

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, April 24, 2017 – Regular Meeting**

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

**Members present:** Mr. Futrell, Ms. Palmer, Mr. Roix, Ms. O'Sullivan (7:08 p.m.), Ms. Normand, Alderman White, Mr. Green and Ms. Pitone.

**Members absent:** Mayor Curtatone

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Laura Pitone called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the aldermanic chambers at 7:06 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Ms. Pitone asked for a roll call, the results of which are as follows: - Present – 7 – Futrell, Palmer, Roix, Normand, White, Green and Pitone and Absent – 2 –Curtatone and O'Sullivan.

**II. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Student Representative, Dessources Domond was not in attendance this evening.

The following next items will be taken out of order so that presenters, etc. can get their business finished and leave.

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

**April 19-27, 2018** Somerville High School students to Costa Rica. Transportation via plane, etc. Cost to students is \$2,300. Each.

High School staff Alicia Kersten (Dept. Head for Social Studies) and Marianna Hosking (Dept. Head for Science) were in attendance to speak about the field trip and to answer any questions from members.

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the field trip to Costa Rica. The motion was approved via voice vote.

**III. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES – *All Subcommittee Reports were tabled until the next meeting.***

**A. School Committee Meeting for Finance & Facilities:** March 29 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: to accept the report and minutes for the School Committee meeting for Finance & Facilities of March 29, 2017.

**B. School Committee Meeting for Finance & Facilities:** April 4, 2017 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: to accept the report and minutes for the School Committee meeting for Finance & Facilities of April 4, 2017.

**C. School Committee Meeting for Long Range Planning:** April 13, 2017 (Ms. Pitone)

MOTION: to accept the report and minutes for the School Committee meeting for Long Rangel Planning of April 13, 2017.

**IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

**A. District Report**

- Recognition of Somerville High School students for their S.A.F.E.T.Y. proposal

Somerville High School student, Katia Mathews was introduced and presented information to the School Committee on the student-initiated S.A.F.E.T.Y. (Safely Accommodating Free Equity for Tampons Yearly) program at the school. The PowerPoint slides are included at the end of these minutes. The presentation included a short video and information on the following:

- The mission of the initiative which is to provide free female feminine hygiene products, promote gender equity, help low-income students who otherwise may not be able to afford the products and create comfort for all students.
- Steps taken to facilitate the initiative
- Next steps

Following the presentation, members and those in the audience, applauded this young woman on such a wonderful job as well as for the leadership and thoughtfulness that she and the other two young ladies put into this project. The three students were praised for their maturity and leadership.

Superintendent Skipper reported on the impact of students opting-out of participating in MCAS testing on the District and the discussion that ensued which included the following:

- The District uses a balanced approach to standardized testing.
- Moratorium on testing resolution
- The use of data to improve learning, especially where there are gaps, is very valuable
- It was helpful to receive the letters and suggestions for a process for opting out
- The procedure should not be made school by school. It should be district informed.
- Mrs. Skipper and Dr. McKay applaud the School Committee for their directive to the district regarding information for parents who wish to opt out.
- Dr. McKay added that this is a balancing act where we are meeting the legal state requirement while trying to respect parents and students. This is a great lesson for kids regarding public policy and making things work.
- Guidance has been drafted with input from the Department of Ed's Chief MCAS Officer and our legal counsel.
- We have to meet our obligations and provide a comfort level for people with concerns
- Participation rate requirement for tests of 90% for the current school year.
- Our accountability level could be impacted without the majority of parents having a say
- Administration believes in consistent messaging
- The District value to this test
- Discussion of actions by the MCIEA regarding assessment – what, who, how often?
- The amount of time on prepping for the test

#### **Consideration of policy or resolution regarding MCAS Opt Out**

Ms. Palmer presented the following draft policy regarding students opting out of testing:

MOTION: Ms. Palmer made a motion, seconded by Mr. Green, to approve the following policy:

The Somerville School Committee recognizes that some parents and students may opt not to take part in the MCAS state testing program. As suggested by Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester in his Jan. 29, 2016 memorandum to school officials, students "should not be pressured to take the test, nor should they be punished for not taking the test. They may sit quietly and read in the testing room."

Therefore, if the school principal is notified by letter or in person by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s), prior to the first test for that grade, that child will not be asked to take the test, be signed into the test, be asked to sign into the test, given the test in paper form, nor sat at a computer on which the test is administered for any of the testing sessions.

Unless otherwise specified by parent(s)/guardian(s), it is assumed that a child who has opted out is refusing to take all of the MCAS tests for the entire academic year. Notification must be resubmitted for each new academic year. Any child who is not being tested may remain in the room with the children being tested (unless an alternate location can be agreed upon) and may read quietly or be given another suitable activity as the principal determines."

Discussion ensued which included the following:

- More conversation is needed on this topic as some members are just seeing/hearing about it for the first time
- Many people are unaware of this issue
- The need for consistent, well-publicized procedures
- Policy needs to be in line with federal and state guidelines

A decision was made to forward this matter to the rules Management Committee of the Whole, which will be held on May 1 at 6:00 p.m. and well publicized.

*The School Committee took a recess at 9:02 p.m.*

*The meeting resumed at 9:14 p.m.*

*Ms. Palmer departed the meeting at 9:16 p.m.*

Mrs. Skipper continued her district report:

- Our final Parent-Teacher Conferences of the year continue this week. Please check our website Calendar of Events for a complete list of conferences. Coming up this week:
  - ESCS Conferences – Tuesday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-7:30pm

- SHS Conferences – Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00pm
- Argenziano Conferences – Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-7:30pm
- Congratulations to the Highlander FIRST Robotics Team! In only their second year competing, Somerville High School's Robotics team is headed to the World Championships this week in St. Louis, where they will face off against hundreds of other teams from around the world. The Highlander team had a phenomenal season, placing among the top finishers at each of the events in which they competed this year. They also earned recognition for outstanding sportsmanship and creativity, earning the Creativity Award at the Bridgewater SE event – their first event of the season – and the Gracious Professionalism® in Revere. Best of luck to the Highlander Robotics team, and congratulations on a great season!
- Congratulations to Somerville High School students Eric Lemus (freshman), Andrew Churchill (senior) and Brittney Gedeon (junior) for their first, second, and third-place finishes in the "Voice of Democracy" VFW Audio-Essay contest. The Somerville High trio were presented with generous awards by the Lt. James A Logan Post 6800 of the VFW for their written and recorded essays on the theme "My Vision for America."
- We're celebrating the Week of the Young Child this week. Please join us this Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at City Hall from 10:00-11:00am to celebrate Somerville's youngest learners. This year's theme explores "What does it mean to be kind and fair?" Pre-K classrooms and early childhood centers across the city have been exploring this topic in preparation for this week's big celebration, using a social story written by the Somerville Family Learning Collaborative titled "Somerville, a Kind and Fair City" and curriculum materials based around that topic. We hope to see you at City Hall on Thursday.
- It's that time of year when students are showcasing their hard work throughout the school year. We hope you can join us at the many upcoming music events and awards ceremonies. This week, we have the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Band Festival from 1:00-3:00pm on Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup> at the Somerville High School Auditorium, and the Evening of Song event with the SHS Chorus and Guitar Ensembles from 6:30-9:00pm on Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup> at the SHS Auditorium. Check our website calendar of events for a completed list of upcoming events.
- Mark your calendars for a community presentation by Dr. Richard Weissbourd, a Harvard lecturer and Faculty Director of the Making Caring Common Project. Dr. Weissbourd will discuss "Raising Caring Children in Somerville" and will share research-based strategies for parents and educators to help children learn empathy and to care for others, including those different from them in background and characters. The event takes place on Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup>, from 7:00-8:15pm at the ESCS Auditorium.

## V. NEW BUSINESS

### A. Contract of the Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Mrs. Skipper announced that, with Dr. McKay sailing of into retirement, a search was done to find his replacement. Lots of input was taken through focus groups, etc. and there were in excess of 85 resumes for the position. 11 people were interviewed and three finalists were forwarded for interviews by the Superintendent. These three people were interviewed and spent time with cabinet members and also went on a tour of one of our schools. After this process was completed and reference checks were made, the unanimous choice of both the interview team and the Superintendent and her cabinet team was Dr. Almudena Abeyta. Dr. Abeyta comes to us with a great amount of experience and is currently doing a similar job in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Ms. Pitone now asked for a member to make a motion to approve Dr. Abeyta's contract.

MOTION: Mr. Roix made a motion, seconded by President White, to approve the contract of employment between Dr. Almudena G. Abeyta and the Somerville School District for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. The term of this contract shall commence on July 1, 2017 and end on June 30, 2018, consistent with the provisions of G.L. c. 71§§41 and 59.

The motion was unanimously approved via voice vote.

### B. Field Trips: (recommended action: approval)

**April 25-30, 2017**

Somerville High School Robotics Team to Championship competition in St. Louis, MO. Transportation via plane and local metro. Cost to students is \$200 each.

**April 27-29 2017**

Somerville High School CTE students to the Skills USA State Championship, overnight, in Marlboro, MA. Transportation via school bus with no cost to students.

**June 1, 2017**

Next Wave students to Canobie Lake Park in Windham, NH. Transportation via school van with a cost to students of \$20 each.

**June 19, 2017**

Kennedy School grade 8 students to Canobie Lake Park in Windham, NH. Transportation via school bus with no cost to students due to parent fundraising.

MOTION: Mr. Futrell made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to waive the reading of the field trips and approve.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**C. Acceptance of Donations:** (recommended action: approval)

The Superintendent recommends the acceptance, with gratitude, of the following donation/grant:

Donation	Donor	City, State	Value	Program donated to
Monetary	Alice Leung	Somerville, MA	\$100	Food Service to help cover costs that are hard for some families

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to accept the donation with gratitude. The motion was approved via voice vote.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- April 3, 2017 Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to approve the minutes of April 3, 2017.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

**D. FY2017 SCALE/ADP Graduate** – (Recommended Action: Approval)

The Superintendent of Schools recommends that the following student, who has successfully completed the requirements for graduation from SCALE, be granted his diploma:

Edberto Martinez Marinero      442 Ferry Street      Everett, MA 02149

MOTION: Mr. Green made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the SCALE ADP diploma. The motion was approved via voice vote.

**VI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS - none**

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjourning, Mr. Green expressed the School Committee's condolences for the passing of staff and family members of staff who have recently passed.

- Walter Pero, former member of the Board of Aldermen and former SPS employee at SCALE and Somerville High School. Mr. Pero's wife, Florence, is a library aide at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School.
- Debbie DeYeso, sister of Christine Trevisone, Director of Special Education.
- Maximiano Oliveira, father of Jean Cabral, Administrative Assistant in the Human Resources Office. Mr. Oliveira was also the father-in-law of Jim Elliott, retired Assistant Principal at the Argenziano School.

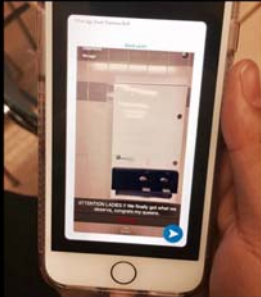
The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. via voice vote.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of April 3, 2017 for approval
3. PowerPoint presentation for the S.A.F.E.T.Y. initiative led by Somerville High seniors
4. The April 2017 Personnel Report
5. Five (5) Out of State/Overnight Field Trip requests
6. One (1) donation acceptance request
7. Five (5) letters of condolence



## THANK YOU



**Mary Skipper,**  
SPS Superintendent

**John Oteri,**  
SHS Headmaster

**Chris Glynn,**  
SHS Student Council Faculty  
Advisor

**Mary Stieger,**  
HOPSECO

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. SUCCESS

Thank you so much for sharing. This is fantastic work. Congratulations to the brave young women who took on this issue.

Nancy Kramer  
EQUUSHER

NOT ALL BATHROOMS ARE CREATED EQUAL.  
FREE THE TAMpons.ORG

the monthly gift  
A Somerville Teen Resource Program

Provide Equity

WICKED LOCAL SOMERVILLE  
NEWS FROM THE SOMERVILLE JOURNAL

HOSPECO

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. MISSION



- Provide free female menstrual products dispensers in SHS female bathrooms
- Promote gender-equity in a more convenient spot
- Help students from low-income homes that financially struggle with health products

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. MISSION

- Create comfort for all female, gender-neutral, & transgender students
- Create blueprint on how students can actively make change



## S.A.F.E.T.Y. STEPS



1. Find a notable, local cause/issue
2. Talk/present to teacher about the idea
3. Brainstorm mission, action steps

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. STEPS



4. Present & work with Student Council for support
5. Once approved by Student Council, draft letter to SPS School Board & Headmaster
6. Schedule meeting to work with SPS School Board

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. NEXT STEPS



- How often will products be replenished?
- Could this expand in SPS middle schools & for all bathrooms to be more gender-neutral?

## S.A.F.E.T.Y. NEXT STEPS

- Should a sign be necessary to remind students of proper conduct usage?
- Will funding be enough each year to support the dispensers?

