

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, December 6, 2021 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – Zoom Webinar

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

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Green asked the Superintendent Skipper to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 7– Dr. Phillips, Ms. Krepchin, Mr. Green, Ms. Barish, Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, and Ms. Normand ABSENT – 2 - Mr. McLaughlin, Mayor Curtatone.

Mr. Green asked interpreters to introduce themselves:
Micaela Yang-Spanish
Elaine Meztker-Portuguese

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Chair Green announced that we now have two-student representatives. Superintendent Skipper introduced the second student representative, Marcia Narh-Botchway, who is a sophomore at Somerville High School. This year she is enjoying AP US History I and Chemistry I Honors the most as it allows her to learn about content that relates to the real world. She is involved in a range of extra-curricular activities from being a member of Track and Field to the Debate Team. Marcia is also a musician who plays the clarinet and violin, actively participating in All-City Band and All-City Orchestra. This year Marcia is on the 2024 Advisory and a member of the Black Student Union. She is hoping to pursue undergraduate studies in law or science one day and looks forward to being and making the most of in-person learning. When she is not busy with academics and extracurricular activities, you will find her spending quality time with her family and friends, reading fiction books, and making jewelry.

Student Representative Bryan Recinos then shared his report,

- Picture day will be on December 8, 2021 to be featured on the high school yearbook and school ID's.
- The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for Somerville High School will be on Wednesday December 8, 2021 at 6:00 PM.
- Thursday December 16, 2021 the Annual Winter Concert will take place.
- Progress Reports close next week.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- September 27, 2021
- October 4, 2021
- October 18, 2021

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Dr. Phillips, to approve the School Committee minutes of September 27, 2021, October 4, 2021, and October 18, 2021.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

There are several items under New Business on the agenda for tonight's meeting, including two presentations; The SHS Building Committee Update and The Youth Risk Survey Report, as well as the ratification of a COVID MOU and a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Somerville Administrators Association. Superintendent Skipper yielded her time for the items of New Business.

VI. NEW BUSINESS (Taken out of Order)

A. Ratification of 2021 COVID MOU with the Somerville Administrators Association

Superintendent Skipper introduced Vice Principal Viele and referenced the agreement with the SAA and the MOU in the packet. The MOU is related to the COVID working conditions similar to other units and the agreement is an integrated agreement that goes back to 2019. Vice Principal Viele said a few remarks thanking the district for their collaborative work to reach this agreement.

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Norman, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to authorized Chair Green to sign the COVID MOU with the Somerville Administrators Association.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

B. Ratification of the July 1, 2019- June 30,2024 Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Somerville Administrator Association

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman seconded by Ms. Norman, to authorize Chair Green to sign the integrated bargaining agreement with the Somerville Administrators Association for July 2019 through June 2024. The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

At this time Chair green acknowledge the presence of member elect Sarah Dion in the audience.

C. SHS Building Committee Update (Mr. Raiche)

Chair green then asked Mr. Raiche to present his update. Mr. Raiche acknowledged that it has been some time since he gave his report and shared some background information to begin with.

Mr. Raiche then presented his slides. [The SHS Building Committee presentation Slides could be viewed here.](#)

Mr. Raiche’s Presentation was followed by a few questions from School Committee members.

One member asked Mr. Raiche to specify which district was the project funded by. Mr. Raiche responded that the SHS construction project was fully funded by the City.

Ms. Pitone asked how the warranty would work and if there are there any negotiations happening for these items. Mr. Raiche said there tends to be subcontract agents. The only way to negotiation for a warranty is to pay up front.

Conversation ensued regarding different aspects of the construction.

D. Youth Risk Survey Report (Mr. Kress)

Present were Dough Kress, Director of Health and Human Services and Matthew Mitchell, Prevention Services Manager of Somerville Prevention Services.

Both Director Kress and Mr. Mitchell took turns reporting the survey results and shared that the presentation would be

added to the city website. [The Youth Risk Survey Report Presentation could also be found here](#) on the Somerville Public Schools Website.

Director Kress mentioned that this year the survey results are somewhat different from years in the past due to COVID-19. He reported that 821 middle school students took the survey in person. Meanwhile 601 Somerville High School students took the survey remote, which shows less participation.

The presentation was followed by some questions from the Committee.

Dr. Ackman commented that some of the percentages might look disconcerting, and asked if the Queer percentages were higher than others due to the amount of students that took the test. Director Kress confirmed that that is correct.

Dr. Phillips directed her question to Director Doncaster, following up on the implication of gender queer students and asked to hear some of the supports currently in place.

Director Doncaster listed some of the supports currently in place and announced that the district would be hosting a parent coffee hour through the District Attorney’s Office to educate parents on the challenges of social media young adults and parents are currently facing.

VII. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities: November 15, 2021 (Ms. Krepchin)
Tabled.

B. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management: November 22, 2021 (Ms. Barish)
Ms. Barish read her report prior to introducing File LBC- relations with Non Public Schools.

The November 22, 2021 Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm. In attendance were: Subcommittee members Ellenor Barish, Emily Ackman, and Ilana Krepchin; Assistant Superintendent Chad Mazza; Attorney Michele McNulty, and Superintendent's Chief of Staff, Dr. Jeff Curley. There were four audience members.

There were four items on the agenda.

1. Approve Minutes from October meeting.

Ilana Krepchin moved to approve the minutes. Emily Ackman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Vaccination Policy

Attorney McNulty provided a review of the legal perspective on COVID vaccination mandates. She noted that our collective bargaining agreements require that we consider this and that we currently have a mandate for employees noting that they must be vaccinated or test weekly and wear an N95 type mask. While there is a federal vaccination mandate for employers of over 100 people, it is not clear if this OSHA regulation applies in MA and it has been stayed by the court. Additionally, SPS currently has an extracurricular vaccination mandate with religious and medical exemptions. Now that the FDA has fully approved vaccinations for those 16 and up, some districts are looking at a mandate for attendance in that age group. If the state Department of Public Health adds COVID to the list of required mandates this is not a problem. In July, our legal advisors opined that School Committee could look at a mandate, but we don't know how DESE would react. That type of action would be bolstered if it was done in partnership with the local Board of Health as was done in Amherst-Pelham. Given DESE's restriction of remote learning, the question arises as to the duty of School Committee to provide alternative options should a student not be vaccinated in the context of a vaccination mandate.

Discussion was put on hold in order to take up the next agenda item.

3. Private School Application Policy

Chad Mazza worked with legal advisors to tailor the Franklin policy shared at the previous meeting. The revised policy includes a schedule of Educational Programs and Instruction meetings including a presentation from the school's founders at the second meeting. Ellenor Barish noted that she added Health and Social Emotional learning to the list of academic requirements. Emily Ackman requested that Nutrition be added more explicitly. Emily Ackman moved to pass the revisions out of subcommittee. Ilana Krepchin seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

With that, we resumed the conversation around vaccination mandates with an update on vaccinations in the district from Dr. Jeff Curley. He informed us that 94% of staff vaccinated, as compared to 76% of Somerville adults. The high school rate is harder to pinpoint, but it is very close to 70%, compared to 50% of Somerville 16-19 year olds. He noted that this 50% rate is pulled from a state database and may not be fully up to date. The extracurricular mandate noted by Attorney McNulty bumped vaccinations by about 150-200 students. Dr. Curley asserted the district's position that vaccination is the best line of defense against COVID-19 and that it must be used alongside other mitigation measures like masking and testing.

If the district were to pursue a broader vaccination mandate for students, we would need to address a number of issues including the appropriate age range, the remedy for non-compliance, how to document vaccination, and the process for exemptions.

The subcommittee discussed next steps and expressed interest in inviting public health and health policy experts to a future meeting to share their perspectives and answer questions. Dr. Curley will reach out to appropriate local and regional resources.

4. End-of-term Summary

Ellenor Barish asked her colleagues to consider the agenda items spreadsheet created and reviewed early this year in order to create a term summary to be discussed at the December Rules Management Subcommittee meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 pm.

Documents Used: October Rules Subcommittee Report, Somerville LBC

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms. Barish, second by Dr. Ackman, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Rules Management of November 22, 2021.
The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

C. Special School Committee Meeting of the Whole: November 23, 2021 (Chair Green)
Tabled.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS (Items E,F and G)

E. Somerville Public School Policy Manual

The Following policies were presented this evening for a first reading:

- File LBC – Relations with Non- Public Schools

Having read her report, Ms. Barish then gave a brief explanation of the policy and the process the District is looking to put in place.

Dr. Phillips asked if a site visit is required as part of the state law? Assistant Superintendent Mazza said he would look into it, and provide a response at the following meeting.

Conversation ensued about the application currently under review

F. ACCEPTANCE OF FY22 GRANT FUNDS (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: To accept all federal entitlement and continuation grants and all state continuation grants awarded to the Somerville Public Schools listed below:

State Grants

YouthReach Returning Grant from the Mass Cultural Council \$22,000 – to support El Sistema Somerville

FC-252 American Rescue Plan (ARP) \$297,628: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

FC-264 American Rescue Plan (ARP) \$26,466: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – Early Education

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Normand, to accept of FY22 Grants Funds awarded to the Somerville Public Schools listed above:

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

G. Donations (Recommended action: approval)

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

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Programs Donated to
Monetary	Stephen Tapscott	Cambridge, MA	\$3,000	Next Wave/ Full Circle
Creality Ender 3 Pro 3D Printer	Cara Hope	Parker, CO	\$250	AFAS – Mr. Coughlin’s Class

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Normand, to accept all Donation awarded to the Somerville Public Schools listed above:

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

VIII.UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. School Committee Special Subcommittee on Policing Policy

At this time, Chair Green announced the names of the committee members for the Special Subcommittee on Policing Policy:

Ellenor Barish
Sarah Phillips
Matt Buchanan

Les Lartey
Glenda Soto
Dayshawn Simmons
Aisha Banda
Caterina Sanz
Johanne Thomas
Anuj Bhardwaj
Silvia Martinez de Mejia

Student Representatives in this committee will be announced later this week.
The process will involve public comment and public forums and an email address will be shared where feedback will be accepted.

IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

X. CONDOLENCES

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned 9:30p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

Submitted by: EGarcia