

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF RESURFACING THE BENJAMIN G. BROWN SCHOOL PLAY YARD

WHEREAS, the Benjamin G. Brown School is a K-5 elementary school in the Somerville Public School district serving 196 students from across the city; and

WHEREAS, offering structured and unstructured play opportunities for students throughout the school day is integral to educating the whole child; and

WHEREAS, the usable outdoor space at the Brown School consists primarily of an asphalt play yard; and

WHEREAS, the ground is not level, the asphalt is cracked and crumbling, and there are storm water drains in the play area; and

WHEREAS, the play yard serves students for recess, Community Schools after school programming, and informal before and after school play; and

WHEREAS, the play yard serves students in physical education classes whenever weather conditions allow given that the building does not have a gymnasium; and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the play yard also serves as a designated outdoor eating space when weather conditions allow; and

WHEREAS, the nurse at the Brown School has documented 232 injuries that have occurred on the play yard so far this academic year, a number that does not include any injuries occurring after school or minor injuries that can be addressed by classroom teachers; and

WHEREAS, parents and community members have been asking the City of Somerville to improve the play yard at the Benjamin G. Brown School for over a decade; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somerville acknowledged in 2017 that the play area at the Brown School did not meet the city's standards; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somerville committed funding in 2019 for the redesign of the school's outside space, a project that has been put on indefinite hold pending a larger study of the building and of the community's needs with no significant improvements having been made in the interim; and

WHEREAS, City representatives have indicated that any large-scale improvements to the school building and grounds will require several years of study and planning before any physical work might begin; and

WHEREAS, Superintendent Mary Skipper has expressed her support for resurfacing the play yard at the Benjamin G. Brown School; and

WHEREAS, the City of Somerville controls funding for the maintenance of the city's school buildings and grounds as well as its parks.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it:

RESOLVED: That the Somerville School Committee requests that the City Council and Mayor Ballantyne provide the financial and administrative support to ensure that the Benjamin G. Brown School play yard will be remediated beginning in June 2022 with the intention of improving the safety of the playground, including leveling where possible in time for the start of the 2022-2023 academic year.

VOTED: Unanimously

DATE: February 7, 2022

BY THE: Somerville School Committee