

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, September 9, 2024 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

Members present: Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Dr. Phillips and Ms. Krepchin, Mayor Ballantyne and President Ewen-Campen

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Krepchin asked Superintendent Dr. Carmona to call the roll, results of which were as follows: **PRESENT** – 8 – Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Dr. Phillips, Ms. Krepchin and President Ewen-Campen. **Absent:** Mayor Ballantyne

Chair Krepchin asked interpreters to introduce themselves:

Laura Lozano - Spanish
Telma Leitao- Portuguese
Angie Surpris- Haitian Creole

Superintendent Carmona asked that the following part of his district report be taken out of order.

II. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- Welcome New Administrative Staff – Dr. Boston-Davis

As Dr. Carmona mentioned during our last meeting, we welcomed more than 80 new educators to our district this school year, and we're so thrilled that they are part of our SPS family. She introduced new team members present tonight accompanied by their supervisors.

- Chrisna Chevalier, Assistant Principal at the Capuano
- Lindsey Dobbins, Counseling Department Head at SHS
- Iris Miller, Special Education Department Head
- Benjamin Parad, Assistant Principal, East Somerville
- Dorothy Scally, Special Education Department Head
- Arundhati Sural, Data & Evaluation Specialist

Additionally, we have staff who are not new to our administrative team, but have assumed new roles.

- Christopher Ames, Principal, Brown - *not able to be here tonight, but share these highlights:*
 - Formerly the Assistant Principal at the Winter Hill.
 - Previous experience in SPS: Assistant Principal at Winter Hill, Director of Academic Summer School in SPS, Instructional Coach for Mathematics in SPS
 - Other experience: bilingual classroom teacher in NYC
 - Just returned from one year "world-schooling" his 5th and 9th graders, traveling to Mexico and Europe.

Dr. Carmona extended a very heartfelt welcome to the newest members of our district administrative team.

We have another important agenda tonight that will touch on a host of topics that underscore the importance of community and shared responsibility here in Somerville.

In fact, so much amazing work and collaboration went into making sure our school communities were ready to welcome students back to school. I'm happy to share that we welcomed our first through 12th graders back on August 28th, and PK and K last week.

Myself and my Executive Team have been out at each school over the past few weeks, greeting staff, students, and families. It's been a high point to get back to these visits and to meet families back at their community schools. A huge thank you to all of the students, families, and staff that made our first weeks of school a huge success.

In your packets, you will see reports from the City of Somerville's Department of Public Works and the Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management that highlight the work they engaged in over the summer and beyond, to prepare our facilities for the school year.

The work of these teams have been extensive – a few highlights include renovations to the Winter Hill at Edgerly that has enabled our Pre-K and Kindergarten classes to join the rest of the grades at Edgerly, sound proofing and more. Additionally, all schools across the district were deep cleaned, classrooms were painted, doors were repaired and more.

We are grateful to our city partners for their efforts in preparing our buildings for a successful school year. Still, it's important for me to note that even with all of these efforts and improvements, we continue to have critical facility needs in our buildings, which we are monitoring very closely.

I want to acknowledge that multiple things can be true at the same time. While a lot of investments have ben made in our facilities, we still face challenges.

Late last week, the elevator at the Edgerly went out of service. When this took place we immediately reported the issue to DPW and elevator technicians, who responded. The Fire Department was also called to the school to assist individuals who required the use of an elevator to access their classrooms. Over the weekend, DPW worked many hours to get the elevator back in service. While tests are still being done, the elevator is now working and available for use.

Our desire as a district is to ensure safe, accessible and inclusive environments for all of our students and staff while honoring our unique strengths, needs and backgrounds. Equity and access is a foundational value of the Somerville Public Schools and I understand that the strength of our facilities should support these ideals.

With this in mind, we have enhanced our collaboration efforts with the City and have also asked the City to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of our elevators across the district to prevent future incidents, promote safety, and minimize disruptions.

I want to close this by noting my deep appreciation for the Winter Hill Community. This school community has shown great resilience and has been able to thrive, despite overcoming various moves and facility challenges in the last few years. To all of the Winter Hill students, families and staff — I have two simple words, thank you.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

In response to Mr. Green's question, Chair Krepchin stated that the Mayor had a conflicting meeting and will be in attendance at the conclusion of that meeting.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Krepchin read the public comment regulations and asked those who signed up to comment at this time. Dr. Phillips stated that, insofar as "those of us around the horseshoe" feel the pain of the community and the Mayor needs to hear that, she requested that public comment be delayed until the Mayor's arrival.

Chair Krepchin granted the request.

B. District Report (continued)

- School Readiness Report – Ms. Anosike

The City's DPW and IAM teams put together reports that are in your packets detailing their efforts to get our buildings ready to welcome everyone. DPW's report outlines efforts they've made across all schools and IAM's report is focused on renovations at the Winter Hill at Edgerly. If you have any questions, we will do our best to answer them, and/or pass them along to our City partners.

Richard Raiche Director of City's Infrastructure and Assets appeared before the Committee.

QUESTION/COMMENTS

In response to Dr. Phillips question, Mr. Raiche stated that the new ADA entrance at Winter Hill/Edgerly is under different phase of construction and will be completed in a month. The existing ADA entrance on the Bonair St. side is being used in the meantime.

In response to Mr. Green's question, Mr. Raiche stated that the initial step in week 1 was the pouring of the concrete and remove the existing door to make the entranceway larger, the concrete pouring was undertaken in week 2-3 and cured for twenty-six days. The handrail was ordered toward the end of August when the material was backlogged.

Mr. Green noted that the Committee was told the entrance would be ready by the fall, and had they had the information in the middle of the summer that the project would in fact take longer, they would have been able to pass the correct information onto their educators and families. This has led to an increase in the "trust deficit."

- CoS Construction Advisory Update – Ms. Anosike

Dr. Carmona asked Amara Anosike Chief of Staff to report on CoS Construction Advisory which was as follow- During our last meeting several members had questions about the Construction Advisory Group formed by the City to align with the MSBA building process. This week, there is a memo in your packets shared by the City's consultant on this advisory group - the Consensus Building Institute - that includes more detail on the scope and timeline for the advisory group. If you have specific questions, I am happy to address what I know or share feedback with the City following this meeting. Our Chief Communications and Development Officer Jackie Piques is also here and has been regularly attending the planning meeting with CBI so she can also answer questions.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Mr. Green reported he had not heard from the consultant since the beginning of July. Ms. Piques stated that the timeline had been delayed so that in the fall more educators could be recruited to serve on the advisory committee. Mr. Biton stated that the consultant had been invited to the next facilities and maintenance building subcommittee meeting on September 25th to get more answers to questions.

Mayor Ballantyne arrived at 7:40p.m. and public comment was commenced.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Shawna Powers of School St., mother of first and third graders at the Winter Hill at Edgerly, stated her support for Mr. Collins and his service dog Bonnie as a dedicated educator forced not to be able to teach because of an inoperable elevator. Winter Hill educators have been raising their voices about neglect and inaction with no concrete response currently resulting in being out of compliance with ADA requirements. There has been profound harm done resulting in deep wounds to the community. She stands "in solidarity with Somerville educators" and demands a formal apology and "an immediate ADA compliance review of all school buildings under the direct accountability of the Mayor."

Kate St. Laurent of Albion St. also with first and third graders "agreed wholeheartedly" with Ms. Powers. While she appreciated the words of Dr. Carmona, she wanted to hear more from the Mayor "as the wounds are deep right now." Parents should not have to come to school committee meetings to protest as our "children at home need us."

Gweneth Davies stated that, to use a second-grade expression, she has "big feelings as a teacher at the Winter Hill" who is tired of having to show up at school committee meetings about the inadequacy of the building. A window in her classroom has been shattered since the summer two years ago and has not been fixed. She thanked Mr. Collins for his bravery and advocacy for others that "every single person who comes through our doors" is deserving of a place of welcome and inclusivity. She has not heard "sorry" from the City. "If you don't want to hear from us,

make it better.”

Melissa Moore deferred to a student who had just arrived.

Keira Foley, a six-grader in Mr. Collins’ class is sad because “he cannot be in class since the elevator is broken. Help us fix our school.”

Melissa Moore, an educator and resident of Madison St. like many others in the community “keeps showing up.” While she hears words praising the “resilience” of the community, she asks that the Mayor acts to keep buildings safe for everyone. She quoted from the mission of the school committee’s website to maintain a safe environment, but when schools are not ADA compliant for educators and students to access education, those words ring hollow. She also calls upon the City to issue a public apology and initiate ADA compliance in all school buildings.

Cynthia Devereux of Highland Ave. received a letter from the City informing residents that a homeless shelter will be housed in the Cummings School on Prospect St. As a former resident of the San Diego area where homelessness was a large issue, she had questions about the shelter based on experience. Occupancy of the shelter would be required to leave in the morning and spend the day at the library, already experiencing problems with how the library is utilized. Since her home is at the corner of Prospect and Highland St., she expects it to become an “area for defecation for those on their way to the library.” Funds are needed to bring the Cummings School up to code, funds that are badly needed to make improvements to Edgerly.

Megan Foley of Alpine St. I live at 34 Alpine Street and I have a fourth Grader at the Kennedy School. I have watched from the sidelines as the WH community dealt with a falling apart building on Sycamore St and continue to deal with a sub-par building at Edgerly. We have not even had a full week of school and already education at Edgerly has been impacted by the state of the building. So I am here tonight to lend support to the WH community because all children, but especially the students, educators and staff at WH deserve to have functioning school buildings.

Maria Nakhtigal a staff member at the Edgerly, because of her disability needs an elevator to access her job. She wanted to “convey how important an elevator is not only to myself but students.”

Brendan Buckland of Twelfth St. has a Winter Hill student and is also the building representative for the SEU since 2021. He speaks at this meeting for the fifth time, with the last time being in the spring of 2022 advocating for students that conditions were an impediment to learning. Educators in Somerville should not have to use their time to advocate in this way. He is a type one diabetic and has protections under the ADA and, at the bare minimum, to “provide accommodations for people to work and teach students.” He asked that the school committee use its body of power to “take on the mantle to advocate for students.”

April Luna is a Winter Hill educator for the seventh year as part of the sixth grade team. She expressed dismay at “what happened with Matt and Bonnie.” With all his struggles and challenges, he is the last person to complain and makes things work. He is a problem solver. She saw the impact of the broken elevator had on his being able to do his job. The beginning of the year are key to building teams to serve children, and the building “fell apart without Matt.” She urged the school committee to use its power to advocate for us and “hope you listen to what Matt has to say for himself.”

Nancy McWeeny is a twenty-five year secretary with nineteen of them serving the Winter Hill. She speaks as a friend and colleague of Mr. Collins. In all the years he has taught he has been absent only five times, and despite his “struggles he shows up every single day for his students.” She relayed the timeline of the elevator breakdown last Thursday. Firefighters had to assist him in getting out of the building that day. He was unable to access the school on Friday morning and by the afternoon the elevator was fixed. It went down again that day with the custodian being stuck for fifteen-minutes in the elevator. On Monday it had been deemed fixed by the elevator company but was not. This situation cannot go on as an elevator is needed for educators, visitors and students to access classrooms.

Matt Collins, sixth grade teacher, stated there were two things to know about him: he was passionate about what he does in the community he is in and he shows up for his students. He stated that he has been absent one day out of the eleven years. Not only was it disturbing to be taken out of the building by the fire department, but he was

buoyed by the students and former students who came to his classroom to be sure he was OK. That is what this community is all about. This is not an elevator issue, it is an issue of equity. As he tells his students, stand up and fight for yourself. It is discrimination that he is not allowed to do his job. He implored the committee to stop harming the Winter Hill community. He knows that "things break, but not to this level. I will tell you at this moment, I am broken." *A lengthy audience applause followed.*

Bev Feldman of Bartlet St. is the mother of a first and sixth grader at the Winter Hill. She thanked Mr. Collins. She comes again to advocate for the schools. "We know things break and there is no guarantee things will work, but this is indicative of a larger systemic building issue in the City and not the first time for elevator issues in the community." She implored the City to "take better care of the buildings and community so students know they are being taken care of. This is what it means to invest in the future of our children."

Dayshawn Simmons of Powderhouse Rd. see attached

Megan Brady, educator at Winter Hill, could not remember the number of times she has spoken publicly at school committee meetings and the City on the dire conditions at Winter Hill. She has felt nothing but "anger and disgust" at the City's ongoing neglect for buildings and disregard for its responsibilities. This crisis is the worst she has seen over five-years, and she is uninterested in listening to the "blame game and finger pointing in leadership positions." As she teaches her eighth-grade civics students, "separation of powers means when one branch of government fails to protect people, then the other branches of government are supposed to step up." She urged "all of you" to do what is needed. She demands ADA compliance checks in all buildings and a presentation by the Mayor on her office's efforts to ensure safety and healthy schools. "If you won't join usin making schools sustainable, we will have to fight you on that." Speaking for herself, when it comes to her colleagues' well-being and treatment, she is down for a fight. I just need to know who I am up against."

Via Zoom

Samuel Blomberg, a teacher at the high school, was mentored by Mr. Collins who encouraged him to get involved in building curriculum and form relationships. He encourages all students to reach their full potential by setting high expectations and self-accountability. Students regularly visit his classroom during lunch breaks and after school where a safe space is always provided. Problems of mold, lead and lack of safe structures at Winter Hill were first reported six year ago and nothing has changed. Mr. Collins has never complained about moving up and down stairs and working around things. One does not expect to see lack of accommodations for someone with cerebral palsy in a school setting, "especially to one of its most valuable public servants." The timeline of November is not soon enough. I urge you like everyone else to do the right thing."

Tara Bearsley, an educator at Winter Hill, is outraged over the broken elevator and its impact on student learning and her friend and colleague Matt and Bonnie as another example of municipal government's failure to act. She demanded that the an ADA compliance check be completed on all buildings and report to the community, and that the Mayor issue a report on her office's efforts to ensure safe buildings. She introduced her son Sean a former student at Winter Hill who was withdrawn because of the "disgusting building."

Sean Bearsley, a fourth grader, stated that Mr. Collins and Bonie "deserve a better building where they are safe and provided with help at all times."

Josh Safdie of Central Street is a parent of third grader at Winter Hill. He is an architect and offered himself as a resource having worked on MSBA projects and municipal buildings on ADA accessibility and expert witness in ADA lawsuits. He underscored the fact that the current situation is more about equity than ADA compliance. However, he asked for the results of an ADA self-evaluation done by the City ten years ago, in which there was a three-year window to make accessibility improvements to schools.

Comment submitted by email

Jodi Nemser-Abrahams-80 Hinckley Street

Dear Mayor Ballantyne, City Councilors and School Committee members,

I'm writing in response to the condition of the elevator at Winter Hill at Edgerly. It is simply unacceptable for the school to not have a working elevator. Should any incidents arise in the future concerning the elevator or any other accessibility limitations, they need to be treated with the utmost priority. And those impacted need to be treated with respect and dignity.

We have been moved from a building that was long neglected (also with a dysfunctional elevator) to another old building. I understand immense energy and effort has been put into making the Edgerly a workable space. However, that does not diminish that accessibility is a non-negotiable.

I ask that the city initiate an ADA compliance check across all school buildings in the city and to share that information back to the public, as well as progress towards completing the assessment.

I ask that the School Committee and Mayor issue an apology to those in the Winter Hill community, including a teacher, who have been directly impacted by the broken elevator.

Thank you,
Jodi Nemser-Abrahams
80 Hinckley Street
Ward 5
Parent of a WHCIS 2nd grader and kindergartener

At Mr. Green's request, Chair Krephin announced a five-minute recess.

B. District Report (continued)

- **CoS Construction Advisory Update – Ms. Anosike**

Kimberley Hutter, Legislative Liaison in the Mayor's Intergovernmental Team, stated that the estimated time for the beginning of the MSBA Building Committee is November.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Dr. Phillips asked, insofar as needs assessments had been completed by various stakeholders on school options, why were there more needs assessments were planned. Mayor Ballantyne asked Mr. Raiche to respond.

Mr. Raiche stated that the memo sent out outlined the community process and how the advisory board will inform the decision on the MSBA's suggestion to combine the Brown with the Winter Hill. The MSBA will fund a new building for Winter Hill if students were relocated. This needs assessment is contemplated to understand if there is community need and desire for the Winter Hill and Brown to form a larger community, and would include the pointed question in consideration of younger families coming in to the system generally locating in the central portion of the City.

Dr. Phillips stated that the desire of the Brown and Winter Hill families are well known at this time. She suggested starting with "what has been told to us and is known." Mr. Raiche responded that this is an attempt to do a more robust community outreach and hear voices not heard before, which may or may not bear fruit.

In response to Mr. Green's question on what questions would be asked of young families, Mr. Raiche stated that the consulting firm of CBI had been hired to facilitate the survey. Mr. Green stated that the surveys already facilitated yielded more information than CBI could facilitate.

Mr. Green requested a memo of what improvements had originally been planned at Edgerly including ADA compliance improvements that triggered lower financial threshold.

Mayor Ballantyne reported she had met with eighth graders at the Winter Hill at Edgerly and they asked to be part of the planning for what the new school is going to be. Although they know they will not have the benefit of it, they are paying it forward and saw the importance of having second graders involved in the process. She made a commitment that their voices will be heard. She relayed that the students were in favor of a combined school for the opportunity "to meet more kids."

Ms. Piques stated that CBI is interested in hearing the voices of ninth graders and above and involve students on the

advisory committee.

Mr. Green stated that early in June the Committee heard exactly what the community wanted. He will be making the four basic requests into a resolution for presentation at the next meeting with an apology to the community.

Chair Krepchin stated that Ms. Brady had announced that her eighth-grade class has been awarded a legislative citation.

Mayor Ballantyne wanted to highlight the bigger message that “nothing is being slowed down” in the MSBA process and timeline. An advisory group has been formed before getting through the eligibility and getting to the feasibility stage.

Ms. Pitone stated that she is struggling with the level of information being shared of what will happen over the next year and asked for more detailed information.

In response to Chair Krepchin’s question about having CBI attend the next meeting, Mayor Ballantyne stated that she will look into it. She understood, however, that the joint building committee of the School Committee and the City Council are discussing the timeline, and that it was the desire of the committee not to ask staff to attend multiple meetings when they already work a 10–12-hour day.

In response to Dr. Phillips’ question on what exactly was the root cause of the elevator problem and assurances that it will not break down again, Mr. Raiche offered the following explanation:

- It took a few days to diagnose the problem as there were a number of days it seemed to work and then stopped working.
- Final diagnosis came on Saturday at 4:30PM at which time the electrical contractor for the City was contacted and appeared onsite at 6:30PM; the root cause was traced back to the Eversource power source in the current transformer, which cabinet was locked.
- An emergency call was placed to Eversource, which did not have a tech on hand to remedy the problem.
- The electrician connected a temporary bridge to make the elevator operational on Sunday and Monday morning.
- The elevator broke down again and the problem was escalated to Eversource and corrected at 4:00PM on Monday.
- The failure was not due to any neglect by the City or any equipment that DPW maintains, but by a faulty Eversource electrical feed; DPW is now conducting an assessment of other equipment in other buildings installed by Eversource to ensure that nothing else has been tripped on heavy equipment.
- The failure was due to work done in the building over the summer and an electrical upgrade replacing all four panels has been completed.
- Legal has been advised that a claim has been made against Eversource.

Mr. Green, referring to the Mayor’s comment that the MSBA process has not been slowed down, stated that in fact it was the goal of the School Committee that everything be sped up to meet the goal of making the Winter Hill as functional as quickly as is humanly possible. Things going wrong at the Edgerly building should be expected. The community has lost faith and trust in its leadership, and the Committee does the work to show that we care and have their backs, and if we can do anything to stop things from going wrong we will. The district is at a structural leadership deficit.

Mayor Ballantyne responded that leadership is a) investing \$12 million in buildings in the first year of her term before anyone asked for anything in anticipation of problems heard first in 2020; b) success in ten weeks of moving 420 students from grades 1-8 into the Edgerly and then being asked to unite the entire school; and c) it is the first time in Somerville’s history that there was no relocation of student into multiple schools. The district has old buildings in which there has been no investment. She will continue to provide money because students deserve the best and healthiest buildings possible. This is top priority and other departments have been commandeered to reprioritize to the Edgerly so that students have the best and safest school buildings. Her team is working diligently to make that happen.

In response to Ms. Pitone’s question on the results of the ADA self-assessment completed in 2013, Mayor Ballantyne stated that an ADA coordinator has been hired to conduct a City-wide review of all buildings for compliance and will start in the fall.

Mr. Green asked that the report be shared on the website. Mayor Ballantyne will check with the ADA coordinator to share relevant information a decades old but now being updated. If something was out of compliance a decade ago, relevant progress will be shown.

Mr. Green stated that his hope that CBI will see the School Committee as a stakeholder in the future of the schools as a state-sanctioned body and plan a direct meeting with the Committee.

- **OST Activities for SHS Student – Dr. Carmona**

The City and the Public Library made the decision to temporarily amend weekday operating hours 1-2 days before school began for grades 1-12. While we very much recognize the challenges that the library staff have faced in recent months, we believe that creating and fostering safe spaces and interesting opportunities for students is essential. To that end, we continue to work with our city and community partners to identify solutions that could contribute to staff feeling safer while also providing these critically needed community spaces for youth and the broader community.

- Stemming from an increase in calls for assistance to the Central Library in the latter part of last school year, my team and I met directly with both City and library staff to discuss possible solutions.
- School staff also responded directly to the library on several occasions, after school hours and off of school property, to help de-escalate issues involving students.
- At the same time, we continued discussions with our city partners to identify solutions to support both library staff and community youth. We continue to partner to find acceptable solutions.
- Our expectation and our practice is for non-educator SPS staff to remain at school sites for a reasonable period of time - approximately one hour - following dismissal. Our trained staff are therefore available and do directly support students for approximately one hour following dismissal. Outside of these hours and off of school property, the expectation is that students are outside the direct care of SPS.
- Our suggested solutions to the issue at hand come separately from the *many* in-school and out-of-school time opportunities that we have established for older students in our district. Our commitment to our young people is well-known: supporting the *whole child*, by providing academic rigor, social emotional support, and opportunities for out of school enrichment, along with other wraparound services.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

In response to Dr. Ackman's complaint that the Committee was not notified of the library's decision, Dr. Carmona stated that the decision was made two days before the beginning of school, and apologized for his oversight in not notifying members.

Mr. Biton also expressed his shock at the decision to close the doors of the public library during the time "when students most need an open door and most need to be able to find a safe refuge in terms of books, learning and socializing in a safe learning environment not inside the school structure." Despite Somerville's reputation for dedication to civic spaces, the library's closing during the two hours of student need is depressing. As a School Committee we should offer the City to help engage together as partners as we have demonstrated by providing school department staff to help ensure safety and provide service.

Dr. Carmona, while he has taken ownership for failing to communicate information shared, he in no way takes ownership for the decision to close the library. While the district is trying to provide as many options for students to keep the library as a center piece of community gathering of teens, the real challenge is to provide a space for a teen center. He made the correction that the district does not supply staff to work at the library but is engaging with the library to address the challenges.

Dr. Phillips expressed dismay that many other districts like Boston, Providence and Cambridge have "figured out a city-wide system not led by public schools." While the district is creating out-of-school time options, it is clear the library is "not enough." In response to her question about the plan to keep the library open during critical period of the day, Mayor Ballantyne stated that she is working with the high school administration to reopen the central library as soon as possible and highlighted the following:

- High school libraries in East and West are open until 4:00p.m. everyday.
- Library needs to be safe and accessible for all constituents.
- Cameras have been installed.
- Additional teen space converted at Founder rink; Edgerly open in the evening as well as Powderhouse school.

- Worked with Harvard design team and surveyed teens who asked for centers within fifteen-minute walking distance.
- New position funded for social worker is being hired to work with librarians on day-to-day basis; Parks and Rec have additional programming time.
- Youth services team conducted need assessment with City; 20% higher rate of summer youth employment.
- Children's cabinet being revamped; funding for SPS support in City budget.
- Explore design change for locations of doors in/out library.
- Honor privacy rights of both City/school; work with SPS to provide wraparound services to students; work with Dean of Students on restorative justice program.

Ms. Barish also expressed shock at the decision. In response to her question on the installation of cameras, Mayor Ballantyne stated that cameras are legally installed in and around public buildings.

Mr. Green stated that the decision to close the library was discriminatory and the "worst possible solution to a real problem." The issues have been known since last January and "should not have gotten to this point without solution." Many good ideas have been suggested from volunteers to help librarians and he urged the Mayor to facilitate the opening of the library as soon as possible.

In response to Chair Krepchin's suggestion that the information she shared above be posted on the City website, Mayor Ballantyne stated that "we are deep in the trenches working on it" but will be on the website shortly.

- **Strategic Plan - Ms. Anosike and Ms. Eligene**

Dr. Carmona began the presentation. As you know, after many months of collaboration across the district, our Five-year Strategic Plan is nearly complete. We've engaged with a graphic designer to bring this plan to life. Tonight, we want to provide another update to you, and seek your feedback as we work toward finalizing the plan. Our goal is to have a final, polished, printed document ready to distribute districtwide in mid-October. This has been a truly collaborative effort, but I am especially grateful to Chief of Staff and Strategy, Amara Anosike, and Director of Data, Assessment, and Accountability, Sam Eligene, for their efforts to get this plan to the finish line. Dr. Carmona asked Ms. Anosike and Ms. Eligene to share a brief PowerPoint presentation and data points including the following highlights:

- SPS Strategic Plan Draft
- The "why?"
- Strategic plan development process
- Collecting feedback
- Emergent themes
- Summary
- Collaborative visioning
- SPS mission and vision
- SPS core values: "we believe in..."
- Overview of priority areas
 - o Academic excellence
 - o Equity and access
 - o Wellness and joy
 - o Family and community engagement
- Data dashboard and tracking progress
- Next steps

As is customary policy, the vote on the strategic plan will take place at the next meeting to allow time to fully review.

In response to Dr. Phillips' question, Ms. Anosike stated that the dashboard will reflect assessment data. The plan went through multiple iterations with significant feedback from leadership and staff with suggestions for looking at the whole child including emotional well-being and physical health.

Ms. Pitone stated that she is most interested in wellness data and incorporating youth risk behavior surveys. The former "highlander habits" at the high school can be reworked from the high school perspective. Data around tiered systems of support and equity data across the district can also be included and ensuring that monitoring is done for consistency.

Ms. Eligene stated that a balance needs to be struck between maintaining privacy in data vs. transparency. Dr. Carmona highlighted the dashboard's profile of the SPS learner for a good understanding of where we are that will guide the assessment made on progress and meeting the mark on goals setting. The high school's "highlander habits" can be extended to include middle, elementary and Kindergarten.

Mayor Ballantyne suggested reaching out to the Health and Human Services Department to obtain information on wellness both social-emotion as well as physical demonstrated by the high rate of obesity. An assessment was completed in 2016 by age group and identified youth at risk with the highest population being high school Latinx girls. In discussions last week the Mayor was advised that little progress was made with this population roughly one-quarter of high school students.

- **School Readiness Memo**

The City's DPW and IAM teams put together reports that are in your packets detailing their efforts to get our buildings ready to welcome everyone. DPW's report outlines efforts they've made across all schools and IAM's report is focused on renovations at the Winter Hill at Edgerly. If you have any questions, we will do our best to answer them, and/or pass them along to our City Partners.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Field Trips (Recommended action: Approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by Mr. Biton seconded by Ms. Pitone to approve the following field trips:

Sept. 24, 2024- Sept. 25, 2024, Thirty -six 5th grade students from the Brown School will visit Nature's Classroom in Groton, MA. Travel via bus, student cost \$250. **October 4,2024** Fifteen students from Next Wave Full Circle will visit Mount Monadnock State Park in Jaffrey New Hampshire. Travel by van, no cost to student. **October 16,2024** **October 17,2024** Eight Students from Next Wave Full Circle will visit Hancock Campground located on Kancamagus Highway in Lincoln New Hampshire. Travel by van, no cost to student.

The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Resolution in Support of Question 2

Mr. Green noted a small grammatical change.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF QUESTION 2

WHEREAS, education is a fundamental right and the goal of our educational system is to prepare the whole child for holistic success in their future endeavors, whether that be in higher education, vocational training, or the workforce; and

Whereas Standardized tests often fail to account for diverse learning styles and may not accurately reflect a student's abilities, knowledge, or potential; and

WHEREAS, there is growing evidence that high stakes testing requirements can contribute to undue stress, anxiety, and a narrowing of the curriculum, potentially undermining the holistic development of students and limiting their opportunities for growth in areas such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have shown that standardized test scores are disproportionately correlated with socioeconomic status, access to resources, and test preparation; thereby disproportionately affecting students from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, every year this requirement costs 700 students statewide, and 24 Somerville High students since 2017, who have met Massachusetts' nation-leading curriculum standards their chance at a diploma, despite no evidence of a graduation exam making diplomas more valuable to colleges or employers; and

WHEREAS, the lack of supporting evidence has lead 19 states to repeal their graduation exam requirements since 2017; and

WHEREAS, Removing the MCAS requirement for Graduation would allow Massachusetts to adopt more comprehensive and equitable methods of assessing student learning and achievement, such as project-based assessments, portfolios, and teacher evaluations, which can offer a more nuanced and accurate picture of a student's abilities and progress;

WHEREAS, eliminating standardized test requirements for high school graduation would align with a growing movement towards educational equity and personalized learning, and would allow for a more diverse and inclusive approach to evaluating student success;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Somerville School Committee supports the ballot initiative to eliminate standardized test requirements for high school graduation, recognizing that this change would promote a more equitable and holistic approach to student assessment.

Be it further resolved that we encourage the adoption of alternative assessment methods that better reflect students' diverse talents and achievements, such as performance-based assessments, comprehensive projects, and teacher evaluations.

Be it further resolved that we advocate for the development and implementation of supportive measures and resources to help schools transition to alternative assessment models, ensuring that all students continue to receive a high-quality education.

Be it further resolved that we call upon policymakers, educational leaders, and stakeholders to collaborate in creating and promoting policies that foster an educational environment focused on growth, equity, and individual potential, free from the constraints of standardized testing.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Somerville's legislative delegation, our Constitutional Officers, local media and that a copy of this resolution be placed on the Somerville Public Schools' website.

MOTION: There was a motion made by Mr. Green seconded by Ms. Pitone to approve the resolution in support of Question 2.

The motion was approved unanimously.

B. Cummings Schools Renovation

Dr. Phillips noted that the lawyers were able to review the motion taken at the last meeting and addition of Ms. Pitone's amendment that the City agree to do the thoughtful planning work if the building were to be used in an emergency by students and mitigate the deteriorating conditions due to water.

MOTION: There was a motion made by Dr. Ackman seconded by Dr. Phillips to approve the motion with Ms. Pitone's amendment.

Discussion ensued. In response to Mr. Green's question on whether the warming center will be staffed, Mayor Ballantyne stated that the issuance of the RFP and award of contract will provide that information. She added that last year the contract was awarded to Housing Families who staffed the center overnight and closed the building.

In response to Mr. Green's question on the number of staff, Mayor Ballantyne recalled there was a security officer with three or four other staff members rotated for different shifts with an additional group of volunteers with different skillsets. The exact number of staff will be provided.

Mr. Ewen-Campen stated he was in strong support of the warming center as literally "keeping people alive," and his

commitment for informational community meetings. The center was housed at the armory last year but because of logistical issues could not support the center this year. Questions can be referred to "warmingcenter@somerville.gov."

Following discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

C. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

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

- File EBCFA- Face Covering

File: EBCFA - FACE COVERINGS

Students and staff are expected to follow Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and/or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance regarding masking to reduce risk of infection with, transmission of, or exposure to respiratory disease. In the event that recommendations and guidance are inconsistent, the final determination of which guidance will be followed shall be decided by the Superintendent or their designee. In addition, any individual who wishes to mask to reduce risk of respiratory infection should be supported in that choice.

Guidance Statements:

Centers for Disease Control - Masks and Respiratory Viruses Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/respiratory-viruses/prevention/masks.html>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health - Mask Recommendations

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mask-recommendations>

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - COVID-19 Information and Resources

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/>

ADOPTED: August 11, 2021

REVISED: March 7, 2021

UPDATED: May 17, 2022

REVISED: XXX, 2024

MOTION: There was a motion made by Ms. Barish seconded by Dr. Phillips to accept the changes to File EBCFA Face Coverings.

The motion was approved unanimously.

The following policy is being presented this evening for a second reading to be removed from the policy manual:

- File JLCB-E MDPH School Immunization Regulations

File: JLCB-E - MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION REGULATIONS

Massachusetts School Immunization Requirements

Child	Kindergarten	Grades 1-6	Grades 7-12
Care/Preschool1			
Hepatitis B3	3 doses	3 doses	3 doses
DTa/DTP/DT/Td	4 doses DTaP/DTP	5 doses DTaP/DTP	4 doses DTaP/DTP
4		or 3 doses Td	or

				3 doses Td; plus 1 Td booster
Polio5	3 doses	4 doses	3 doses	3 doses
Hib6	1 to 4 doses ⁶	N/A	N/A	N/A
MMR7	1 dose	2 doses measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella	2 doses measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella	2 doses measles, 1 mumps, 1 rubella
Varicella8	1 dose	1 dose	1 dose	< 13 yrs. = 1 dose 13 yrs. = 2 doses
Meningococcal9	NA	N/A	N/A	1 dose for all new students (applies to residential schools only.)

1. Hepatitis B vaccine is required for all children born on or after January 1, 1992
 2. Five doses unless 4th dose was given after 4th birthday, then only 4 doses
 3. Four doses unless 3rd was given after 4th birthday, then only 3 doses
 4. Doses 3 and 4 should be given according to manufacturer's guidelines
 5. A second dose of measles vaccine will be required for entry into 7th grade until 2002
- Adopted: December 2009

MOTION: There was a motion made by Ms. Barish seconded by Dr. Phillips to approve the removal of File JLCB-E MDPH School Immunization Regulations from the policy manual.

The motion was approved unanimously.

D. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

There was none.

E. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of **Joanna Smith Brown** – mother of Christopher Ames Principal at the Benjamin G. Brown School

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

[Public Comment](#)

[Construction advisory group update](#)

[District strategic plan](#)

[School readiness memo](#)

Submitted by: C. Barraford

ATTACH DOCUMENTS STARTING ON THE NEXT PAGE

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL
REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 – 7:00 P.M.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2024, this meeting of the School Committee will be conducted via hybrid 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.

To **watch** this Regular School Committee meeting live from home please visit the following link:
somerillema.gov/GovTVLive

To **listen** live to the simultaneous interpretation of this meeting in **Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole**, or to participate in Public Comment, please join this Zoom Webinar and choose your desired language by clicking the interpretation globe on the Zoom:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pROSMIOvsJOWNEg

Meeting ID: 869 0362 0322

Password: SPSSC24

Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2023 - 2025

In order to address the root causes of systemic inequity in our schools, the Somerville School Committee and SPS commit to the following goals, knowing that these can only be achieved through ensuring meaningful partnerships with Somerville families, district staff, city government, and community partners. Our goals attempt to address deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensure 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.

1. Whole Child Teaching and Learning... we will:

- prepare students to demonstrate strong literacy and mathematics foundation by grade 3, grade 6, and grade 10
- provide all students with integrated classroom lessons from a high quality social-emotional learning curriculum that helps students value and develop their ability to build relationships with other students, to be self aware and socially aware, to self regulate, and to make responsible decisions
- expand access to real-world learning experiences through students' participation in Early College, Advanced Placement courses, CTE, and/or other learning experiences that help students build critical 21st century skills, meeting with their college and career counselor in their junior and senior year, and students graduating with a defined post-secondary plan.

2. Equitable Access to Programming... we will conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and create and begin implementing a strategy for school building development, school assignment, and programming that aligns with the district's equity policy, and which is based on results of the enrollment study and the projected 10+ year plan for school facilities.

3. Workforce Diversity... we will increase the percentage of support staff of color, teachers and counselors of color, and administrators of color by 6% per group compared to SY22 rates through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our personnel system – recruitment, processes, training, retention, development, advancement, and staff data collection systems on which we base and measure our improvement efforts.

4. Equitable Resource Allocation... we will design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting by 2025, or identify alternative mechanisms to more equitably allocate district resources.

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. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person or via Zoom

To participate in Public Comment remotely please use the following Zoom link:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pROSML0vsJ0WNEg

Meeting ID: 869 0362 0322

Password: SPSSC24

III. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- Welcome New Administrative Staff
- OST Activities for SHS Student
- Strategic Plan (Ms. Anosike & Ms. Eligene)
- School Readiness Memo
- CoS Construction Advisory Update

IV. NEW BUSINESS

B. Field Trips (Recommended action: Approval)

Sept. 24, 2024- Sept. 25, 2024,

Thirty -six 5th grade students from the Brown School will visit Nature’s Classroom in Groton, MA. Travel via bus, student cost \$250

October 4,2024

Fifteen students from Next Wave Full Circle will visit Mount Monadnock State Park in Jaffrey New Hampshire. Travel by van, no cost to student.

October 16,2024 – October 17,2024

Eight Students from Next Wave Full Circle will visit Hancock Campground located on Kancamagus Highway in Lincoln New Hampshire. Travel by van, no cost to student.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

F. Resolution in support of Question 2

G. Cummings School Renovation

H. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following Policies are being presented this evening for a second reading

- File EBCFA- Face Covering

The following Policies are being presented this evening for a second reading to be removed from the policy manual.

- File JLCB-E MDPH School Immunization Regulations

VI. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

VII. CONDOLENCES

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

For Simultaneous Interpretation in Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole See below:

Español - Para Interpretación

Para **ver** la Reunión Regular del Comité Escolar el 26 de septiembre a las 7:00, en vivo desde casa, visite el siguiente enlace y elija **GovTV**: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para **escuchar en vivo la interpretación simultánea de la Reunión Regular en español, portugués o criollo haitiano**, únase a este Zoom y elija el idioma que desee haciendo clic al globo de interpretación:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEq

Identificación de la reunión: 869 0362 0322

Contraseña: SPSSC24

Português - Para Interpretação

Para **assistir** à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 9 de setembro às 7:00, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e selecione

GovTV: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para **ouvir ao vivo a tradução simultânea da Assembleia Ordinária em espanhol, português ou crioulo haitiano**, entre neste Zoom e escolha o idioma desejado clicando no balão de interpretação:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEq

ID da reunião: 869 0362 0322

Senha: SPSC24

Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon

Pou **gade** reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la 9 septanm a 7:00, an dirèk nan kay la, vizite lyen sa a epi chwazi **GovTV:**

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Pou **w tande entèpretasyon similtane Reyinyon Regilye a an panyòl, pòtigè oswa kreyòl ayisyen an**, rantre nan Zoom sa a epi chwazi lang ou vle a lè w klike sou balon entèpretasyon an:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEq

Reyinyon ID: 869 0362 0322

Modpas: SPSSC23



SOMERVILLE EDUCATORS UNION

My name is Dayshawn Simmons and I am a resident of Ward 7 on Powder House Blvd, a middle school history educator in the City as well as the very proud President of the Somerville Educators Union. I'm an educator with an autoimmune condition that leaves me feeling so weak at times that I can't get through the day without an elevator.

In May 2023, before the falling of the concrete, former President Rami Bridge came to these chambers and expressed how outrageous it was that the City had allowed the Winter Hill on Sycamore Street to fall into such disrepair. It was outrageous last year when educators continued flagging issues at the Edgerly building to only be gaslit and told that the mice problem in the building is their fault for needing to have access to food to get through the work day. It's outrageous that our City leadership decided to blame our educators for the City's failing infrastructure instead of praising them for forever doing more with less.

It was outrageous last year when we learned due to inadequate planning by the City, the Winter Hill community almost did not have their PK and K classes join them this year. It was only through the logistical gymnastics of the dynamite principal/assistant principal Courtney Goesslin and Isabel Barros that the Winter Hill community became whole this year. Your Wildcat family loves you both.

It's outrageous that our wonderful colleague and my good friend Matt Collins let his building administration know last year there were no rugs on the accessibility ramp once you enter the Edgerly from Bonair Street which made it a slipping hazard when wet and the City's response was no response. It took Mr. Collins falling and receiving a black eye for the City to decide to do something about the ramp.

It's outrageous that Matt almost lost his wonderful dog Bonnie when the doors to the elevator were not timed correctly. Matt had made complaints about the timing of the elevator doors way before that incident before the City decided to act. Lastly, there's no word for when Matt needed to be carried down by firefighters last Thursday, to be told the elevator was fixed for today, to have it go down again by lunch time.

Perhaps most importantly, Madam Mayor, it's outrageous that you claim to be such an investor in the youth when all we've seen you do is drop a check and run. Don't get me wrong, we'll take your money each and every time, but that's not what it means to invest in the youth and in our community. Investing in our youth, as these educators can tell you, means showing up for them each and every



SOMERVILLE EDUCATORS UNION

single day. Even when it's hard. Even when you don't know why mice keep running around the floor. Even when you don't know why you can't have a recess yard like other schools. Even when you don't know why elevators break and there are no easy solutions. You show up - because showing up shows that you care. It shows that you are here to dig up your sleeves and help, it's not showing up to a School Committee meeting, where you hold a vote, twice a year to keep up with appearances.

We appreciate the superintendent saying we want to make a safe environment for everyone. What progress have we made on the winter hill building

I want to be clear - this is a failure of City government at the highest levels and the buck stops with the Mayor's Office. Get our City departments to talk to each other. Settle these union contracts so folk can have a place they're proud to be for employment. Do your job.