

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

January 11, 2021

7:00 p.m. – GoToWebinar

Members present: Ms. Krepchin, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Barish, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone and Dr. Phillips. Mayor Curtatone and President McLaughlin.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Green called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Green asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 9 – Ms. Krepchin, Ms. Pitone, Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand, Dr. Phillips and Mayor Curtatone, Mr. McLaughlin. ABSENT – 0 - .

Chair Green announced that the meeting would begin with regular business and the awards would be presented later during the meeting, he apologized to outgoing Chair Normand and Vice Chair Ackman.

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representatives Ms. Salmeron and Mr. Recinos were present and reported the following:

- The Highlander Theatre Company is performing Clue, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7pm
- Senior Superlatives- seniors have put out a google classroom survey to nominate their peers for the yearbook
- The Senior Class of 2022 is raising money for a senior class trip hoping they can take a trip by 2023
- Last Sunday members of the Sunrise Somerville Hub gathered in Davis Square to advocate for Mass State House Transparency, pressuring the governor to sign amendments including publicly disclosed committee votes and a 72 hour rule and a roll call vote from 16 teen representatives to eight representatives student involvement as well as anyone who came to Davis Square to try to push these amendments
- Community conversation regarding the raiding of the Capital building- it was a very scary event for both students and adults. This provided an open space for staff and students for opinions and sharing thoughts and feelings and a time for reflection.

Ms. Normand asked when or how people could log on or access the Theatre company production and if there is some kind of donation process for covering the cost of the admission. She also thanked Mr. Recinos for bringing up the discussion of the Capitol, they are incredibly important topics and there will be many more discussions to come.

Ms. Pitone responded that there is information on how the public can log on to the performance at <https://www.highlandertheatre.org/> and it appears that you can purchase tickets as well.

III. REPORT FROM MAYOR CURTATONE

At this time Mr. Rich Raiche, City Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, gave an update on the status of school buildings, he reported the following along with a Power Point presentation, which will be attached at the end of these minutes.

- Filtration and ventilation are critical for air quality
- There will be further work for disinfection humidification to improve air quality but it is not critical for occupancy consistent with Harvard School of Public Health
- Progress on procuring and delivering the air filters which have been installed in Groups 1 and 2 buildings and are in the process in the Group 3 buildings
- The retrofitting of the air handling units is in process for Group 1 and 2 buildings and the John F. Kennedy School
- Encountered additional maintenance items not in capital improvements so that contractor was brought in before ours and are coordinating the work

- Some technical difficulties for retro commissioning the ESCS are being worked out with the engineer this will possibly delay opening to February 1, 2021
- Portable units, humidifiers and filtration units have been deployed in Groups 1 and 2 and have started on Group 3
- Carbon Monoxide monitors have not yet been delivered but the rough in has been completed
- Wellness Room exhausts are in process
- Construction Schedule Risk Factors * see attachments
- Preliminary Construction Schedules * see attachments
- Hoping for Certificate of Occupancy on January 25 or February 1, 2021. Things are progressing very well
- Somerville High School has presented challenges with the operational and mechanical systems. Coordinating with GLX and new building codes and egress to the north stair tower. For occupancy, the new building codes have been in place since 911. Pressurization tests and fire alarms have been a problem and we are looking at occupancy for January 25 or February 1.
- The retro commissioning in the ESCS has caused delays of a few days and may be ready for February 1st
- Things are going well at the Capuano, Argenziano and West Somerville
- Work has not yet been started at Healey or WHCIS
- We feel confident that we can turn over the other buildings by February 8.

Questions:

Ms. Barish asked two questions, one regarding Somerville High; is it necessary for coordination with GLX for occupancy, could certificate of occupancy be issued before resolution? And regarding the lack of mention of the Brown School, her constituents are looking for updates.

Mr. Raiche responded that Working with GLX on the north stair tower is one issue they are dealing with for partial occupancy. Phase 2 is the part of the building nearest to the library. They are pushing for occupancy of the whole thing but they are facilitating GLX access to the building throughout. Egress and safety are the logistics that need to be addressed. Regarding the Brown School they will be looking at that school comprehensively and determining what renovations would be needed to bring it up to code and make the building ADA compliant.

Mayor Curtatone took this time to announce that the green line extension is a concern and they do not want any further delays to the completion of the high school. He will be working alongside John Dalton and state officials to make sure no further time is lost.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Elizabeth Caffery - 71 Alpine Street

It is January and Somerville is one of the only districts to not have special need students back in the classroom. The district is allowing community schools into the Argenziano building for programming. Wondered if the air quality is better after 2:30 pm and that the Asher report never mentioned it.

We preach equity and then a quasi-district program is running in a secret pilot with nothing-public facing. Not all schools can offer this, how many parents must unenroll because two hours for two days, weather dependent programming in New England is just not sustainable or affordable. Were they offered the chance to opt in? That time and space could be used for complex needs students. I suggest now that the district come up with broad and meaningful summer programs to make up for the learning loss our children have suffered this year brought on by politically focused decision making and the incompetence of this district. Our children deserve better, and it is appalling.

Kinga Borondy submitted her comments to be included in the minutes; they have been attached at the bottom of this set of minutes due to the length of them.

Fredo Durant - Father of a first grader at Kennedy School.

I am angry at the city for leaving our children out of school for so long but I want to congratulate the School Committee for their hard work and level headed approach to reopening. It was good to hear the expert chosen by

the union and to hear that Somerville is not in the top 1% for mitigation measures. I was also happy to learn that internal polling of the teachers union had more than half of the members want to go back in person.

I was surprised to see the union statement asking community transmission metrics given that their own experts said they are the appropriate tools at this time. I understand that educators and staff want and deserve to feel safe; I need to feel the city has a plan and a contingency plan. I hope the city can provide better answers and real time monitoring of the decision process. If metrics are the only thing keeping our kids from returning to school, then let's agree on the metrics. The city needs to get quantitative criteria for closing classes based on the metrics from testing that they are closing the schools. The current situation is terrible, and the kids are not learning. Their emotional health is suffering, and our older daughter keeps asking why she cannot go to school when her younger siblings are attending five days a week with zero transmission so far. I do not understand why Somerville is so special that they could not give our kids a single day of learning in the last months. This is getting old, and the city needs to get their act together.

Leah Bloom

It does not matter about the incomplete picture that is drawn by the city. Our top priority is to bring our highest needs students to be brought back to school.

Adam Portney - 52 Beacon Street

I am very disappointed in our city. We are mid-January, 10 months after schools have closed, after a really poor effort in the spring the schools came back, and we said what is done is done let's move on. After speaking with most of the groups involved, I am comfortable laying blame where it belongs. The mayor's office needs to hand over the schools and the teacher's union needs to stop twisting science and stoking fears in the community and with their own teachers. There have been multiple missteps throughout the year. The science which has been proven around the world to show that the transmission rates among pre-pubescent children is incredibly low. Once the data started to be proven as fact, we saw every school around us follow the data and reopen schools to lower grades on some type of hybrid model. I hope that Somerville can follow this and open schools so our kids can join their peers around the country and around the world.

Alini Contini-Field - 215 Summer Street

I heard the sad news today that it is the last day for one of my son's Community School teachers. She has been great, the program has been great, and in the absence of any real in person day school Community Schools has been doing great work with our younger kids. I did not realize until last week that Community Schools does not get any real dollars from anyone and they are almost entirely tuition driven. This seems like a poor plan for the kids, to think this is all they have been getting, and this is super important for the younger kids. While I strongly would like schools to become in person for high needs special ed and for young kids, we should in the meantime throw as much money as we can at Community Schools and expand the program to five days, four days, pay our teachers more. They are out there every day in the cold, and they are helping our kids. I hope when the pandemic is over Community Schools can be budgeted for.

Anastasia Kolokithas - 407 Highland Avenue

I am a parent of a high need Special Ed student when I polled the teachers today and the last they heard for return to school was January 15. Mr. Raiche said earlier maybe the 25th, maybe February 1. There is a definite breakdown in communication. There is no real idea when the high need students will go back in. I keep being promised that they will be the first tranche, they are going to go in, we are working on it and I hear this from everyone. I am a teacher with 15 years' experience I am very thankful I can support my son at home with his education, but I don't think everyone has that luxury and I think with his disability he cannot access his education. He has gone over a month now without his twice-weekly speech therapy; he went most of the fall without his occupational therapy remotely. At what point do you decide they need outside placement so they can get the services that they need, that they are mandated, that they are prescribed? I am a union member; I am on my schools negotiating committee and we have never turned away a high needs student because we know the danger, they are in. I am again, speaking from a place of privilege because I can support my child but not everyone can do that and I can see how other families struggle, how other children struggle. I would implore you to reopen, and I was very disappointed with the union president's op ed because it belittles the professionalism of teachers. Professionals do their best,

which is what makes them professionals and they do what is necessary because that is what they need to do. If we do not get high needs students in by February 1st, because I thought it was the 15th of January, I still think it is the 15th because no one has told me otherwise, if it isn't until the 1st of February, what is the alternative what is the plan for these students? We are causing them to fall further and further behind and they need remediation immediately.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Taken out of order)

A. Risk Mitigation Discussion

- Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy as it relates to collective bargaining with the Somerville Teachers Association, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, as declared by the Chair.

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Barish, to enter into Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L c. 30A, Section 21 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing strategy as it relates to collective bargaining with the Somerville Teachers Association, as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the Committee, as declared by the Chair. Members exited the meeting at 7:41 to enter the Executive Session.

The Regular meeting resumed at 8:38 p.m. and Chair Green called the Somerville School Committee back to order.

Chair Green announced that in the Executive Session a vote was taken to allow the negotiating team to continue to bargain all elements of the reopening plan with the Somerville Teachers Union including the conversations about thresholds and metrics. Now having heard over the last two meetings of this body, Somerville School Committee has heard from the city and from experts regarding the risk mitigation strategies and efforts to safely reopen the schools. He then gave space to the body to deliberate and share their thoughts regarding a safe reopening of schools given our risk mitigation efforts and asked if any members wanted to address the topic. Members commented the following:

Ms. Barish - I would like to thank my colleagues and the other folks who made it possible for us to have the experts last week. It was helpful to have outside voices who were not in the conversations prior. I was heartened to hear they thought the plan that we have been following is one of the best in the state if not the nation. I was glad we had so much public there and interpreters present so we could share the message more broadly.

Ms. Norman - I am grateful to Dr. Feldman's brought forth from the SEU and Dr. Ciaranello's both were so clear about what we are doing in Somerville and what we have enacted thus far. What is in process in the buildings and the contact tracing and surveillance testing is unlike anything else we have seen. So much has been difficult as we learn more about the virus and we have no model for this. There has been no federal or state leadership on this. Each district has been making it up on our own. Even if we had been divided into regions or had some guidance from someone. I am grateful as a community as a city and as a school that we have been digging in and trying to bring back the safest return to school for our students and our staff. It was great to have those two outside perspectives come in. There is more to learn but it was helpful right now. We were away in executive session for some time and there are still 100 people here tonight. I want to thank the community in every role you have for participating.

Ms. Pitone - Having the expertise of Dr. Feldman and Dr. Ciaranello was powerful for me. I was able to ask a ton of questions, particularly understanding better questions around infectious control and virus transmission in the schools. It is challenging, we are in a place where the city has been having thoughts about what is the best route in risk mitigation. Putting forth concerns about thresholds or not thresholds and having educators who are also very concerned coming forward and being on opposing sides in that is a hard place. Having more expertise was helpful. Shedding light on all the challenges, fears and concerns that are all valid, families have fears, educators have fears. Somehow, it was lost in our community and our conversations about how tremendous the plan is. How it is not a light thing to say and to hear one of the doctors say it was the top 1% of plans in the nation of risk mitigation. It is phenomenal and I am so thankful for it.

As I said before I am super challenged by the fact that even with this beautiful plan, this testing could be a huge

benefit and asset to our community and these families that are not accessing testing still do not have their kids in school. That is the message we are receiving from some families and to hear from some families that they want to leave the district, that they are going to go to a parochial school, and that they hate to do it, but their children are not being serviced and it has been incredibly painful to hear. At the same time, I hear from educators that they are uncomfortable and afraid. So shedding light on the fact that our mitigation plan is so well done and thought out and invested is wonderful. Thanks to our Mayor, our public health officials, our nurses and our administration in the district. Now we have to move forward and try to merge or connect this disconnect point so that people feel comfortable returning to the classroom. We have a conundrum on our hands, but people want to create the opportunity for our students to be back and I will support that return to in person learning.

Dr. Phillips - I am going to get a little bit personal here so please tell me if I am out of order. Many people do not know this about me but I am very familiar with death. My mother is dead, my daughter is dead and as an elected official, I am terrified that someone will die because of a decision that I made. I think it is important for me to be able to look every parent and educator in the eye and say to them, this is how I know our plans are working. I think it is critical to talk about thresholds. I think after listening to the experts last week, what is less concerning to them is that people are bringing Covid to schools, we are all walking around all the time out in stores, grocery shopping. What is concerning is getting Covid in school, in school transmission. I really hope that we can get some clarity so we can make sure we communicate with confidence that it is not happening in Somerville Schools.

Mr. Green - I think I have been clear for months now that the only thing that would be worse for me than maintaining all remote indefinitely would be a situation where we had our thousand privileged students come back and all of our low income black, brown and otherwise disadvantaged populations not return. This worries me because we have seen it in other places. New York City is the most prominent example. Districts that are overwhelmingly black and brown currently are not because those families are not coming back. I think the best thing we can do to have those families return is to do everything in our power to both create safe schools. I was deeply heartened to hear from the experts last week; even experts who I have agreed with, putting aside that a lot of districts rushed back to school during this horrible and deeply inequitable pandemic and putting aside that urban schools were by and large underrepresented. Somerville is not doing that. Somerville is doing all it can to have the safest schools it can possibly have. I am glad we have done all that we can. I feel that it is the first step in actually having a district in which everyone can come back.

I am also deeply aware as a man whose mother became a nurse because black women in Louisiana could not become doctors; of a deep history of deserved skepticism in our communities, they have distrust in us. The other thing we must do is be as transparent as possible in why we know these schools are safe and how we will know if our systems are working and that they are up to the challenge in this raging pandemic. I am looking forward to continuing conversations with the city who has been a great partner and with our scientific community and their staff to be critical partners in building trust with this body. How we can address a deserved skepticism and how we can build trust in large parts of our population. I think our schools are safe, I think we have done everything we can to make them safe and now I would like to begin the process of building trust within the community.

VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Superintendent Skipper thanked Chair Green and asked Mr. Mazza to speak and expand on two items and give a quick synopsis with the understanding that he will provide a memo and talk in more detail on January 25.

Mr. Mazza began by stating that the first item was the updated 2021-2022 school calendar and the second was the updated timeline for the Somerville High School principal search. It is very important to make sure that the committee is aware of the timeline that we will be following for that process. The other thing is that the commissioner sent out a memo on January 5 about modifications to MCAS and a few other things. These things came in five buckets and he listed the buckets right now and will expand in a memo.

- The first is the modification of the competency determination for the class of 2021.
- The second bucket is the shortened MCAS testing time for grades three through eight.
- The third bucket is accountability relief
- The fourth is extending the access testing window which we already knew

- The fifth is MCAS biology testing for ninth grade

The memo will give greater detail into those five buckets. The impact of the determination for Somerville High and Full Circle students with numbers around the competency determination and the MCAS biology test.

Superintendent Skipper reminded everyone to say goodbye to Principal LaGambina after his many years of service here in Somerville. She plans to have him attend the next School Committee meeting, which will be done virtually. Back three years ago there was a search launched which was a state and national search, similarly to what we are doing again but in a somewhat condensed time frame. Some of the key parts of it such as the visioning and the key components of the job description will not have to be done from scratch but rather from the orientation from three years ago. We will give a full update including the firm that will be doing search and the updated timeline for that process. We will make sure that our community as well as the high school community has a full update of the search firm that has been selected and most importantly, how they can become involved in that process. More to come on that.

Dr. Curley gave an update on a topic we heard tonight during public comment. There are a lot of parents who want information on this and that has to do with the Community Schools program and the pilot that is going on at Argenziano and the expansion of this pilot.

Dr. Curley stated that through these conversations, we recognize the importance of trying to get students any and all opportunities to get safe and in person social interaction, especially now in this tough winter season. Since the original in-person return date has been moved from early December they tried to figure out how to run that program despite the weather conditions. The district worked with our city partners to propose a pilot program to figure out how to run an indoor/ outdoor enrichment option. Our city experts deemed this is feasible since students are spending one to two hours each day in the buildings and it is a small number of students.

There was some confusion about the ventilation standards. Those standards assume a much larger capacity of students and that those students were in the building a full day. We would like to get the students back for a full day. We felt it was safe with all other mitigation efforts in place to try a pilot program. The reason it is at the Argenziano is because for the past four weeks we have been having weekly testing of building based essential staff. Remember we have a partnership with Tufts and the Broad Institute to offer weekly assurance testing to students and staff. We did not want that resource to go to waste so we have begun having students participate in that testing to bring them back into the buildings during the cold weather.

Community school staff have been working directly with our students since last July. They have been supportive of this pilot and have been participating in weekly testing since December. We took all those factors and as of two weeks ago proposed to the parents that if they wanted their students to participate, they had to agree to do weekly Covid testing so they could come inside. This pilot has been very successful and has been expanded to the Capuano, which is the next site that will have Covid testing available. We are looking to grow this as fast as we can grow our testing capacity. I know there are parents and guardians across the city who are wondering how soon this will become available at their school sites. The next would likely be the East and then the West. We are looking to hire mobile EMTs or medical professionals that could bring testing to the sites that would not necessarily have it as part of the immediate in person return.

This in no way takes away our commitment to bring high need special education, EL and younger learner students back as soon as possible. This is a question of having the buildings ready to that level that Rich detailed on the timeline. In the interim, we think it is a safe and effective way to bring the students back and give them the social interaction that they need during the winter months. On the testing, the district and the city have now administered over almost 1100 PCR Covid tests in the last four weeks to nearly 400 individuals. These are mostly building based essential staff and 40 students from the Argenziano. We are testing on Tuesdays and Fridays. I called our health director just before this meeting to check and am happy to report we have had well under 1% positivity rate and have been seeing the results come back in less than 12 hours which is helpful for us since we can use this information for the adults who comes back positive and stop them from returning to work. I would like to thank the Community Schools staff who have been at this despite the cold weather for the last few weeks and our health and

rec partners who are working with kids to make sure they have this outlet.

Superintendent Skipper paused to see if School Committee members had any questions:

Dr. Ackman commented that because Community Schools have been so successful, constituents were curious about the sites that have low attendance switching to four days a week and then returning to two days a week when school reopens. Is this a possibility?

Dr. Curley would investigate that, and made a note. We would need to make sure we would have available staffing, and then we would have to make sure parents know it would be temporary and we will be returning as planned to a hybrid where the students would be in a two-day a week format. It would be a temporary dissolution of the cohort system until the students come back.

Dr. Phillips asked Dr. Curley about the 1% positivity rate. Is that just the staff or are the students included in that rate?

Dr. Curley responded that it includes the roughly 40 students that participated, to be clear it is well under the 1% given the limited number of tests and participants, these are numbers that we are working to put on the districts COVID testing dashboard. To at least show the public, staff and students the overall number of tests administered each week the total number of positives and the percent of positivity rates overall. But fortunately, it has been an extremely low number of positive tests staff so far.

Ms. Barish asked, unrelated to Community Schools, what other opportunities there might be or are already happening, to have other groups of students in the buildings between now and the reopening of schools?

Superintendent Skipper said that as we start to bring the buildings online it comes into a narrower risk piece and we can start to put a timeline to it. We are going to look at what other groups can be accommodated. For each group that comes in we must ensure the integrity of the safety component, the testing and what space is used. There is a lot of logistics to be worked out. Our priority is Community Schools because it is the K-8 and the youngest students. To ensure that we are using the Argenziano to test and where we can do the testing for our special needs highest risk and highest needs special education students. We are attempting to expand the amount of what we can use but once the full mitigation of the building happens, we really start to layer on and add other parts to the building. I will keep you up to date weekly.

Ms. Barish asked for clarification, when speaking of testing do you mean evaluations opposed to COVID testing.

Supt. Skipper confirmed this and said the space is there, Christine Trevisone and her staff are working to determine this, and there is online testing, psychological testing and so forth for students. Some of that is being done where it works remotely and some is more beneficial done in person or has to be done in person. We are using the Argenziano, one of the largest spaces with the smallest population.

Ms. Pitone added to Ms. Barish speaking to the schedules for buildings mid-February, early March gives a good chunk of time before February break and a month after February break, Has any thought been given to providing any services to our special education students? Not full days but services like occupational therapy and speech therapy. This seems to be a particular point of pain and I guess the parallel with Community Schools is how the city has allowed us to use some buildings with very small populations of students since it is not as taxing on the filtration and ventilation needs. I think the same thing would apply to the smaller populations of students who are not getting these services and that they cannot access remotely. I would like to hear any thoughts and encourage that we prioritize that need if we have four or five weeks where we can possibly be in person.

Superintendent Skipper responded that we would have to look at this as connected to the bargaining process. In other cases, it is contract work, Director Trevisone is actively looking at that, and that would have to look at that and the spaces available. In most cases this would be large spaces, the gyms are taken up with testing so it would have to be cafeterias or libraries or in rare cases auditoriums like the ESCS. We are looking at all space and the goal is to

get all services in person to our kids. We are working on a cohesive plan with all our units.

Superintendent Skipper took this time to acknowledge Dr. Curley's hard work this year as Chief of Staff. He has had a catch all in terms of a number of large and important buckets of work and true to his fashion; he eagerly embraces it and learns whatever is thrown at him.

Chair Green I hope School Committee recognizes this as that Dr. Curley has become vital in becoming an epidemiologist, as we all have had to adopt public health as part of our jobs. Our thanks.

Superintendent then delivered the last of her district report.

Superintendent's Notes: *School Committee Meeting – Monday, January 11, 2021*

Before I share some brief notes on upcoming events in our district, I want to take a moment to address last week's incredibly disturbing events in Washington. Wednesday's insurrection was not just an assault on our democracy and our values as a nation, it was yet another example of how deeply racism lives within our country and a reminder of how much work we still have to do to dismantle the systemic racism that continues to impact our children, our families, and our communities. As educators, we must not only try to make sense of events for ourselves, but we must also be prepared to support our students, providing space for students to ask questions, express their concerns, and to try to understand the impact of these events in the context of their own experiences.

As we are all painfully aware, history can sometimes be ugly. We have a responsibility to speak out when we witness inequities, and to do what we can to learn ourselves and to help our students learn from these painful experiences. We all have a role to play in becoming an anti-racist community, and it starts with acknowledging and confronting racist acts. Our teachers and curriculum team have been sharing resources and providing age-appropriate opportunities for students to engage in dialogue and learning around last week's events. For some of our students and staff, last week's insurrection surfaced past traumas. We will also continue to provide support for students and staff who may need additional support in processing these events.

A few additional reminders:

A quick reminder that Monday, January 18th is **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** and an official school holiday. There will be no classes on Monday, and all schools and district offices will be closed. We look forward to welcoming students back to online classes on Tuesday, January 19th.

The **Somerville SEPAC** hosts its January meeting and workshop tomorrow, January 12th. The SEPAC meeting is from 6:00-6:45 and will be followed by a special presentation by Linda K. Murphy of her new book, "Declarative Language Handbook: Using a Thoughtful Language Style to Help Kids with Social Learning Challenges Feel Competent, Connected, and Understood". Please email somervilleparentstogether@gmail.com for the Zoom link.

In partnership with the City, we will be hosting our next **Schools Town Hall** online events on Tuesday, January 19th. A Town Hall for staff will be held from 5-6pm; information will go out to staff via email. The community Town Hall will take place from 6:30-8:00pm. Information about how community members can participate in the Town Hall will go out this week. We look forward to updating you on our reopening plans.

The Somerville High School **Highlander Theatre Company** will be presenting three live-stream performances of "**Clue**" this weekend. Shows are Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at 7:00pm. Ticket price is "pay what you can." Each performance will be followed by an interactive post-show online activity. Visit highlandertheatre.org/live for more information and to purchase tickets.

That concluded the Superintendent's Report.

VII. AWARDS AND CITATIONS

A. Recognition of Service for Outgoing School Committee Chair and Vice Chair

- *Carrie Normand*

Caroline Normand - School Committee, Ward 7

- WHEREAS,** *Carrie Normand has served as Chair of the Somerville School Committee for the year 2019 and 2020, and*
- WHEREAS,** *Ms. Normand has guided the Committee with grace and perseverance during a global pandemic, and*
- WHEREAS,** *During Ms. Normand's tenure as Chair, the School Committee developed a progressive new Equity policy and*
- WHEREAS** *Ms. Normand has offered invaluable advice and encouragement to her colleagues as the School Committee navigated unprecedented challenges and*
- WHEREAS** *Ms. Normand's commitment to the students of SPS has been unwavering, always keeping what is best for the students of SPS at the forefront in any decision and celebrating the accomplishments and growth of every student, therefore be it*
- RESOLVED:** *That the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledge the efforts of Carrie Normand, and be it further*
- RESOLVED:** *That this well-earned Resolution be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Ms. Normand.*

- *Emily Ackman*

DR. Emily Ackman - School Committee, Ward 1

- WHEREAS,** *Emily Ackman has served as Vice Chair of the Somerville School Committee for 2019 and 2020, and*
- WHEREAS,** *During Dr. Ackman's tenure as vice chair, she has guided the Committee with grace and perseverance during a global pandemic and*
- WHEREAS,** *During Dr. Ackman's tenure as vice chair and chair of the Rules subcommittee, the School Committee developed a progressive new Equity policy and*
- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Ackman has been proactive in mentoring new colleagues and*
- WHEREAS,** *Dr. Ackman has demonstrated a focus on how to best serve the students of SPS, therefore be it*
- RESOLVED:** *That the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledge the efforts of Emily Ackman, and be it further*
- RESOLVED:** *That this well-earned Resolution be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Dr. Ackman.*

At this time, all members took the time to praise and thank outgoing Chair Normand and Vice Chair Ackman for all their work during the past 2 years.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. MCAS Update

Assistant Superintendent Mazza reported the MCAS update above during the Superintendent’s Report and the memo is included as an attachment.

B. 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	Lueders Environmental	Needham, MA	\$50	Somerville Public Schools
Marimba	Jon Moran	Somerville, MA	\$5,500	SHS Percussion Program

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Normand, seconded by Dr. Phillips, to accept these donations with gratitude. Motion approved unanimously via roll call vote.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Normand

Made a request for an enrollment update at a future meeting.

X. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of **Ann Marie Mahoney** – Mother to Patricia O’Brien, Teacher at the Argenziano School, **Christopher Donnelly** – Father to Jackie Lawrence, Teacher at the Capuano School and Former STA President, **Ellen Skuse** – Sister to Patti Marques, retired Executive Secretary to the Superintendent of Schools, **Barbara Hawkes** – Mother-in-law to Michele Bennett, Teacher at the Kennedy School and **Karen Considine** – Sister to Kim Conley, Teacher at the Healey School.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned via roll call vote at 9:51 p.m.

Related documents:

- Agenda
- 2020-2021 School Calendar
- Personnel Report
- MCAS Update Memo
- Building Update Presentation
- (https://somerville.k12.ma.us/sites/default/files/School_Comm_Building%20Update%2001_11_21.pdf)
- Public Comments submitted to be included in the minutes

Submitted by: C. White

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE,
MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL
COMMITTEE GOTOWEBINAR
REGULAR MEETING – JANUARY 11, 2021 – 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/7798682456361890831>

**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. AWARDS AND CITATIONS

B. Recognition of Service for Outgoing School Committee Chair and Vice Chair

Carrie Normand

Emily Ackman

**III. REPORT OF STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVES**

IV. MAYOR CURTATONE’S UPDATE

A. Building Update

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- 2021-2022 School Year Calendar (Mr. Mazza)

B. Personnel Report

- December

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Risk Mitigation Discussion

B. School Committee Spring Meeting Schedule

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. MCAS Update (Mr. Mazza)

B. Donations (Recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Programs Donated to
Monetary	Lueders Environmental	Needham, MA	\$50	Somerville Public Schools
Marimba	Jon Moran	Somerville, MA	\$5,500	SHS Percussion Program

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

X. CONDOLENCES

XI. ADJOURNMENT

**2021-2022
School Calendar**

Important Dates

AUGUST '21				
M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

SEPTEMBER '21				
M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER '21				
M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

NOVEMBER '21				
M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

DECEMBER '21				
M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

JANUARY '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

For more information or for any questions,
please contact Katherine Santiago –
ksantiago@k12.somerville.ma.us

FEBRUARY '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28				

MARCH '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

APRIL '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

MAY '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

JUNE '22				
M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
☆	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

Quarters

- 1st Quarter 8/30-11/3 (45 days)
- 2nd Quarter 11/6-1/19 (45 days)
- 3rd Quarter 1/22-4/2 (45 days)
- 4th Quarter 4/3-6/13 (45 days)

Half-Day Wednesdays

Dismissal @ 11:30 (PK) Noon (K-8)
 Sept. 15 Feb. 9
 Oct. 6, 27 Mar. 2, 23
 Nov. 17 Apr. 6
 Dec. 8 May 11
 Jan. 12, 26 Jun. 8

August
 30 – 1st day for Staff Prof. Devel.
 31 – Staff Prof. Devel.
September – 20 days
 1 – 1st day for students 1-12 (1/2 day)
 3 – No School
 6 – No School - Labor Day
 6-8 – Rosh Hashanah*
 7 – 1st day for Kindergarten and Pre-K students
 15 – Yom Kippur*

October – 20 days
 11 – No School – Indigenous Peoples' Day
November – 18 days
 2 – No School – Election Day, Prof. Devel.
 4 – Dwali
 11 – No School – Veterans Day
 24 – Begin Thanksgiving Recess at noon
 11/28-12/6 – Hanukkah*

December – 17 days
 23 – Begin winter recess at close of school
 (Includes Christmas – 12/25 and Kwanzaa – 12/26)

January – 20 days
 1 – No School – New Year's day
 3 – Classes resume
 6 – Three Kings Day / Dia De Los Reyes
 17 – No School – Martin Luther King Day
February – 15 days
 21-25 – February Vacation (includes Washington's Birthday)

March – 23 days
 17 – Holi
April – 15 days
 4/2-5/1 – Ramadan*
 15 – Good Friday
 17 – Easter
 4/15-4/22 – Passover*
 18-22 – April Vacation (includes Patriots Day)

May – 21 days
 2 – Eid al-Fitr*
 27 – Class Day (Tentative)
 30 – No School – Memorial Day
June – 11 days
 6 – Graduation Day (Tentative)
 15 – Last day of school (180 days)
 19 – Juneteenth Independence Day
 22 – 185th day

Prof. Dev. for teaching staff only

○ Half-Day **ALL** students PK-12

☆ **Special Dates for Seniors**

Major Religious & Cultural Holidays

Dates underlined above represent the district's major religious and cultural holidays. All Jewish and Islamic holidays started above begin at sundown the previous day. Somerville Public Schools staff members will do their best to refrain from scheduling one-time events, field trips, athletic competitions, auditions, tests, quizzes for these days. Long-term assignments will not be due on the day of or the day after one of these holidays.



Somerville Public Schools
 Education • Inspiration • Excellence
PERSONNEL REPORT
2020-2021 School Year
December 2020

RESIGNATION FOR PURPOSE OF RETIREMENT:

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	YEARS OF SERVICE
SHS	Utility Aide	Michael Dedrick	07/28/20	17 & 152 days
SHS	CAD/CAM/Computer Repair Teacher	Yuri Petriv	08/10/20	20
HLY	ELL Integrated Grade 1 Paraprofessional	Dania McIntire	09/01/20	7 & 170 days
AFAS	Grade 4 SEIP Teacher	Carmen Chagas	10/12/20	33 & 158 days
ESCS	Grade 2 Teacher	Carole Phillips	12/31/20	24
ESCS	Grade 4 Unidos Teacher	Ruth Quintanilla	12/31/20	14
SHS	Health Education Teacher	Janet Flynn	06/30/21	34
WHCIS	SPED Teacher	Alison Bell	06/30/21	27
AFAS	Grade 4 Teacher	Deborah Pacino	08/09/21	36
SHS	In House Suspension Advisor	Michael Rolli	06/30/21	30
AFAS	Cafeteria Helper	Naa Adjetej	01/02/21	16
KEN	Special Education Paraprofessional	Joan Grimes	01/01/21	21 & 70 days
SHS	Principal	Sebastian Lagambina	06/30/21	33 & 131 days

RESIGNATION NOTICES:

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE
EEC	SPED Paraprofessional	Trudy Iseghohi-Edwa	12/11/20
SFLC	Playgroup Facilitator	Kumi Okabe	11/09/20
SCALE	PT HISET Chief Examiner	Scott Weaver	12/01/20 (Will Continue as a FT Teacher)
SHS/Athletics	Athletics Coach - Boy Freshman Hockey	Troy Saulinier	12/03/20

ASSIGNMENT ENDED

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE

LEAVES OF ABSENCES

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATES
AFAS	Grade 2 SEI Teacher	Diana Garity	11/30/20-06/30/21 - Extension
CAP	SMILE Paraprofessional	Anne Marie Browne	11/05/20-11/16/20
CAP/Comm Schools	PT Assistant Teacher	Nathaniel Starling	11/02/20-TBD
Central	Innovation Project Specialist	Jason Behrens	11/18/20-12/03/20
ESCS	Kindergarten UNIDOS Teacher	Nicole Navarro	12/25/20-06/30/21
HLY	Kindergarten Paraprofessional	Katherine Donahue	11/23/20-01/15/21 - Extension
HLY	Special Education Teacher	Emily O'Brien	02/11/21-06/30/21
KEN	Music Teacher	Catherine Ward	02/25/21-06/30/21
SHS	PT Cafeteria Helper	Ashma Sheikh	10/03/20-12/25/20
WSNS	Kindergarten Teacher	Stephen Debenedict	10/26/20-11/10/20
WSNS	Grade 4 Teacher	Danielle Elrich	02/23/21-06/23/21

INTRA-DISTRICT PERSONNEL TRANSACTIONS

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	REASON	VICE	EFFECTIVE DATE
AFAS	Temporary Grade 2 SEI Teacher	Christina Carroll	Reassignment	Diana Garity	11/30/20
ESCS	Long Term Substitute-K Unidos Teacher	Jessica Lopez	Temporary Assignment - Current P	Nicole Navarro	12/21/20
HLY/Comm Schools	Interim Afterschool Site Coordinator	Amanda Oppman	New Assignment	Tamar Dalce	11/23/20
HLY	Kindergarten Teacher	Paige Mahoney	Reassignment - Temp to Perm	Kim Conley	11/30/20
HLY/Comm Schools	PT Lead Teacher	Kaycee Corea	Additional Assignment	Jose Torres	09/08/20
WHCIS	Temporary SPED AIM Paraprofessional - 209 days	Patrick Lane	Additional Assignment	New	01/04/21
WHCIS	Temporary SPED ASD Paraprofessional - 209 days	Khadija Faiki	New Assignment	New	01/04/21
WHCIS/Comm schools	PT Lead Teacher	Ana Taveira	Additional Assignment	Francisco Reyes	11/17/20

NEW HIRES

SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	VICE	Dual/SEI	Effective Date
BR/Comm Schools	PT Assistant Teacher	Dritan Aranitasi	New	No/No	01/04/21
ESCS	SPED Paraprofessional	Yu-Ping Mao	Jamie Fleming	No/No	01/04/21
HLY then to KEN	Temporary Occupational Therapist	Delosh Taylor	M. Bernstein J. Riopelle	No/No	12/07/20
KEN/Comm Schools	PT Assistant Teacher	Joseph DiGaetano	Manuel Santiago	No/No	01/04/21
SCALE	PT Technology Operator	Jordan Williams	Manuel Santiago	No/No	01/09/21
SCALE	PT Evening ELL Education & Career Advisor	Derek Washington	Jack Craypo	No/No	11/23/20
EEC/SPED	Special Education Interpreting and Translating	Jeremie Dupin	New	No/No	01/04/21
SHS	PT Redirect Tutor	Matt Clements	New	No/No	01/04/21
SHS	Interim Music/Choral Teacher	Jeremy Pletter	Beverly Mosby	No/No	11/23/20

To: The Honorable School Committee
RE: DESE MCAS Update

January 11, 2021

On January 5, 2021, DESE Commissioner Jeffrey Riley provided a 2021 *Assessment and Accountability* update to school districts. Please see important points of the update below:

- **Modify the Competency Determination for the Class of 2021:** The make-up MCAS administration window for 12th graders scheduled to open on January 14th will be postponed. The Commissioner will recommend to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education that the competency determination (CD) requirement be modified in English language arts and mathematics for students in the Class of 2021 who have not yet earned their CD. The recommended modification would allow students to receive their CD by passing an approved course and demonstrating competency in that subject in lieu of a qualifying MCAS score. Seniors who still want to take the tests may take them later this school year. Members of the class of 2021 will have opportunities to receive additional academic support this spring and summer.
- **Shortened MCAS testing time for Grades 3-8:** The Department will significantly reduce testing time for students in grades 3-8 through a session sampling approach, in which each student will take only a portion of each MCAS assessment in each subject. This modified MCAS administration will preserve the validity and reliability of the test at the school, district, and state levels. When combined with other data points, this approach will provide meaningful diagnostic data at the individual student level.
- **Accountability relief:** The Commissioner will not name or recommend to the Board any new underperforming or chronically underperforming districts or schools in the upcoming school year. The Department will also consider any available flexibilities provided by the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Extending ACCESS testing window:** ACCESS testing for English language proficiency is key to strengthening education programs for English learners. As previously announced, the Department is extending the testing window for ACCESS, which normally concludes in February, until May 20, 2021.
- **MCAS Biology test:** The Department has provided school districts flexibility on scheduling the high school biology MCAS test. Schools may offer the biology MCAS to first-time 9th graders in June, instead of or in addition to offering it in February.

Impact

- Somerville High School has certified 12 students in Science.
- SHS is currently verifying approved courses in ELA and Mathematics. There are currently 25 students in ELA and 11 students for Mathematics.
- SHS currently has 322 grade 9 students who will participate in the Biology exam in June 2021.

Will update with Full Circle numbers for grades 9 and 12 students

Public Comments Submitted to be included in these minutes:

Equity:

Pandemics, because of aggressive corporate farming techniques, incursions into wild areas to cultivate previously virgin land that robs wildlife of habitat and blurs the border between wilderness and civilization, and the globalization of the world, will ensure that this will not be our last pandemic.

They have happened, and will continue to happen, at a possibly more accelerated rate, throughout history:

Note: the Black Plague (fleas), Yellow Fever (mosquitos), Typhoid Fever and Cholera (water borne) Smallpox, the (Spanish) Flu of 1918, Polio.

And despite the vaccine and the deniers, this pandemic is far from over. On-line schooling will continue.

One way to improve children's on-line school experience is to pay people/parents to stay home to support their families.

While this experiment has been wildly successful in Vancouver, and has been launched in neighboring Chelsea, Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone may not be brave enough to launch a similar project.

Another issue with the district's on-line learning has been said to be childrens' inability to log in to on-line school.

That issue has an easier fix: Recruit multi-language speakers who are versed in technology to help families, to teach families, how to log on and use the internet.

Also: Wire the city. Offer free high-speed internet to all residents, regardless of where they live; how many households live in one dwelling.

What do we need? High speed internet!

When do we need it? Now!

What do we want: Free Wi-Fi! When do we want it? Now!