whereby people can submit anonymous comments about their teachers, fellow students, etc. – is bad news. What started as about 50 students on the app has increased to about 500 and, along with “trash talk”, we have even had a bomb threat made using this app. Mr. Ojo and others think this is a dangerous piece of technology.
- Winter sports are starting and it is exciting not only to see our returning athletes, but to also see how our freshmen perform.

Mr. Sweeting thanked Josh for his report and for always providing important information.

Mrs. Skipper will ask our IT Director to look into the possibility of blocking the app.

- **Library and Media Department Presentation**

Mr. Charlie LaFauci and many of his library/media staff were in attendance for a presentation of his department. Mr. LaFauci reported that today was a big day for his department with the kickoff of the Hour of Code week-long event. Unfortunately, poor network connection limited his ability to fully show his electronic presentation. He, however, did provide a verbal overview and some of his staff members were also able to provide information and answer questions asked by members.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- November 16, 2015

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the minutes.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

IV. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**A. Rules Management Subcommittee: Nov. 17 (Mr. Roix)**

The Rules Management subcommittee met on Tuesday, November 17 at 7 PM in the conference room at 42 Cross St. In attendance were myself, Christine Rafal, Superintendent Mary Skipper, also head athletic trainer/concussion coordinator Michelle Kelly, Assistant Director of Special Education Christine Trevisone, and School Committee Chair Adam Sweeting.

First on the agenda was to take another look at the proposed changes to our concussion policies and those are Files JJIF and JJIF-R, these were being updated to reflect our current best practices in accordance and in accordance with recent changes to state law. These are in fact both policies which have been recently updated by MASC and were reviewed for consistency with our procedures by Miss Kelly, our Athletic Trainer and Concussion Specialist. One of the minor changes we made in subcommittee at the recommendation of the Superintendent and Miss Kelly was to modify these policies to reflect the fact that these are not merely athletic policies for us but in fact reflect the policy for all students who may incur head injuries.

Next we tackled a proposed revision to our Physical Restraint Policy, File JKAA, which came from MASC but was also reviewed by Christine Trevisone, our Assistant Director of Special Education, who revised the administrative procedures document with regard to the subject of physical restraint, to make sure we are in line with the latest laws on this - and for the public, you should know that in accordance with the law and our own best practices, without getting too down in the weeds, physical restraint of students is in fact an absolute last resort that is only used in the case where the health and welfare of our students and staff is in immediate danger, including I'm sure the health of welfare of the student being restrained. And this policy indicated that, it reiterates that we don't use physical restraint EVER as any sort of punishment, we don't use any sort isolated restraints, where a student would be in a "timeout" situation without a staff member present, there will always be a staff present and in general, we are consistent in our policy and our procedures with the current best practices on restraint which is really to minimize and discourage the use in any cases other than when its necessary because someone is about to get hurt without it.

We discussed two policies, File IK Academic Achievement, and IKB Homework. These are two topics that have been kind of hanging at the end of our Rules agenda for a few months now, that I had probably been putting off subconsciously - always pushing them to the end of the agenda - because of some dark

association of childhood trauma that the subject of homework and academic achievement triggered in the depths of my own psyche. These items appearing on our agenda came out of some questions from parents about our policies on grading and on homework, the amount of time spent on homework, etc. and the consistency with which various schools and or teachers May or may not adhere to that policy, and perhaps even whether there should or should not be making "recommended guidelines" on this subject which is technically perhaps beyond the school committee purview. We did not propose any changes to these policies, but we did agree that they wanted further discussion by the school committee but that would discussion would be better served perhaps continuing in the educational program subcommittee, at least at first – if in fact there is some proposed changes to policy in the future we could revisit this in the rules management subcommittee, but for now we did not take any action except to send them back to the full committee – and even there it wasn't a formal motion, but the School Committee Chair Adam Sweeting was present in the audience at that time and agreed that he would be willing to refer these two policies to the educational program subcommittee, so that they could be discussed in that context first.

Next we discussed 3 policies File ADC, Smoking on School Promises, File JICG Tobacco Use by Students, File GBED Tobacco Use on School Property by Staff members. These three policies were discussed at the request of a school committee member who astutely pointed out that we didn't currently have anything in our policy manual that covered electronic cigarettes e-cigarettes. And in fact the latest policies from MAS C on this are not even updated to include electronic cigarettes, and that includes File GEBD which we did not have in our Somerville public schools policy manual, that is The use of tobacco products on school property by staff members – which is in fact presented this evening for adoption for the first time, where the other two are presented as amendments to existing policies that we already had in our policy manual. But the common thread for all three of these policies is that The members of the subcommittee wanted them to effectively include e-cigarette's or electronic cigarettes as "tobacco products" Now as I said, the MASC has not yet tackle this in their policy templates, but fortunately a school committee member who originally brought this to the rules subcommittees attention, was able to provide a definition of tobacco products - taken from another organizations policy - that would cover electronic cigarettes. So we took that definition and added it to all three of these policies and we also reworded them so that we use the use of tobacco products rather than just smoking, and of course the definition also includes chew, snuff, etc. not just smoking.

We also I hope addressed an inconsistency on one of the policies - File JICG, brought to my attention by another member, by simply removing a paragraph that started with the consequence for smoking, and referred the school building administrative policy based on where the infraction occurred, when in fact the policy is intended to be general in that it covers any school sanctioned activities at any location, not just at a particular school.

The subcommittee agreed that it was inconsistent, and also not an effective use of policy to make general reference to administrative "consequences". So we remove that sentence, from File JICG and we feel it makes the policy more consistent.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

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 November 17, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

C. District Report

- Our second district-wide Somerville Hour of Code event in as many years started off with a flurry of activity at the East Somerville Community School this morning. Thank you to MA Secretary of Education Jim Peyser, Mayor Curtatone, Shereen Tyrell from the MassTLC Education Foundation, and great partners and volunteers from Amazon/Ten Marks Education, Microsoft New England and other organizations for stopping in to code with our students, and for their incredible support of this event. Every student in the District will have an opportunity to log at least 1 hour of coding through this week-long Hour of Code event, and one lucky student from each school will have a chance to win a Kindle Fire Tablet for their participation in Hour of Code, generously donated by Amazon/Ten Marks Education.
- A huge congratulations to Caleb Piehl, a fifth-grade student at the Argenziano School who was recently announced as the NATIONAL winner of the Saris 5th Grade Bicycle Poster contest. Caleb is

Massachusetts' *first national winner* of this contest. His poster was the Massachusetts winning entry, while fellow Somerville resident Nora Chiu, a fifth-grade student at the Brown School, finished second in the state. Caleb's national win earned him an all-expense paid trip to the 2016 National Bike Summit in Washington, DC. We are SO PROUD to have incredibly artistic and dedicated students throughout the District, who represent their schools, their District, their city, and their state so well!

- This week, the Kennedy School is launching the district's first Makerspace/Innovation Lab! Kennedy staff members have been working alongside partners from the Lesley University Graduate School of Education in converting the school's science lab into an innovative, hands-on working space that will be utilized by students at every grade level for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) activities and projects. We're hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, December 9th at 8:15 a.m. Join us to celebrate and for a sneak peek.
- Families with young children are invited to the Capuano Early Childhood Center (150 Glen Street) on Wednesday evening, December 9th, for a "Learning about the Somerville Public Schools" presentation. Come learn what makes the Somerville Public Schools the perfect place for your child to explore, learn and grow. The event is from 6:30 to 8:00pm. Educators and parents/guardians of current students will be available to answer questions.
- All students in grades 6-12 and their families are encouraged to join us this Saturday, December 12th, for the first district-wide Somerville College and Career Day, which will be held at Somerville High School from 9:00am to 12:30pm. More than a dozen workshops on a wide range of topics related to college and career preparation will be offered.
- Our commitment to supporting the whole child has been supported by a number of community partners and a variety of funding sources. We're pleased to announce that our District is one of 74 projects from across the United States that was recently awarded a **Farm to School grant** by the USDA. We were awarded a \$100,000 Farm to School Implementation grant which spans two years and which will allow us to continue building on the great work we have been doing the past few years in helping students connect what they eat to local food sources through nutrition education, healthy food options, and educational events in our school cafeterias.
- This is the time of year when many of our schools are showcasing the fantastic work that music teachers and students have been doing since the start of the school year. Please check our website Calendar of Events for upcoming school and District-wide concerts and events. A few upcoming events include the: (1) All-City Middle School Concert on Thursday, December 10th, starting at 7:00pm in the Somerville High School Auditorium; (2) El Sistema Somerville "Community in Harmony" concert on Tuesday, December 15th, starting at 7:00pm in the East Somerville Community School Auditorium; and (3) on Thursday, December 17th, the Somerville High School Winter Concert. The SHS Chorus is sponsoring a "Dinner and Show" that evening with dinner from 5:30-6:45pm at the Highlander Café (dinner tickets are \$25 apiece), followed by the SHS Winter Concert at 7:00pm in the Auditorium.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

• Somerville Public Schools Vision Statement

Mr. Sweeting announced that the School Committee has been working to develop a Vision Statement that would be timeless and that Mr. Futrell had volunteered to draft the first version. After discussion, and several edits, the School Committee will vote this evening on the most current version.

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the Somerville Public Schools Vision Statement, as presented.

Following discussion, which included suggested edits to the statement, Mr. Futrell amended his motion and Ms. Normand seconded the amendment to edit the Vision Statement to read as follows:

We commit to providing our students with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners, and empower them to enrich their communities.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

B. Field Trips (recommended action: approval)

**Jan. 15, Feb. 12 and
Mar. 12, 2016 (3 trips)**

NW/FC students to Pat's Peak, Henniker, NH. Transportation via school van with a cost to students of \$20 each per trip.

Jan. 31, 2016

SHS Outdoor Club to Mount Sunapee, Newbury, NH to ski and/or snowboard. Transportation via SHS mini bus with a cost to students of \$65.00 for lift, lesson and rental package

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to waive the reading of the field trips and approve.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

C. Acceptance of Donations (recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program donated to
Monetary	Boston Trust and Investment Management Company (on behalf of an anonymous donor)	Boston, MA	\$1,000.00	El Sistema
20 Thanksgiving Baskets	The Ryan Harrington Foundation	Somerville, MA	TBD	Two (2) baskets per school
23 sheets of sheet metal and 60 sheets of cement board	Suffolk County Sherriff's Department	Boston, MA	TBD	SHS Vocational Program
¾ Cello, bow and case	Marty Plotkin	Concord, MA	\$1,850.00	SHS Orchestra Program
Bass Recorder	Oriole Feshbach	Amherst, NH	\$400.00	SPS Music Department
10 Kindle Fire tablets	Ten Marks Education/Amazon.com	Cambridge, MA	TBD	One at each school for raffle prize during Hour of Code event.

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to waive the reading of the donations and accept.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

D. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual (Mr. Roix)

The following policies were presented this evening for first reading, as amended:

File: ADC – Use of Tobacco Products on School Premises

File: JJIF – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Policy

File: JJIF-R – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Regulations

File: JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students

File: JICG – Use of Tobacco Products by Students

The following policy was presented this evening for first reading, for adoption:

File: GBED – Use of Tobacco Products on School Property by Staff Members

E. SCALE ADP Graduate (recommended action: approval)

SCALE Supervisor, Janice Philpot, recommends that the following students, who have successfully completed the necessary requirements, be granted an Adult Diploma:

Sonya Catherine Fuentes 50A Memorial Road, Apt. 31 Somerville 02145

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

The motion was approved via voice vote.

F. Report of voting delegate for MASC/MASS Conference (Mr. Futrell)

The report was tabled to a future meeting.

VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**Mr. Roix**

1. Announced that there is an edited copy of File JJIF-R at members' seats this evening.

Ms. Rafal

1. With such a busy music schedule, Ms. Rafal gave a shout out to Mr. Saunders but also to the students and staff who give so much of their time to preparing and performing.
2. At the Healey School tomorrow – a meeting regarding the Healey-Mystic River Master Plan.
3. This weekend, there will be a Winter Hill "Better Block" meeting
4. On Saturday, there will be a College and Career Readiness Fair at Somerville High School for students in grades 6-12 and their parents and guardians. Great workshops are being offered including some being presented in Spanish in addition to English.

Mr. Futrell

1. Asked about the memo regarding PARCC that is at members' seats.
Mrs. Skipper responded that this was a preview of what will be discussed tomorrow evening at Ed Programs.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

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

- Harvey Porter, father of Lisa Kuh, Early Childhood Director for the Somerville Public Schools.
- Flora Romeo, mother-in-law of Donna Romeo, paraprofessional at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m. via voice vote.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of November 16, 2015
3. Somerville Public Schools Vision Statement
4. Four (4) Out of State Field Trips forms
5. Six (6) donation acceptance forms
6. One (1) SCALE ADP diploma request
7. Two (2) letters of condolence
8. Three donation thank you letters
9. Policies for first reading this evening