

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, August 31, 2020 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Council Chambers– City Hall

Members present: Ms. Krepchin, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Barish, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Phillips, Mayor Curtatone and President McLaughlin (7:23 p.m.).

Members absent:

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Normand called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Chair Normand asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 8 – Ms. Krepchin, Ms. Pitone, Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand, Dr. Phillips and Mayor Curtatone ABSENT – 1 - Mr. McLaughlin (7:23 p.m.)

Chair Normand took this time to give a warm welcome to staff who return to work today and gave thanks for all of the work district staff has been doing during this uncertain time.

II. MINUTES

- May 11, 2020
- May 18, 2020

MOTION: There was a motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Dr. Ackman to approve the School Committee Regular minutes of May 11, 2020 and May 18, 2020. The motion was approved unanimously via voice vote.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Normand read the Public Comment guidelines and invited those who signed up to comment, to do so in the order called.

Elizabeth Shaw – Alpine Street

Asked for transparency of the Reopening plan and the decision process. She requested that School Committee members push the Mayor and Superintendent for clear metrics and framework at each phase to hold the district accountable.

Sarah Campbell – Brown School Parent

Commented regarding the afterschool program and the fact that it is currently operating on a hybrid model, despite of the school district operation on a remote model. She wondered when the hybrid plan for school reopening would be shared out. And inquired about whether or not the assigned afterschool days would align with student's in person days for the hybrid model. She also asked about the early release of after school at 4:30 wondered if the hours could be extended.

Michelle Lippens – District Parent and SEPAC Co-Director

Explained the role of the SEPAC and announced that they have held a number of virtual events since the close of school. They plan to start meeting monthly moving forward and anticipate these meetings to be held virtually moving forward. Therefore, Ms. Lippens requested a zoom account for SEPAC and ELPAC. Their meetings go well over 90 minutes, which is the limit for meetings on free zoom accounts.

At this time, Mayor Curtatone gave an update on where the city is in relation to school reopening and spoke to the following topics:

- He clarified that neither the Commonwealth or the Department of Elementary and Secondary School have shared a reopening plan with school districts.
- There are several indicators the city is currently looking at beyond the number of positive cases for school

reopening, and they are doing so diligently and deliberately to ensure the health and safety of the school population.

- The City is working to put together a closely co-coordinated, integrated plan around buildings, operation of the facilities, the air exchange filtration levels and a testing surveillance plan to support an overall education plan.
- Mayor Curtatone expects to work with the school department over the next several weeks to release the information for each building, as it is finalized. This information will include the analysis and assessment of the buildings, and the interventions or investments, or adjustments needed to bring down or minimize any risks to the lowest possible level of transmitting the virus from person to person.
- The district also plans to release for the public, what the surveillance-testing plan will be, who will be tested, the frequency of it and what the sampling size will be.
- In addition, they expect to, at least for the public, know what the guidelines, mandates and protocols will be to be followed by anyone who will be in physical attendance of Somerville public schools at any time.
- There are still a lot of unknowns, but the district is doing work that no other community is doing, to get it right, because there is too much at stake.

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. DISTRICT REPORT

Superintendent Skipper first asked Dr. Curley and Ms. Paribello to speak to Community Schools given the previous comments.

Dr. Curley began and reported the following:

- Extended programming has been lined up for Pre-K and Kindergarten students in the 12:20-2:30 timeframe.
- Parks and Recreation has offered to support grades one through eight, with options around the fields and city parks, and this was designed with the plan that students will return in person.
- There was an attempt to help parents lineup scheduling to build the programming around the two days that the students would not be coming back in-person in a hybrid environment.
- They are doing their best to make the transition from full remote into hybrid, as seamless as possible.
- On Friday, the Governor signed an executive order allowing the Department of Early Education and Care authorizing after school and out of school time programs to operate during the school day. The school department is meeting with city partners to see what that might mean and how they may be able to interface or in a further expansion bring partners in, like the YMC for example.
- They will continue to work with the recreation department and other community providers to offer safe programming and as many options as possible to support parents.
- Ms. Paribello spoke to the scheduling comment and explained that Community schools is currently based outdoors, with very limited access to indoors, which limits the amount of time students can be outside. Both students and staff will be outside for about 5 hours.

- **2020-2021 Enrollment Update**

Superintendent Skipper then invited Ms. Bertholdo to give an update on enrollment.

Ms. Bertholdo reported the following:

- The district is experiencing a lot mobility currently with families moving in and out of Somerville.
- This year we do not have a large amount of new comers, as it is typical every year.
- There are a lot of registrations for Pre-K.
- The data is changing day by day, so it will take about two weeks to get a sense of what the numbers really are, because of the mobility.
- There are many moves in third and fourth grade, but this is consistent with previous years.
- About 20 families have requested the one-year emergency leave, with most requests coming from Kindergarten families.
- There have not been too many withdrawals or transfers by high school students.

- **School Committee Fall Meeting Schedule**

Chair Normand asked Subcommittee Chairs to look over the meeting dates and send any changes to Ms. Santiago.

B. Personnel Report

- **June**
- **July/August**

Tabled.

Superintendent Skipper concluded her report by thanking the entire Somerville public School staff for all their work.

V. REPORT OF SUMCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management: August 14, 2020 (Dr. Ackman)

Dr. Ackman shared the following report:

The meeting was called to order right at 12:00 p.m.

In attendance were Dr. Phillips, Ms. Bearish, Ms. Normand and Ms. Bertholdo, Mr. Iwasaki and Dr. Curley.

The Emergency Leave Policy and the Vaccine Policy were both passed. Ms. Bertholdo spent time answering questions and giving thoughts and the new Superintendent Intern; Mr. Iwasaki was also present and offered some suggestions, as did Dr. Curley.

The meeting ended right before 1:00 p.m.

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Phillips, seconded by Ms. Barish to accept the report of Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting of August 14, 2020.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policy was presented for a first reading:

- File JLCB: Immunization Policy

Dr. Ackman read the policy:

JLCB - IMMUNIZATIONS

Influenza (Flu) and COVID-19 are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. COVID-19 is caused by infection with the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, and flu is caused by infection with [influenza viruses](#). Because some of the symptoms of flu and COVID-19 are similar, it can be hard to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone, and testing may be needed to help confirm a diagnosis. Preventing transmission of the flu is especially important in schools, and during the global COVID-19 pandemic. Annual flu vaccines protect Somerville Public School (SPS) students and staff against the most common flu viruses, and allow the city and district to focus resources on prevention and surveillance of COVID-19.

Immunization Requirements

No student, as defined in 105 CMR 220.400, shall attend Somerville Public Schools preschool programs for in-person learning without a certificate of immunization documenting that the child has been successfully immunized in accordance with current Department of Public Health (DPH) recommended schedules against influenza (Flu), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), hepatitis B, varicella and other communicable diseases as specified from time to time by the Department, in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control, or any successor committee serving a comparable function.

No student, as defined in 105 CMR 220.400, shall attend kindergarten through 12th grade for in-person learning without a certificate of immunization or a copy of a school immunization record that the student has received immunizations in accordance with current Department of Public Health (DPH) recommended schedules against influenza (Flu), diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), hepatitis B, varicella and other communicable diseases as specified from time to time by the Department, in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Centers for Disease Control, or any successor committee serving a comparable function.

Documentation

Certificate of Immunization means either: (a) a form or letter signed and dated by a physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant or designee which specifies the month and year of administration and the type/name of the vaccine(s) administered to the student; or (b) a dated report from the Massachusetts Immunization Information System which specifies the month and year of administration and the type/name of the vaccine(s) administered to the student.

Access

The City of Somerville and Somerville Public Schools will offer free-of-charge, annual influenza vaccine to all district personnel (full-time, part-time, and contracted employees), parents, caregivers, and students to support this policy.

Exemption

An exemption to the vaccination policy may be requested for certain medical reasons, including documentation of severe allergy to the vaccine or components as defined by the most current recommendations of the [CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices \(ACIP\)](#) or a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome within six weeks of a receiving an influenza vaccine.

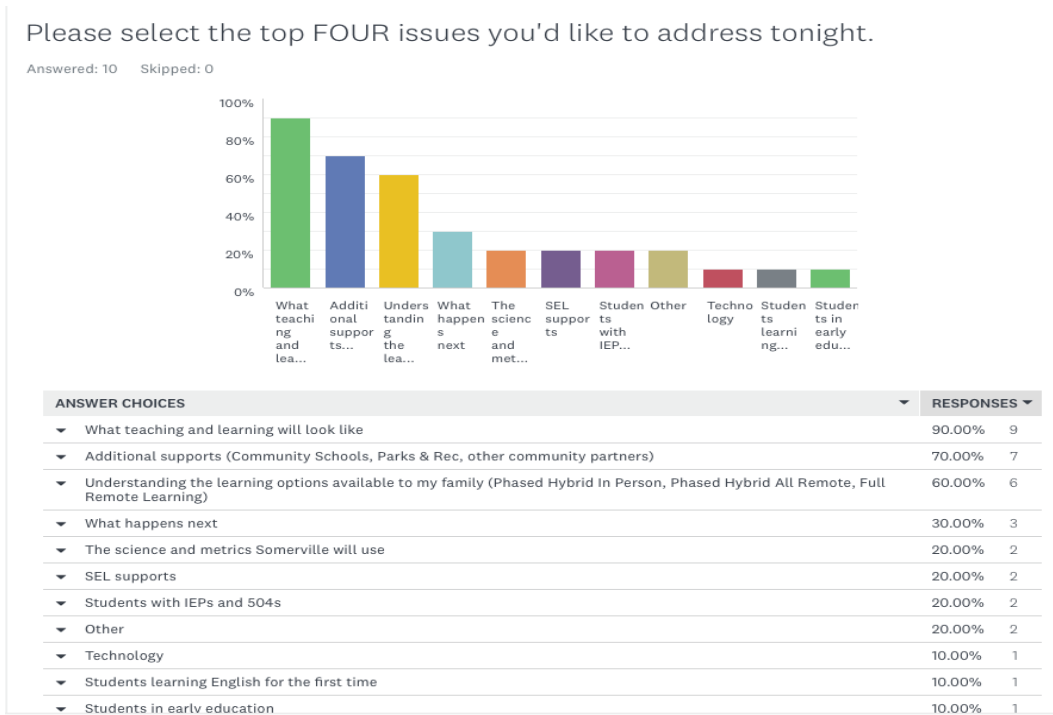
Chair Normand made a request for the Governor's Executive Order along with the Immunization policy to the following week's packet and tabled this item.

B. Report Out of School Committee Office Hours

Chair Normand announced that these office hours were specifically to further explain the reopening plan and to answer any questions from families. The following report was shared:

School Committee Office Hours Report
8/13/20 - 21 participants

Ellenor welcomed participants and presented ground rules for discussion. She reminded everyone that with negotiations ongoing there are a lot of details we do not have. Sarah posted a link to a poll to establish people's discussion priorities. (Screen shot included below.)



Discussion centered around the following themes:

- Families want to know who their students' cohorts and teachers are. They want this information in order to begin preparing their students for the coming year as well as to form support pods for learning and socialization and help other families in their cohort find support.
- Families are concerned about what the schedule will look like in the fall. Key concerns include:
 - A desire for consistency across grades within a school and across the district as well as more face time with teachers, particularly for middle grades students.
 - Being asked to register for community programs without knowing their children(s)' school schedules.
 - Supporting multiple young children at the same time during remote learning.
 - Understanding the timeline for returning to in-person learning and how the decision will be made.
- Families are frustrated with the labor negotiation process and the resulting lack of clarity.
- Families do not have a clear understanding of the distinction between Fully Remote (LMS), Hybrid (with Remote Start), and the option for continued (after phase-in) synchronous remote learning within the Hybrid model. In addition, families asked:
 - How is this information being communicated to families who are not at office hours?
 - Who is doing outreach to families for whom English is not the home language?
 - How and when will families make that choice?
 - If a family changes models, will their student have a new teacher?
- Families want to know what technology will look like in the fall. Key questions include:
 - What platforms will the district use for remote learning in the Hybrid and Fully Remote models?
 - Will students be expected to sit for three or more hours in a row in front of the screen?
- Families are deeply concerned about students (their own and others) who are being left behind. Key concerns include:
 - Some families don't communicate electronically or use social media.
 - Families do not know how to reach out to each other to offer or ask for help.
 - Students are depressed and need support.
 - Students with 504 plans and IEPs aren't receiving accommodations/services/support.
 - Economically disadvantaged families and families without childcare need to be prioritized for program registration and return to buildings.
 - Keeping Remote students connected to their school community.
 - Older students and their families.
 - Will attendance/grades reporting to the State have an unfair and lasting impact on the most vulnerable students?
- Families want to use their skills and resources to support others but expressed frustration that the district is not accepting their support or giving them tools to connect with families in need. Several expressed a desire for the district or city to create a mechanism to fully leverage community member skills, expertise, time when offered.
- Specific questions that need follow-up:
 - What is being planned for the UNIDOS program? Students have had large language learning losses since March, only the youngest students appear to be included in our priority groups, and families don't understand how the continued (after phase-in) synchronous remote learning within the Hybrid model might work in a program that is already team-taught.
 - At ESCS, the PTA is fundraising for \$4000 worth of technology to enable more timely, linguistically appropriate communications with families for whom English is not the home language. There appears to be District support for this but district's timeline is not quick enough to meet the immediate need. Should families be fundraising for solutions like this or can the district fast-track its purchasing for ESCS or other school communities with large populations of English language learners?

- Is the district looking for a way to provide a safe, supervised place for students to engage in remote learning for economically disadvantaged families or families who don't have childcare support? Can this be part of the Rec Dept/Community Schools programming?
- Suggestions from participants:
 - Shorter, more concise, multi-lingual, multi-modal communications from the district.
 - Support inter-family connections and cohorting/podding by providing cohort contact information to all families as soon as possible and/or create pods for families.
 - Think beyond school walls to encourage district-wide teaching teams and/or pairing schools with different demographics and different challenges.

Dr. Phillips provided an overview of next steps in the reopening process.

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
2400 Backpacks with Student Supplies	Cradles to Crayons	Newton, MA	TBD	Somerville Public Schools

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Barish, seconded by Ms. Krepchin, to accept this donation with gratitude. Motion approved via voice vote.

VII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Mr. Green

Requested information about the School District providing student desks to families.

Dr. Ackman

Followed up on the request for a zoom account for SEPAC and ELPAC.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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

Related documents:

Agenda

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE GoToWEBINAR
REGULAR MEETING – AUGUST 31, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.**

Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. C. 30A, s. 18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, as well as Mayor Curtatone’s Declaration of Emergency, dated March 15, 2020, this meeting of the Somerville School Committee will be conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels (SCAT).

Copy & paste the following link into your internet browser to preregister or on the date and time of this meeting to view it live: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/999017773738411791>

Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2019 - 2022

Through the following long-range goals, we commit to addressing deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensuring that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the supports and resources they need to achieve educational success in our district now and in the future. By 2022, we will ...:

...increase the percentage of support staff of color by 6 percentage points, teachers and counselors of color by 5 percentage points, and administrators of color by 4 percentage points through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our human capital system.

... 1) conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and 2) craft a vision for school assignment and programming aligned with the district’s equity policy.

... design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting to ensure that every student has equitable access to rich learning opportunities that help them thrive.

... design a robust system of aligned developmental academic and social-emotional benchmarks which will be used to inform practices, policies, and resource allocation.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- May 11, 2020
- May 18, 2020

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- 2020-2021 Enrollment Update
- School Committee Fall Meeting Schedule

B. Personnel Report

- June
- July/ August

V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management: August 14, 2020 (Dr. Ackman)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Rules Management of August 14, 2020.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The Following policy is being presented this evening for first reading, as amended:

- JLCB – Immunization Policy

B. Report Out of School Committee Office Hours

C. Donations (Recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Programs Donated to
2,400 Backpacks with Student Supplies	Cradles to Crayons	Newton, MA	TBD	Somerville Public Schools

VII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT