

The January 10, 2023 meeting of the Special Policing Subcommittee was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Subcommittee members Glenda Soto, Sarah Phillips, Dayshawn Simmons, Andre Green, Aisha Banda, and Ellenor Barish were present at the start of the meeting. Jeff Curley and Susana Hernandez Morgan were also present. Anuj Bhardwaj arrived at 6:06 pm. There were three people in the audience at the start of the meeting.

There were two items on the agenda.

1. Response to Subcommittee Questions

Interim Superintendent Curley presented some slides outlining the process so far and clarifying the present situation. The Somerville Police Department has identified two officers appropriate for the role of SLO but there are many details that need to be worked out and formalized in a MOU before an SLO program can go into effect. Dr. Curley recommends a phased approach in which the two officers identified by SPD will be the first to respond in an emergency when they are available. These officers have specific training that prepares them to work with young people. Until an MOU is in place, they will not have any formal role in any school building. To be clear, the prior proposal is on hold pending further work on the MOU. The superintendent hopes to prioritize de-escalation and relationship building in that MOU. He is eager to move away from the old Middlesex County DA MOU that the district has been working under for several years and suggested that the 2022 Commonwealth Model MOU would serve as a baseline.

The subcommittee discussed how to move forward given this shift and the coming change in district leadership with the hiring of a new superintendent. Members seemed to agree that having two specifically trained officers to respond to emergencies was a positive development. They matched the superintendent's eagerness to move away from the DA's MOU but raised concerns that district staff would need clear guidance regarding how and under what circumstances they should request assistance from SPD while a new MOU is being developed, and that with a new superintendent coming on, some of this work may need to be repeated. School Committee Chair, Andre Green, suggested that this group should provide the full committee with recommendations about what they want to see included in a new MOU, reminding the group that like any MOU, creating this MOU with SPD will be a negotiation. Dr. Curley suggested that the group vote on adopting the phased approach before taking up the MOU discussion. Mr. Simmons asked how this group can best support Superintendent Curley in the work of negotiations with the City. Dr. Phillips suggested that the group do three things: vote on the phased-in approach, determine how to provide guidance to district staff for the interim period, and provide guidance on what we want to see in a new MOU.

The School Committee's attorney advised the subcommittee that the district is not required to have an MOU in place but that it is important to provide specific guidance about what qualifies as a reportable event and how to proceed when such an event occurs.

2. Deliberation on District Proposal

Andre Green made a motion to recommend to the full committee that SPS work with the two juvenile officers in emergency events and that no officers will work within SPS buildings until an MOU is created and agreed to by SPD and approved by the School Committee.

The motion was seconded by Glenda Soto.

Superintendent Curley noted that the MOU has not been legislated by the School Committee in the past and that the more involved the process the slower it will be.

A friendly amendment (in italics) was suggested by Dr. Phillips:

Recommend to full committee that SPS works with the two juvenile officers in emergency events and refer to rules the development of a new policy; start with the MOU that the district is in midst of negotiating, and take away everything the police have to do leaving just what the district is responsible for.

Attorney Tobins reminded the group of the importance of providing staff guidance regarding legal responsibilities.

There was a discussion about why the recommendation to follow the phased approach and a provision for guidance should be combined in a single motion. Several subcommittee members shared concerns that without clear and comprehensive guidance there is a potentially dangerous risk of confusion among students, caregivers, and staff. Ms. Barish clarified that this group could pass several motions during this meeting in order to cover all of the concerns. Superintendent Curley requested guidance specifically on what constitutes an emergency, suggesting the language from the new model MOU. He expressed a desire to suspend the old MOU as soon as the next day in order to pare down the types of incidents that must be reported.

Andre Green withdrew his prior motion.

Attorney Tobin and Principal Soto shared some context regarding what happens when there is an emergency in a school: Liz Doncaster is always notified and included in the process; often the attorneys are also brought into the conversation. Every administrator in the district is trained in the legal requirements and in the district's process. Conversation turned to what happens when there is a 911 call from a school building. In that case, the police call the school to verify. If a person calls the police about something they see happening outside the building, the police respond.

Dr. Phillips proposed a new motion which was workshopped by the group with guidance from Attorney Tobin and with support from Dr. Curley:

I move that this subcommittee recommend that the full school committee adopt the district's proposal to call the two police officers designated by SPD in emergency situations and direct the Superintendent and/or his designee to develop guidance for

SPS staff and administrators on their roles and responsibilities when calling and interacting with police that are based on the draft MOU SPS has been developing. Until such time that this guidance is developed and in place, the school department will work with legal counsel to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and our stated values to interrupt the school to prison pipeline.

Andre Green seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm.