

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Monday, March 9, 2020 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Council Chambers– City Hall

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

Members absent: Mayor Curtatone.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Normand called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a moment of silence followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Chair Normand asked the Superintendent to call the roll, results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 8 – Ms. Krepchin, Ms. Pitone, Ms. Barish, Mr. Green, Dr. Ackman, Ms. Normand, Dr. Phillips and Mr. McLaughlin ABSENT – 1 – Mayor Curtatone.

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representative Nathalya Salmeron was present and reported on the following topics:

- Sophomore/Junior Semi-Formal gala is this Friday at the Armory
- As You Like It, presented by the Highlander Theatre Company is next week
- MCAS coming up
- Spring sports sign-up/clearance this week for next week is the start of spring sports
- Mock AP exams are being held on various Saturdays

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 13, 2020

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Pitone to approve the School Committee Minutes of January 13, 2020. Motion was approved via voice vote.

V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. DISTRICT REPORT

- **Coronavirus (COVID- 19) Update (Dr. Kress)**

Superintendent Skipper took this time to publicly thank Director of Health and Human Services, Doug Kress for his partnership on this work regarding the virus and asked him to brief the school committee on what we know about the virus.

Mr. Kress reported that the virus began in China but it is spreading throughout the world with 150 countries currently affected including 5 that have already enforced travel bans. The symptoms are similar to the Flu and could last anywhere from 3 to 14 days. It is spread through bodily fluids and what are called droplets that could travel from one body to the next or onto surfaces. Currently there is 1 confirmed case in Massachusetts and 40 presumed cases and 200 people being monitored. The population most at risk of catching the virus are the elder and those with compromised immune systems. The best way to protect yourself from the virus is to wash your hands thoroughly for 20 seconds and use paper towels to shut off the water and open doors. Wipe down all surfaces whenever possible including phones, desks etc. Any one not feeling well should stay home to keep the virus from spreading. There may be potential business and school closures if the virus continues to spread.

Chair Normand opened the floor for questions, which included a question from Dr. Ackman about procedures for the more medically fragile students and from Mr. Green about communication around this topic. Also Ms. Pitone asked about the Enrollment Center protocol, while Ms. Krepchin asked if any of the 40 presumed cases were

students and Dr. Phillips asked how teacher were being allowed time to constantly wash their hands.

Mr. Kress and Superintendent Skipper took turns answering these questions and responded that the district is taking similar precautions to that of the Flu with medical fragile students. There is communication happening between the school department and the city on every other day basis or as needed on this topic and the district is also looking to the state for guidance. Updates will be communicated to parents through the school's communications department and added that it would be similar to snow closure communications. Superintendent skipper said that families visiting the Enrollment Center are being asked to wear a mask. And Mr. Kress reported that none of the 40 presume cases were student and that those cases were mostly related to recent travel. Superintendent Skipper replied to the questions about allowing teachers time to wash their hands and said this was mainly happening through transitions and added that nurses visited classrooms with Principals to speak to this topic. And lastly Mr. Kress said that he would work with Superintendent Skipper to get all this information to students, primarily at the high school level and that the Health and Human Services Department is working on hash tags to further spread the word to students.

Chair Normand Thanked Mr. Kress for all his work and for taking the time to report this information to the School Committee.

- **West Somerville Neighborhood School – School Improvement Plan** (Presentation included at the end of these minutes)

Mr. Mazza introduced the topic of School improvement plans and announced the two school who would be presenting tonight; the West Somerville Neighborhood School and the Next Wave/ Full Circle School.

The first team presenting was from the WSNS. Ms. Seward asked the members of her team to stand up and introduce themselves, which included a member of the PTA and parent liaison, and a teacher among others. They then presented their School Improvement Plan, which spoke to some of the following topics. (see slides attached at the end of this report for full presentation).

- Student Referral Data for 2016 – 2019
- Action Plan for 2019- 2020
- Staff Professional Development for 2019-2020
- Current Student Referrals 2019-2020
- Academic Goals by June 2020
- Action Plan for Academic Goals

- **Next Wave/ Full Circle – School Improvement Plan**

Then Principal Green and Assistant Principal Haverty took the podium to deliver the School Improvement Plan for the Next Wave Full Circle School, which included the following: (see slides attached at the end of this report).

- New Mission Statement
- Improvements to the Teacher/Counselor Model
- Academic Pilot Courses
- New Academic Grading System

Members praised and thanked both teams after each presentation for the cutting edge work that's being done at each school.

At this time Superintendent Skipper delivered the rest of her report.

Superintendent's Notes: School Committee Meeting - Monday, March 9, 2020

Welcome back. We are in the home stretch and looking forward to a very productive remaining few months of the school year.

Before I go into my district notes, I want to take a few minutes to talk a little bit about our efforts related to the **Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**. As you know, news about COVID-19 has been intense and quickly evolving. We have been working closely with the Mayor's Office, Health and Human Services, and other city departments to ensure that we are putting protocols in place in the event of a Coronavirus in our city or in our schools.

We have developed a district task force that has been meeting regularly to understand all of the potential impacts of

a school closure, and putting plans in place to minimize the impact to our families and staff. As always, we are incredibly grateful to be part of a community that quickly comes together to address challenges. We keep hearing from health officials at all levels that taking precautions to minimize the spread of illness is the best defense. We appreciate everyone's continued support of preventive measures as this issue continues to evolve. We will continue to keep the community informed. The City is posting frequent updates at somervillema.gov/Coronavirus.

Somerville High School hosted its annual **Science & Engineering Fair** the week before February break. Nearly 60 SHS students in grades 10-12 participated in the event. As in years past, Tufts University was a key partner in this event. Projects were scored by Tufts representatives. Projects that placed 1st through 3rd automatically qualified for the 2020 Massachusetts Region IV Science & Engineering Fair, which will be held Friday, March 6th at Tufts University's Breed Hall. Congratulations to all of the participants for their outstanding work, including the following top finishers:

- 1st place: Samantha Eatough
- 2nd place: Rio Hunter Black; Era Haxhimali
- 3rd Place: Hiba Khouti & Manal Khouti; Patrick Walsh, Carmen Raftery, & Louise Caspariello; Kevin Wen, Emily Howley
- Honorable Mention: Aidan O'Sullivan & Matteus Anell; Leensyn River Asmen; Kevin Arbaiza

I also want to extend a very special shout-out to the Somerville High School Swimming and Diving teams for their recent recognition as the **MIAA 2020 Winter North Division II Boys and Girls Swimming & Diving Sportsmanship Award** winners. Both teams were recognized earlier this month at their respective North Meets held at MIT. The Sportsmanship Award is such a special honor for our students, staff, and our entire community because it speaks to the pride that our students have in being part of a community, and their commitment to having a positive impact on others through their actions. Congratulations to all the Highlander swimmers and divers, their coaches, Athletic Director Stanley Vieira and Asst. AD Heather Paonessa, and to Principal LaGambina for setting high standards and supporting our students in becoming dedicated and compassionate leaders and members of our community.

Mark your calendars and join us at the **2020 Summer Camp and Activities Fair**. The Fair will take place tomorrow evening – Tuesday, March 10th, 5:30-7:00pm at the East Somerville Community School (50 Cross St.). Stop in to learn about summer camps, recreational activities, and other summer learning opportunities in Somerville and the surrounding community. We anticipate that more than 30 program representatives will be on hand to share information and answer questions about their respective programs. This is a free family event. We hope you'll join us.

Somerville families are invited to the **2020 Family Census Fair** to enjoy an afternoon of family fun on Saturday, March 14, 12-3pm at the Argenziano School as the city kicks off the 2020 Census count. The Fair includes free food and games as well as support in completing the census online. The Census determines funding for schools, healthcare, transportation, infrastructure, multilingual programs, senior programming, food security, fire and public safety, and other critical services. The census process is easy and safe. Be counted and enjoy a fun afternoon with friends.

Finally, one of our many wonderful community partners is the Duhamel Education Initiative (DEI). Mark your calendar for their annual **DEI Pancake Breakfast**, which will take place on Saturday, March 28, from 8:30-10:30am at the First Church of Somerville (89 College Ave.). Members of the School Committee and my office will cook up a feast of pancakes for supporters of DEI. Proceeds go toward funding teacher-initiated programs to promote student engagement and academic achievement in our schools. Tickets are \$10 adult, \$9 senior citizens, \$5 children, and \$25 for a family ticket. Tickets can be purchased at the door or on Eventbrite.

This year, DEI is also partnering with the Somerville High School PTA and will be collecting new or gently used men's and women's formal wear for students who want to attend the Somerville High School prom but may need some assistance. Items needed include dresses, accessories, suits, ties, and shoes.

We hope you will join us on March 28th for this fun (and delicious) community event.

VI. REPORT OF SUMCOMMITTEES

- A. School Committee Meeting for Rules Management:** February 3, 2020 (Dr. Ackman)
- B. School Committee Meeting for Educational Programs and Instruction:** February 24,

2020 (Ms. Pitone)

C. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities: February 26, 2020 (Mr. Green)

Due to the late hour after the presentations tonight, Chair Normand proposed to table the subcommittee reports and the unfinished business listed on the agenda.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policies were presented this evening for a second reading:

- File ADDA: Background Checks
- File ECABA: Building and Grounds Security

Tabled.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual

The following policy was presented for a first reading:

- File GBBA-R Gender Identity Support for Staff

Chair Normand explained that this is a policy that was created in 2018 for gender support for staff. It was brought to Ms. Pitone's attention that there's fairly minor but important language that needs to be included. She asked Ms. Pitone to introduce the subject and give a little background and the changes in the language and the significance of the amendments she is proposing.

Ms. Pitone reported that there's been a lot of conversation about restrooms for students and staff who don't necessarily identify traditionally with gender and whether or not the language in these policies should change. The policy for students has the additional language about using facilities or restrooms that correspond with a gender for which they identify. Through these conversations about the new high school Ms. Pitone received feedback from a staff member about obtaining similar language for the staff policy. She reached out to some of the members who were involved with this original policy and confirmed that it was not intentional to exclude this language. Ms. Pitone is making a recommendation that because it is an issue that has come up that the committee update the language.

At this time Mr. Green made a motion.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to waive the reading of File GBBA-R: Gender Identity Support for Staff, and to approve the proposed change to add "All Somerville Public Schools Staff are able to use the facilities or restrooms that correspond with the gender with which they identify" after the 2nd paragraph.

Ms. Barish then expressed some concerns about other language in the policy that may deserve some revisiting. She is in favor of the proposed amendment but referenced the language in paragraph two that says "the district will support them in preferred gender, pronoun use, use preferred name, etc." and said the thinking around the word "preferred" has evolved and may no longer be appropriate. Other options to use instead could be "correct" or "chosen", because preferred may suggest that there's another option.

Chair Normand then announced that the policy would be brought back for a second reading on the following meeting and encouraged members to send any changes, or amendments to Ms. Santiago the Wednesday by noon before the next meeting.

B. Student Opportunity Act

Superintendent Skipper explained that for the Student Opportunity Act there is a budget of about \$158,000 that the District will be getting to use as part of our budget. This is through the governor's budget and some of the changes that were made with chapter 70. The state laid out a process where every district's School Committee needs to vote on how the dollars will be spent. Mr. Mazza has been working with various department heads to look at the budget and at the different categories that the state has allocated that we could spend the dollars on.

In our district the money is going toward things that are already continuing to be worked through. Commitment one

on the form is focusing on student subgroups, so Mr. Mazza has been meeting with different department heads to focus on the different subgroups. One of the pieces they're focusing on has to do with college and career readiness at the high school level. And the other piece is on tier three supports, which basically encompasses all of our students. Two of the other pieces are looking at how we monitor success and looking at your outcome metrics and your targets. And the fourth is engaging all families in the process that we've gone through over the past couple of years that encompasses all of these.

The plan is that on March 23rd the School Committee will receive the completed document and the plan for the use of the Student Opportunity Act money to move our students forward, and they will be voting on it that night.

Dr. Phillips asked one question about needing to get input from stakeholders and educators for the plan and how the district would be approaching this. And Mr. Mazza responded that the District has undergone the process of interviewing staff and involving them in the design process for both of the goals around the college and career readiness and around tier three supports.

C. Somerville High School Building Committee Report (Ms. Pitone)

Building Committee Update from SC Representative Laura Pitone 0309 2020

Schedule: Phase one is on schedule, phase two is on schedule for the July 31st completion but the schedule is tight. Good weather and no surprises will help maintain the schedule, which is being monitored closely.

Due to unforeseen additional time needed for renovation of the War Memorial building (the southernmost building on the current and future campus, referenced as phase 2A), the renovation of this building will not be complete for the September move in date. Additional contaminated materials were found which required abatement but more significantly the structural steel supporting the building was deemed insufficient. The new plan includes doubling the steel (and additional expense). For reference, the building design includes maintaining the renovating the War Memorial building, that most recently served at the library and had previous incarnations as the auditorium and if I am not mistaken a gym. The new design of the War Memorial includes the new auditorium and Career and Technical Educational classes (cosmetology, barbering) as well as the TV production studio and life skills courses for special education students. The district and project team are looking into options for temporary placement of these classes for the start of school, if deemed necessary. The goal is to not have students being bused to the Edgerly, though we are currently outfitted to provide cosmetology and barbering. Note: extending the modular trailer rental would be ~20K per month, which is being considered.

Multi-stall non-gendered bathroom:

The current building design includes 30 non-gendered single use bathrooms, however there has been a request made by the GSA (Gay/Straight and Gender/Sexuality Awareness Alliance) to include one multi-stall all gendered bathroom near or adjacent to a common area on the building. Julia Post, the club advisor, made a presentation to the building committee outlining the reasons for this request. They consider the current plan inequitable: "It is separate but not equal, we deserve multiple stalls, we deserve common area bathrooms, single use, all-gender bathrooms are 'othered'." They are also concerned that there is only ONE all-gender changing room in the locker room area of the new SHS, which district administration is looking into. The proposal requested converting two gendered multi-stall bathroom into a single non-gendered multi-stall bathroom. With this proposal, multi-stall gendered bathrooms and non-gendered bathrooms would both be available.

The project design team is looking into feasibility. SMMA set up a meeting with the plumbing board to review and noted that we do not have space to swap out urinals with toilets. The project team is looking into potential cost and schedule impact if it was determined the modification is feasible. The School Department in conjunction with this committee would make the decision. The School Department is in discussion with the city about how to engage the community on this topic, if determined it was feasible.

In addition to the tight schedule, the project team is still negotiating with contractors to determine status of changes and delays on the budget.

The next Building Committee meeting is Monday March 16th at 4:30 pm in the SHS modular trailers. Additional

meetings scheduled • 04/13 • 05/18 • 06/15 • 07/13 • 08/17 • 08/31 • 09/14

For updated photos on construction status, visit the project website. <https://www.shsproject.org/> or www.somervillema.gov/highschool

After our meeting on March 16th, the city is hosting a Community Meeting to discuss remaining Somerville High School Construction in the Somerville High School Cafeteria. The meeting will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the Somerville High School cafeteria, 81 Highland Ave. Light refreshments will be served.

It is a public meeting and all are welcomed to attend. This meeting is primarily intended for neighbors who live and work near the high school construction site. The presentation will focus on logistics plans and anticipated impacts of construction over the next several months.

A. FY20 SCALE/ADP Diploma Request (Recommended action: approval)

Joseph Michael Pustorino Reading, MA

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to approve the DP Diploma for Joseph Michael Pustorino. Motion approved via voice vote.

B. 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	Timothy Finn	Somerville, MA	\$650	SHS Puerto Rico Trip
Monetary	Annie Carlson & Doug Goldberg	Bethesda, MD	\$200	SHS Puerto Rico Trip
Monetary	Tom Matthews	Canton, OH	\$1,250	SHS Puerto Rico Trip

MOTION: Motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Ms. Pitone, to accept these donations with gratitude. Motion approved via voice vote.

IX. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of Arthur Francis Hughes, Retired Teacher/Principal at Charlton, Western Junior High, Cutler, Conwell and Kennedy Schools and Alice S. (Torosian) Janian, Grandmother of Jessica Green, wife of Andre Green, School Committee Member.

X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Pitone

Congratulated those who organized the Latin Dance to raise funds for the trip to Puerto Rico. She also asked member to look at future Ed Programs agenda topics that are included in the packet and announce that the next SHS Building Committee meeting would be the following Monday, March 15th at 4:30 p.m.

Dr. Phillips

Asked about a glitch that occurred with afterschool registration system the previous week and about afterschool busing, where does it travel to and who has access to it. Superintendent Skipper responded that the bus route is mainly for ELL students and that she would get more information on why the glitch happened.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned via voice vote at 9:26 p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

WSNS School Improvement Plan

Next Wave/ Full Circle School Improvement Pan

File GBBA-R: Gender and Identity Support for Staff

Submitted by: K. Santiago

