

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday December 21, 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, Mr. Bockelman, Alderman White, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Sweeting

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone

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 7:03 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.

II. AWARDS AND CITATIONS

Presentations to the following members for their service upon their departure from the School Committee:

- School Committee Chair Adam Sweeting

Mr. Bockelman assumed the Chair so that Ms. Normand could honor Mr. Sweeting with a resolution (at end of these minutes) and a plaque recognizing his wonderful work on the School Committee on this his last meeting.

Mr. Sweeting offered his thanks and reflected on his pride at the work the Committee has done.

- School Committee Ward Four Representative Christine T. Rafal

Mr. Sweeting assumed the Chair and Ms. Rafal stepped to the podium where she was also honored with a plaque and resolution for her great work. This was also Ms. Rafal's last meeting.

Ms. Rafal also expressed her gratitude and gratification regarding various accomplishments of the Committee during her time as a member.

III. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Our Student Representative, Joshua Ojo, provided the following report on happenings around the High School:

- Stated that it was an honor to serve with Mr. Sweeting and Ms. Rafal and that he is sad to see them go.
- Last Wednesday was holiday sweater day and lots of students and staff participated. Mr. Oteri wore a holiday tie instead!
- The holiday show will be presented on December 23 and the expectation is that staff will, as usual, be fun and funny. This is supposed to be the best show ever!
- Students are starting to get interested in the upcoming presidential election and are voicing their opinions regarding the candidates. Ms. Kersten is engaging students in the process and encouraging all eligible students to register to vote.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- December 7, 2015

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to approve the minutes.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning: Dec. 16 (Mr. Sweeting)

Members Present: Adam Sweeting (Chair), Carrie Normand (Vice Chair), Steve Roix, Dan Futrell, Christine Rafal, Laura Pitone, Paul Bockelman.

Also in attendance: Superintendent Mark Skipper, Assistant Superintendent McKay, Susana Hernandez Morgan, Jim Nocito, Kenya Avant-Ransom. There were also three members of the public in the audience.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm in the conference room at 42 Cross Street.

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.

1) Options of Expanding Foreign Language Instruction. Mr. Nocito, the Director of K-12 Foreign Languages, presented ideas for expanding options for foreign language instruction. Currently, the District offers Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian at the High School. In addition, we offer Spanish to students 3 days per week starting in the 6th grade and every day beginning in the 7th grade. Students must be MCAS proficient in ELA to take Spanish in the elementary schools. This policy is being reconsidered.

The Superintendent sought guidance from School Committee about how, or if, to expand language offerings. There was strong support for doing this. Mr. Nocito also discussed the possibility of beginning language instruction as early as the 3rd grade. He is interested in having different languages at the different elementary schools as a way to build feeder programs for languages other than Spanish.

The School Committee gave its strong support for these initiatives and encouraged the Superintendent and Mr. Nocito to explore options and to pay special attention for potential complications in how enrollments in the various schools might be affected.

2) Revision of the School Improvement Plan Process. Ms. Avant-Ransom presented a redesigned School Improvement Plan process. This revision began in spring 2015 and was accelerated over the past several months.

The new process aims for a more flexible and easy-to-update process that stakeholders could revisit throughout the term of the plan. The Superintendent would also like to see the plans cover a two-year period, rather than the current one.

3) Summer School. The Superintendent outlined a plan to coordinate the several summer school programs. Currently, there is a lack of coordination and no clear vision of what we hope students will receive in our summer offerings, which include – but are not limited to – community schools programming, credit recovery, and remedial offerings. There will be a new position: The District Coordinator of Summer Programs, which will be a part-time position reporting to the Assistant Superintendent.

The Superintendent also shared an initial draft of a new program to be called ExperienceSomer. This will be a summer opportunity comprised of several different programs, each tailored to offer students the unique experiences that will benefit them most. Ideally, the new program will enable community partners such as the Freedom School to utilize school department space while coordinating services such as nursing, redirect, and other support services.

Mr. Justin Hildebrandt, who runs the Freedom School in the summer, shared with the School Committee his experience of trying to set up programs in schools during the summer and expressed hope that the new coordinated efforts would better serve city students.

4) School Committee Evaluation. The School Committee discussed the results of its first-ever self-evaluation. The Committee used a survey instrument provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees. Members were glad that they conducted the evaluation but expressed dissatisfaction with the instrument. Going forward they will build on this pilot to develop a survey of their own.

The School Committee took no action at the meeting.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

MOTION: Mr. Sweeting made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to accept the report and minutes for the School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning meeting of December 16, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. Personnel Report

Mrs. Skipper announced that in the Personnel Report included in members' packets, there are the names of five employees who have recently notified us of their intention to retire:

- Ann Marie Valeri, School Psychologist for the Special Education Department
- Stella Apostolakos, Cosmetology Teacher at Somerville High School
- Susan Alport, ESL Specialist at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School
- Anne Sutherland, Teacher at the Healey School
- Richard Brunet, Culinary Arts Teacher at Somerville High School

The Superintendent wished these employees health and happiness upon their retirements.

B. District Report

- At our last School Committee meeting, I mentioned Caleb Piehl, a fifth-grade student at the Argenziano School, who won the **NATIONAL Saris 5th Grade Bicycle Poster contest**. Caleb was honored at a school assembly for Argenziano 5th and 6th grade students last week. Mayor Curtatone, representatives from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and school and district administrators were on hand for the celebration. Representatives from the MassDot's Safe Routes to Schools presented him with his new bike, light and helmet. Caleb's classmates had a surprise special presentation for him – a poem using the letters of his name, to demonstrate their pride in this outstanding accomplishment. Caleb also won a 3-day/2-night trip for two to the National Bike Summit in Washington DC. As the national winning school, the Agenziano School will receive a bike parking rack for 20 bikes, and The Hub System -- an online educational transportation tracking system that makes it fun and easy for a school to implement a biking incentive program.
- This past Wed Dec 9th, many staff, students, and parents and community members joined the Mayor, me, Principal Mark Hurrie to cut the ribbon for the District's first **Makerspace/Innovation Lab at the Kennedy!** The school's science lab was re-designed into an innovative and creative STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) space with a variety of hands-on activities that promote critical thinking. Students at every grade level in the school will be able to explore and discover through the use of a range of educational resources such as BeeBots, Scratch, Lego Simple machines, and other resources. The Kennedy Makerspace/Innovation Lab is the result of a tremendous amount of collaborative work with the Lesley University Graduate School of Education, and a host of incredible volunteers. We're very excited about the opportunities that this space will provide to Kennedy School students, and about the potential for expanding this type of programming into schools around the District.
- What an amazing few weeks of music we have had in our schools under the leadership and direction of Rick Saunders, SPS's Music Director. I have had the pleasure to see a number of our school Winter concerts as our talented students shine playing their instruments and let their voices ring out with joy. Additionally, as a community, we have been treated to our District-wide Middle School and High School Winter Concerts, and El Sistema's Community in Harmony concert. What an amazing place Somerville is for music and the arts!
- With help from our Mayor and the district, SHS launched their US First Robotics team a week ago. We have 40 talented and eager students ready to put their minds and creativity to work as we compete against hundreds of teams from around the State. What makes SHS poised to do well in the competition is the diverse make up of the team—students who can build, program, draw and design, construct, and articulate from across various programs at SHS. The competition will officially kick off in January during the build season and end in mid April. We are looking for parent and community volunteers who want to be part of this incredible opportunity. If interested please reach out to John Oteri, SHS Headmaster.
- As part of our continued effort to look at other high school design projects, members of the SHS building committee along with several students from Somerville High visited Winchester High on December 10. A few weeks earlier members visited Essex Technical and Agricultural school. These visits are timely and helpful as they show us examples of schools that have completed the building process with MSBA and those that have ongoing projects. It has been particularly helpful to have students and teachers be a part of these walkthroughs and as we work toward the first draft of the Education Plan, what we see and what we hear continues to help shape our vision for the SHS of the future. We are currently deep into the collaborative work of writing the Educational Program Plan, a document that details the current educational structure and proposed plan and which will help inform the design of a new or renovated building. An early draft of the Ed Program Plan will be shared with SC in early January and the final Educational Program Plan will be submitted as part of the Preliminary Design Program in early February. For our audience, videos of the site tours, and additional project work documents, are available on the SHS Planning Committee website, located at somervillema.gov/highschool.
- Our commitment to supporting the Whole Child is evident in so much of the work and programs happening every day at every school in our District. A great example is the **Healey Buddy Bench and "Ripple of Kindness" presentations** that took place at the Healey about a week ago. The Buddy Bench was donated by The Joseph Middle Miss Big Heart Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to "demonstrating the power of kindness." The organization was started as a way for a mother and father to honor the memory and the spirit of their young son, whom they lost to a cardiac condition. Part of the Foundation's work includes offering "Creating a Ripple of Kindness" presentations to youth, helping kids see how kindness can have a lasting impact on the larger

community. Healey Kindergarten through 3rd grade students had an opportunity to be part of these presentations and will no doubt continue to promote the values of kindness, friendship, empathy and inclusion that are at the core of the Joseph Middlemiss Big Heart Foundation, using their new Buddy Bench to help promote that important work.

- It's hard to believe that the start of **Winter Recess** is just a few days away. Here are a few notes about the upcoming break:
 1. Wednesday, December 23rd is a regular school day for all students.
 2. Winter Recess begins Thursday, December 24th and goes through Friday, January 1st.
 3. Classes will resume on the normal schedule on Monday, January 4th.
 4. School and District **offices** will be closed on December 24th and 25th, and on January 1st, but will be open on December 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st.
 5. Offices will close early (1:00pm) on December 31st.

Mrs. Skipper offered the following reflection:

I want to end by offering a few of my thoughts to parents and staff about the past two weeks and some of the media and social media they may have read regarding the Somerville Public Schools and how specific student issues were handled. Almost every day we as adults see and hear about threats happening locally, nationally and internationally. It is a stressful and emotional time for all of us as we are bombarded with the fear and thought of what could happen to us, to our family members, to our friends. I honestly cannot estimate the impact this constant media stream is having on our children, on their anxiety levels, and on their ability to just be children.

To our parents: I want you to know that I have spent my entire career as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent and now superintendent committed to ensuring the safety and development of all children. In fact, to me this job is not just a job but a calling and one that for the past 25 years has compelled me to make all decisions in the best interest and safety of the children I serve every day.

I want to reassure you that whenever there is any information that gets reported at a school or district level that could potentially mean harm for any or all members of the SPS community, that information is immediately processed and assessed and my team and I reach out to engage additional professionals which include law enforcement professionals, city agencies, social service and mental health professionals, and community agencies. In each and every case the safety of all of our students and staff is our paramount concern. As has been the case in SPS and as will continue to be the case in SPS, when credible threats happen we share that information with the community immediately.

One of things I have been reminded of being back here in Somerville and one of things I most appreciate about our City and SPS as a school district is there is no 'I' in our effort to keep our students and staff safe. The Somerville Public Schools, the City of Somerville, and the Somerville Police Department are constantly working together 24/7 to ensure the safety of our students, staff, and community. It has been so wonderful as the Superintendent to experience how we all work together in times of uncertainty or concern with one agenda: to protect and to serve ALL of our children.

At this time of year, there is so much to celebrate in SPS and so much to be thankful for. I want to thank our SC and Mayor for always keeping our students at the center of our policy making and practice. I want to thank our entire SPS staff for the hard work of teaching and learning it does every day with our students. And I want to thank our parents and families across the SPS for entrusting your children to us every day as they really are the greatest gift we all have.

On behalf of the SPS, We wish everyone a safe and joyful winter break and a Happy New Year. We are excited already to welcome students back to school in 2016!

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

• Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policies are being presented this evening for second reading, as amended:

- File: ADC – Use of Tobacco Products on School Premises

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bockelman, to approve File ADC – Use of Tobacco Products on School Premises, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual. The motion was approved via voice vote.

- File: JJIF – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Policy

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Mr. Bockelman, to approve File JJIF – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Policy, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

- File: JJIF-R – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Regulations

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve File JJIF-R – Somerville Public Schools Concussion Regulations, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

- File: JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve File JKAA – Physical Restraint of Students, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

- File: JICG – Use of Tobacco Products by Students

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve File JICG – Use of Tobacco Products by Students, as amended, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

The following policy is being presented this evening for second reading, for adoption:

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

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve File GBED – Use of Tobacco Products on School Property by Staff Members, as presented, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

Report from the November MASC Conference (Mr. Futrell)

As this body's voting delegate to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees conference held November 4-7, I represented Somerville Public Schools and our interests through votes on 7 resolutions and 2 amendments to MASC's bylaws.

On Resolution 1, authorizing MASC to petition the legislature and to support legislation (including S.254) which calls for a special commission to study the appropriate starting time for students in middle in high school, I voted YES. The Resolution passed by voice vote majority. Notable discussion included comment from a school committee member in Duxbury noted that Duxbury had changed school start time in 2009 and described their incredibly difficult and challenging implementation as "tricky". Nevertheless, she supported this resolution.

On Resolution 2, prioritizing the issue of the eradication of poverty among children within MASC's public policy agenda by supporting dedicated funding streams for anti-poverty programs, services that focus on children with the greatest social and emotional risk, and pre-K for all children. Additionally, this resolution advocates for nutrition programs, healthcare services including vision, hearing, dental, and mental health, and increasing educational opportunities for children to grow inside and outside of school. I voted YES, and the Resolution passed with a voice vote majority.

On Resolution 3, which supports legislation that ties school funding to the school at which children take their standardized tests for the year, thereby creating a disincentive for charter schools to counsel students out before testing, I voted YES. This Resolution passed on a voice vote, but prompted significant discussion among the group. Most notable in that discussion, the body "took a sense" - which is not a vote - in favor of a standardized testing moratorium, with a vote of 66-42. Because this was not a vote that was in the published agenda, it was not recorded in the minutes and was not an actual vote of the body, but I believe it represents a majority of school committee members across the Commonwealth who recognize the disincentives of top-down, high stakes standardized testing. This issue is particularly relevant to Somerville we we continue with MCAS and as we seek to codify the successful outcomes that our community prioritizes, instead of continuing to hew to the priorities coming from Malden (the HQ of the DESE).

On Resolution 4 focusing on improving support under McKinney-Vento, I voted YES. This Resolution passed by voice vote majority. Most of the discussion was not relevant to our diverse community or our values here in Somerville, and was dominated by minority views.

On Resolution 5, whereby MASC would explore new funding streams, including support for a tax on upper income levels, I voted YES. The Resolution failed on a counted vote of 50-62. This is the only Resolution where the Somerville vote did not align with the majority of representatives. The discussion centered around the efficacy of the body to pass a resolution on the tax code of the Commonwealth, even though the resolution sought only exploration and advocacy for sustainable funding of education through taxes.

On Resolution 6, which seeks to remove a prohibition of a School Committee member on the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, I voted YES. The Resolution passed by majority voice vote.

On Resolution 7, urging an end to the mandated Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment for Kindergarten students, I voted YES. The Resolution passed by majority voice vote.

On the Amendment to Article VIII, Section 1 of the MASC bylaws, permitting an MASC member to concurrently serve on the NSBA Board and the MASC Board, I voted YES. This Amendment passed by majority voice vote.

On the Amendment to Article VIII, Section 1 and Section 4, creating a minority caucus within MASC and adding its chair to the MASC Board, to represent minority concerns and mirrored after a similar position on the NSBA, I voted YES. The Amendment passed by majority voice vote.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Acceptance of Budget Appropriation

MOTION: Mr. White made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to accept an additional appropriation of \$27,362 from the City of Somerville's Parking Meter Receipts to establish a FIRST Robotics Team thus increasing the total FY2016 Somerville Public Schools budget to \$62,512,020.

B. 2016-2017 School Calendar (informational only, no action)

Members received a copy of the draft calendar for informational purposes only. Brief discussion ensued relative to coordinating with Medford, using Tufts, etc. Mrs. Skipper reported that Mr. Oteri is initiating conversation about this but that the students prefer the traditional plan to have the ceremony at Dilboy. Discussion also ensued regarding Election Day and the fact that the Friday before Labor Day on this calendar is not a school day. More discussion in January once new members are on board!

C. Results of Caucus for 2016 School Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Prior to this evening's Regular Meeting, members, including the two new members, Mr. Green and Ms. Palmer, held their caucus for Chair and Vice Chair for 2016. Ms. Normand was elected as Chair and Mr. Bockelman as Vice Chair. Congratulations!

D. 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:

Manuel Orellana 34R A North Street Somerville 02144

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to approve the SCALE ADP graduate. The motion was approved via voice vote.

E. Use of cell phones by members during meetings

Mr. Sweeting recommended that the School Committee consider the use of phones during meetings. He believes this is symbolic as it models the importance of paying attention. He, of course, will no longer be a member, but hopes that this topic will be discussed by the new board.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Normand

1. The All-City Middle School music performance was a joy. Amazing that the students play so well together considering they only spend two hours a week together.
2. The High School musical performance was stunning and included 12 different groups including a brilliant dance towards the end of the show.
3. The Career and College Fair was wonderful and well attended. It included multiple workshops and there were parents and students from sixth grade and up in attendance. Congratulations to the organizers!

Mr. Futrell

1. The Argenziano School's winter concert will be held this Wednesday at 9:15 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

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

- David James Murray, father of Mary Beth Murray, Adjustment Counselor at Somerville High School
- Emidio "Tony" Iacobucci, father of Connie Evangelista, paraprofessional at the Capuano Early Childhood Center

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m. via voice vote.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of December 7, 2015
3. December 2015 Personnel Report
4. Policies for first reading and action this evening
5. A draft copy of the 2016-17 School Calendar for information only
6. One (1) SCALE ADP diploma request

School Committee

**Adam Sweeting**

- WHEREAS,** *Adam Sweeting has been a member of the Somerville School Committee since 2008, serving as Vice Chairman in 2010 and 2014, and Chairman in 2011 and 2015, providing steady leadership in challenging times, and*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. Sweeting's service has included serving as Chairman of the Finance & Facilities and Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittees, and*
- WHEREAS,** *Mr. Sweeting's professional experience as a professor at Boston University and his personal experience as a parent of two students in the Somerville Public Schools has proven invaluable in his leadership and deliberations, and*
- WHEREAS,** *During Mr. Sweeting's eight years of service to the School Committee, his major areas of focus were those that addressed issues related to the well-being and education of all students. Sources of pride include being the leading urban school district in the state, the Unification of the Healey School, the hiring of our new Superintendent, and*
- WHEREAS,** *During his tenure on the School Committee, Mr. Sweeting has served as a champion for all schools and programs in the city, as well as for all students, parents/guardians, and staff, earning the esteem of his colleagues on the School Committee, therefore be it*
- RESOLVED:** *That the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledge the efforts of Adam Sweeting, and wish his continued success in his future endeavors, and be it further*
- RESOLVED:** *That these well-earned Resolutions be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Mr. Sweeting.*

Somerville School Committee

Carrie Normand, Vice Chairperson **Christine T. Rafal**
Dan Futrell **Paul Bockelman**
Steven Roix **Laura Pitone**
Mary Skipper, Superintendent **Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor**
William A. White, Jr., Aldermanic President

December 21, 2015

City of Somerville, Massachusetts
School Committee



Christine T. Rafal

WHEREAS, *Christine T. Rafal has been a member of the Somerville School Committee since 2010, serving as Vice Chairman in 2013, and Chairman in 2014, and*

WHEREAS, *Ms. Rafal has served as Chairman of the Finance & Facilities and Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittees, and has been a productive School Committee member, earning the admiration and respect of her colleagues, parents, students, teachers, and administrators, and*

WHEREAS, *Ms. Rafal's experience as a professional educator and her personal experience as a parent of two students in the Somerville Public Schools has proven invaluable in her leadership and deliberations, and*

WHEREAS, *Ms. Rafal has served for six years as a member of the School Committee conscientiously and objectively addressing issues related to the school district, including the Healey School Unification, the addition of a College and Career Readiness Director, and the hiring of our new Superintendent, and*

WHEREAS, *During her tenure on the School Committee, she has demonstrated a genuine interest in all schools in the city, as well as all students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators, therefore be it*

RESOLVED: *That the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledge the efforts of Christine T. Rafal, and wish her continued success in her future endeavors, and be it further*

RESOLVED: *That these well-earned Resolutions be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Ms. Rafal.*

Somerville School Committee

Adam Sweeting, Chairman

Dan Futrell

Steven Roix

Mary Skipper, Superintendent

William A. White, Jr., Aldermanic President

Carrie Normand, Vice Chairperson

Paul Bockelman

Laura Pitone

Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

December 21, 2015