

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, April 2, 2018 – Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. - Board of Aldermen's Chambers – Somerville City Hall

**Members present:** Mr. Futrell, Ms. Pitone, Ms. Palmer, Mayor Curtatone (7:55 p.m.), Alderman Ballantyne, Ms. O'Sullivan, Ms. Ackman, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Green.

**Members absent:**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Green called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Mr. Green asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 8 – Futrell, Pitone, Palmer, Ballantyne, O'Sullivan, Ackman, Normand, and Green and ABSENT – 1 – Curtatone.

**I. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Student Representative Emily Nash was present for this evening's meeting and offered information on the following:

- Spring sports are well underway and have over 300 participants
- On March 24<sup>th</sup>, the High School was busy hosting the Vocational Fair and also tours of Somerville High School. Approximately \$3,000.00 was raised for the Teachers' Scholarship fund through donations for the tours. The School Store also had tremendous sales on merchandise fueled by the tours and the Vocational Fair.
- On this coming Thursday, April 5, the National Honor Society Induction Ceremony will take place at 6:00 p.m. in the auditorium.
- The Sophomore/Junior Semi-formal is this coming Friday night, April 6 in the Field House.
- College and Career Day is this coming Saturday (April 7).
- Last week, sophomores participated in the first phase of MCAS.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- February 26, 2018
- March 5, 2018
- March 26, 2018

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to approve the minutes.

Ms. O'Sullivan requested that a section of the minutes from March 5, 2018 be corrected as text was cut off and Ms. Marques confirmed that she would correct the minutes.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Rajiv Raman, a Ward 5 resident, spoke about the recent closing of schools due to expected snow last week and how decisions are made, etc.

On the heels of Mr. Raman's comments, Mr. Green announced that, without objection, he would take the next item out of order as it is relevant to Mr. Raman's concerns.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Discussion regarding school closures due to inclement weather**

Mrs. Skipper shared the current process used to determine school closures due to inclement weather. The Superintendent also stated that there is a Decision Making Wheel on the district website for the public to see the steps that go into the process. She teams with the City and reviews the current forecast, road conditions and the possible need for a snow emergency to be declared. She also consults with other area superintendents. Also taken into account are the travel of our staff, as many of them live outside of the city; walking (sidewalks); and parking. For the most recent storm, Mrs. Skipper participated on five (5) phone calls with Somerville DPW, Police, Fire, Traffic and Parking administrators. Clearly, the forecast was incorrect and we could have had school. A practice of calling off school the night before limits flexibility in making a decision. Mrs. Skipper spoke about a "prep" call the night before whereby parents and guardians would be alerted to make plans for a possible snow day and that a call

would be made early the next morning with the final determination. We are also looking into possible delayed start times.

Members had discussion that included:

- The lack of a current School Committee policy regarding school closings for inclement weather, etc.
- An overview of delayed start
- More lead time when canceling after school programs
- Not restricting the Superintendent's decision-making
- Snow emergency/parking ban play-in
- Lack of space to put snow that has to be removed to allow for safe walking/driving/parking

## I. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Congratulations to the East Somerville Community School and the Unidos Program for hosting the **Southern New England Regional Dual Language Conference** on Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. The conference, sponsored by the Multistate Association for Bilingual Education (MABE), drew their largest attendance ever, with more than 300 educators, parents, and students attending the conference to learn about and share current research and best practices in the field. We were thrilled to showcase the ESCS and the Unidos program at this important regional event.

Congratulations also to Leo DeSimone and the Somerville High School Career and Technical Education team for hosting another outstanding **CTE Fair** on March 24<sup>th</sup>. The annual event provided future SHS students and members of the Somerville community with a first-hand look at the work that happens in each of the school's 13 CTE programs. Student Ambassadors provided guided tours of the programs, and guests had an opportunity to participate in hands-on activities in each of the shops. Thanks to Leo and all the CTE faculty and students for providing our guests with an in-depth look at the many ways in which Somerville High school Students are gaining leadership skills and preparing for post-secondary success.

The Somerville Family Learning Collaborative invites you to a free screening and discussion of **"Celling Your Soul"**, a documentary about the impact of digital dependency from the perspective of the first digitally socialized generation. Filmmaker, writer, professor and producer of the documentary, Joni Siani, will facilitate the screening and discussion, which takes place tomorrow, Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6:30-8:30pm at Tufts University's Cohen Auditorium located in the Aidekman Arts Center (40 Talbot Ave., Medford). Parents and youth in 5<sup>th</sup> grade or above are encouraged to attend and be part of this discussion. This event is co-sponsored by Tufts University School of Arts and Sciences Community Health, and by the Cambridge Health Alliance.

The **2018 College and Career Day** at Somerville High School will take place this Saturday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, from 9:45am to 1:00pm. Students in grades 9-12 and their families are invited to attend and get information related to college and career planning for every grade level. Guests will hear advice from admissions counselors, find out about job training programs, learn how to pay for college and how to obtain scholarships, get tips on finding the right college, and hear about a range of popular career fields. Snacks, interpreters, and childcare will be provided.

**Parent-Teacher Conferences** are coming up in the next few weeks. Please check our website calendar of events for a complete listing.

- Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>: Healey School, 6:00-8:00pm
- Wednesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>: Next Wave/Full Circle, 6:00-8:00pm
- Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>: Somerville High School, 6:30-8:30pm
- Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>: Argenziano, 5:30-7:30pm
- Thursday, April 26<sup>th</sup>: Winter Hill, 6:00-8:00pm

Reminder that **April Vacation is April 16-20<sup>th</sup>**, including Patriots Day. All schools will be closed throughout the week. District offices will be closed only on April 16<sup>th</sup>, but will be open the remainder of the week.

## II. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

### A. Educational Programs & Instruction Subcommittee: March 19, 2018 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

The Education Programs & Instruction sub-committee held a meeting March 19, 2018. Sub-committee members in attendance were Paula G. O'Sullivan, Emily Ackman and Dan Futrell. Participating district staff included Assistant Superintendent Almi Abeyta, SHS Headmaster Sibby LaGambina, SHS Director of College and Career Readiness Melanie Kessler, and Director of Communications and Grants Susana

Morgan. School Committee chair Andre Green, vice-chair Carrie Normand, and member Laura Pitone also attended. In addition, there was one audience member.

Ms. O'Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Mr. LaGambina, Ms. Kessler and Ms. Morgan presented a progress update on the district's work with the Barr Foundation, in partnership with the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), in envisioning the future of Somerville High School (SHS). The work has focused on designing a whole-school educational model that puts the student at the center of a flexible and evolving learning experience through pathways that connect all students to the real world as standard practice.

The work is supported by a \$300,000 two-year planning grant from the Barr Foundation. The district pursued this grant because it aligned well with SHS Building Project Educational Program Plan, and it offered an opportunity to bring many pockets of great work together more systematically, to leverage our strong community partnerships, and to address persistent gaps in access and achievement.

The project aims to develop a model where every student would have at least one significant out-of-school learning experience. The planning process is designed to be inclusive and comprehensive. A diverse planning team of about 24 members meets bi-weekly. In addition, there are four subcommittees and a student committee that meet regularly, as well as two convenings of all grantees (about 11 across New England). The committees are made up of staff, parents, students, and community partners.

Each subcommittee has a particular focus: Out-of-School Learning, Personalization, Performance-Based Assessment, and Scheduling. Each subcommittee is researching the particular focus area, and will visit at least one other school. They also are charged with ensuring full diversity of students and parents when collecting input, and developing a proposed set of recommendations. One recommendation should be identified to field test in the 2018-19 school year. Importantly, all recommendations should apply to and work for all students.

The first of several "community conversations" took place in February, with about 50 people attending. The input gathered was similar to what staff and the planning team had identified.

According to the proposed timeline, a final plan will be presented to the School Committee in December 2018. The pilot will then take place January to June 2019, followed by refinements to the plan based on the pilot and feedback. In September 2019, the full implementation will begin to be rolled-out, with phasing in of the initiative for current SHS classes. It is likely there will be an implementation grant opportunity to further support this work.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:47pm.

MOTION: Ms. O'Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to accept the report of the Chair of Ed Programs for the meeting of March 19, 2018.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

Discussion ensued which included the following:

- Work is vital and so important to the new Somerville High School
- Would this grant also provide possible student internships?
- Applied learning and internships
- Not all internships are after school
- Because students have other obligations after school – child care, sports, jobs, internships could be done in 6-8 week modulized experiences that provide transferable skills.

#### **B. School Committee Meeting for Finance & Facilities:** March 20, 2018 (Mr. Futrell)

The meeting began at 6:39pm at 8 Bonair Street. In attendance were myself, Ms. Ackman, Ms. Pitone, Ms. Palmer, Ms. O'Sullivan, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Green.

We first discussed enrollment across the district, specifically looking at the enrollment matrix that the district maintains to project future space and teacher needs from grade to grade. The enrollment figures showed the traditional trend of higher enrollment in earlier grades dropping down as students' progress to and through high school. The committee had questions about attrition over time, specifically asking the district to provide figures on attrition between 8th grade and high school, as well as intra district mobility which the Superintendent indicated could be a signal of school-level strengths and opportunities, as well as confidence in a particular school.

Additionally, the Superintendent noted that our investment in online registration provides the district with

more data that will continue to inform future enrollment data.

Finally, the committee visited the need for a NESDEQ enrollment study similar to what the district completed about 4 years ago. This study looks out farther in the future than we're capable of doing ourselves, additionally pulling in birth and municipal/state mobility data to inform enrollment forecasts.

Next we discussed our preparation for the FY2019 budget, talking through expenses around our Special Education programming, which has been higher than expected this year. You've heard me report out on this before over the last couple months, and has been driven by our provision of services to children who have been placed in out-of-district placements, as well as serving our homeless population, transportation for vulnerable populations, and other factors. The district has diligently looked within the Special Education department for financial efficiencies, as well as looking across the district to ensure that we are focusing our resources so that we're serving the needs of all of our children. Of note, this issue is shared by urban and other districts across the Commonwealth and we expect to partially recoup some of the costs through the circuit breaker, which provides funds for Special Education costs that are extraordinarily high above what was budgeted by more than 25%. This body and the public should expect to hear an update on this as we continue forward.

The overage for our Special Education costs this year is forecasted to be approximately \$1.25M, and we've been able to repurpose \$500k of funds toward these expenses across the district in a \$68.5M budget. For context, the \$500k we were able to shift represents 7 tenths of 1%, so just under 1%, of our entire budget.

Next, we reviewed the level service budget for the district for FY19 - which represents how much it would cost to provide the same level of services and programming to our students given multi-year obligations and expected costs. The district reported the initial level service budget at 5.95%. When the extraordinary expenses that I've previously mentioned are excluded, the level service budget represents an increase of 4.85%, which is in line with the budget increase last year of 4.78%. I'd caution this group from reading too much into these figures as this is literally the first full-budget look for the year with no decision-making applied from the district or from this body. This figure will likely move in both directions multiple times before we land on a final figure, and I will continue to report out as we make progress.

We next discussed the budget calendar for the year, agreeing to host community meetings across the city over the period March 24 through April 23, at which time each Committee member will report out in this forum on what we heard on needs across the district for the upcoming year.

School Committee members have scheduled office hours this week on Tuesday April 3, and every day from this Thursday April 5 to Wednesday April 11. These dates and locations were published in last week's Connections newsletter and will continue to be published going forward. If you want to know more details, please reach out to the district.

The Superintendent's public presentation of her budget to the School Committee will take place the evening of Tuesday, May 15. We invite all school and community members to attend. Finally, we reviewed the bill rolls which were moved and seconded for approval by Ms. Pitone and Mr. Green respectively, which passed unanimously.

The committee adjourned at 8:50pm.

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the report of the Chair of Finance for the meeting of March 20 2018.  
The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to approve the bill rolls.  
The motion was approved via voice vote.

Ms. Pitone spoke about initiating a conversation with the city regarding transportation, development and density with Somerstat.

Ms. Palmer requested that Policy BIBA – School Committee Conferences be referred to Finance for budgeting information. Rules Management will deal with the rest of the policy.

*Mayor Curtatone arrived at 7:55 p.m.*

### **III. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual**

The following policy being presented this evening for second reading:

- File: EDE Recycling Policy

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to approve File: EDE Recycling Policy, with the suggested amendments, for inclusion in the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

#### **C. Extended Learning Program**

MOTION: Dr. Ackman made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the forms and send to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

#### **D. Resolution in Support of Our Student Leaders** (resolution at end of these minutes)

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Ms. O'Sullivan, to amend the resolution.

Discussion ensued which included the following:

- Who is the audience for the resolution?
- The thought that thanking the administration should not be included in this student-centered resolution
- Develop a separate resolution thanking administration
- Having the resolution added to the Somerville High School morning announcements so students will be aware of its existence.
- Idea of informing Mr. LaGambina of the resolution and the possibility of his inviting the student leaders to a future meeting.
- Strike the section of the resolution that refers to administration.
- Add the standard distribution information to the end of the resolution.

Following discussion, the motion was passed, with amendments, via voice vote.

*Ms. Pitone departed at 8:11 p.m.*

*Ms. Palmer departed at 8:19 p.m.*

### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. SCALE ADP Diploma Request:** (recommended action – approval)

Habibullah Akhlaqi      34 Putnam Road, Apt. #2      Somerville, MA

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to approve the ADP Diploma.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

#### **B. Somerville High School Building Committee Update** (Ms. Normand)

I am pleased to report that as of March 2018, the Somerville High School Building Project is on schedule and budget. The MSBA has received 90% of the building drawings. The first significant changes to classrooms and traffic will occur after April break. SHS C wing classrooms will start using the module classrooms on Monday, April 23rd. Due to students walking between the main building and the modules, cars will no longer be able to make the loop from City Hall, across the length of the SHS, and exit by the War Memorial Building. Traffic will enter and exit by City Hall. Due to the increase in traffic at the corner of Highland Avenue and School Street, the public is encouraged to seek other locations to drop off/pickup students. Currently, the possibility of creating an alternative pick up/drop site along Highland Avenue is being explored. Somerville Public Schools and the city will send out a variety of messages about this change over April break.

#### **C. General Release of Liability for field trips**

Mrs. Skipper reported that, as part of an expanded possible itinerary for the students traveling to Costa Rica later this month, some water activities were added. As there are students participating on the trip who are not strong swimmers, this form was developed by our attorney as an additional means of ensuring safety, etc.

Discussion ensued relative to timing of the form, changes to the itinerary, etc.

Following discussion, the following motion was moved:

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Ms. O'Sullivan, to approve the General Release of Liability document for the Costa Rica Trip only.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**D. Field Trips:** (recommended action: approval)

**Apr. 13-14, 2018**

Somerville High School Redirect students to New York, NY to attend a conference. Transportation via train. There is no cost to students.

**May 6, 2018**

Somerville High School Outdoor Club to Mount Lincoln, NH to hike. Transportation via school mini-bus with a cost of \$5.00 per student

**May 19-20, 2018**

Somerville High School Girls' Ultimate Frisbee team to Northampton, MA, overnight, to participate in a tournament. Transportation via mini bus/parent drivers. There is no cost to students.

MOTION: Ms. O'Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the field trips. The motion was approved via voice vote.

**E. 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/class room supplies	Burlington Stores	Minneapolis, NH	\$10,000	ESCS via Adopt a School Program
AED	Marilyn Kelly	Sandwich, MA	\$875.50	SHS Athletics
4 Routers	Bryan Gobiel	Danvers, MA	\$500	SHS CTE Computer Repair Program

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the donations, with gratitude. The motion was approved via voice vote.

**V. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Mr. Futrell**

Announced that members would be holding office hours across the district and that specific information is included in the Connections Newsletter. Mr. Futrell also read the dates/times at the meeting.

**March 28, 8:30-10:30am:** Emily Ackman at Dunkin Donuts (220 Broadway)

**April 3, 6-8pm:** Chair Andre Green at Mystic Community Center, with Rep. Barber and Ald. Clingan

**April 3, 7:45-8:30am:** Paula O'Sullivan and Laura Pitone at Kennedy School drop off, with Ald. Davis and Ald. Niedergang.

**April 5, 6:30-8pm:** Lee Erica Palmer at Forge Coffee Shop (626 Somerville Ave.), with Rep. Provost

**April 5, 7:45-8:30am:** Carrie Normand at WSNS drop off

**April 6, 7:45-8:30:** Paula O'Sullivan and Laura Pitone at Brown School drop off, with Ald. Davis and Ald. Niedergang.

**April 7, 1:30-3:30pm:** Emily Ackman at Dunkin Donuts (220 Broadway) with Ald. McLaughlin

**April 7, 3-4pm:** Carrie Normand and Paula O'Sullivan at Angelina's Pizzeria (230 Holland St)

**April 7, 3-5pm:** Lee Erica Palmer at Forge Coffee Shop (626 Somerville Ave), with Ald. Ewen-Campen

**April 8, 12-1:30pm:** Laura Pitone at Armory Café (191 Highland), with Ald. Niedergang

**April 9, 7-8:30pm:** Dan Futrell, Gracie's Ice Cream (22 Union Sq.)

**April 10, 8-9:30:** Laura Pitone at Armory Café (191 Highland), with Ald. Niedergang

**April 11, 7:45-8:30:** Dan Futrell at Argenziano drop off

**April 14, 10-11am:** Chair Andre Green at Winter Hill Brewing Company (328 Broadway), with Rep Barber and Ald. Clingan

**Alderman Ballantyne**

Asked about the wait-times parents experienced while registering their students for the Community Schools summer program. Also asked about the future of online registration for these programs and also, expanding capacity.

Mrs. Skipper responded that this will be the last year for paper, face-to-face registration. Because registration includes making a payment, new software needed to be purchased. It has been purchased and a roll-over is underway. As for expanding capacity, all who registered their students today have slots. There are also 20-25 slots in reserve. Capacity expansion is being explored, but depends on staffing to ensure safety.

**Ms. Normand**

On Saturday, Porter Square Books will host a fundraiser for the Healey School from 5:00-7:00 p.m. The Duhamel Breakfast is this coming Saturday and features breakfast prepared and served by School Committee members and the Superintendent.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjourning, Ms. Normand extended condolences from the School Committee to the families of the following employees, or their family members, who have recently passed:

- Shirley DeRosay, retired teacher from the Powder House Community School and mother of Pamela Connors, retired teacher from the Kennedy School.
- John Hanlon, brother of Patrice Hobbs, teacher at the East Somerville Community School.
- Mary McKenzie, mother of Theresa DiRusso, Paraprofessional at the Winter Hill and grandmother of Jeannine Nye, SHS Mediation Office.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54 p.m. via voice vote.

**Related documents:**

Agenda

Minutes of February 26, March 5 and March 26, 2018

Recycling Policy

Applications for ELP Program for the Mass. Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education

Resolution to Support Somerville Students Against Gun Violence

Release of Liability document

**SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT SOMERVILLE STUDENTS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE**

**Whereas:** the Somerville Public Schools is committed to providing a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students; and

**Whereas:** the Somerville School Committee is in full support of our students organizing and advocating against gun violence and for proper and immediate action from our country's leadership to ensure gun control and safety in all schools, across our community, and across other communities throughout this country; now therefore be it

**Resolved:** that, based on these commitments and values, the School Committee extends its admiration of and willingness to work together with these student leaders, and therefore be it

**Further Resolved:** that a copy of this resolution be delivered to the Governor, Attorney General, and the Somerville state and local legislative delegations and otherwise widely distributed.

**Voted:** Unanimously

**Date:** April 2, 2018

**By the:** Somerville School Committee