

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, August 26, 2019 – Regular Meeting**

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

**Members present:** Mr. Futrell, Dr. Ackman, Ms. O'Sullivan, Ms. Normand, Mr. Green, Ms. Pitone, and President Ballantyne.

**Members absent:** Ms. Palmer and Mayor Curtatone.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Normand called the meeting to order at 7:09 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 – 7 – Futrell, Pitone, O'Sullivan, Green, Ackman, Ballantyne, and Normand ABSENT – 2 - Palmer and Curtatone.

**II. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

**A. Recognition of Service for Outgoing School Committee Member**

*Dan Futrell*

Our second agenda item is Awards and Citations in recognition of our colleague Dan Futrell, who will be sadly departing, but going on to become the CEO of the Pat Tillman Foundation. Chair Normand invited Mr. Futrell and Ms. Pitone up to the mic and asked Dr. Ackman to take the podium in her place so she could join them. She then presented Dan with a Resolution and read it out loud to the audience.

***Dan Futrell - School Committee, Ward 2***

- WHEREAS,*** *Dan Futrell has been a member of the Somerville School Committee since 2014, and*
- WHEREAS,*** *Mr. Futrell's service has included serving as Chair of the Finance & Facilities Subcommittee for three years and as Chair of the Rules Subcommittee for one year, and*
- WHEREAS,*** *During five plus years of service to the School Committee, Mr. Futrell has helped the district with prioritizing the education and nurturing of the whole child, and developing alternative assessments through the Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative Education Assessments, and*
- WHEREAS*** *Mr. Futrell's service has included the hiring of our Superintendent, and developing a human capital plan to increase equity and diversity across the all district staff, and*
- WHEREAS,*** *During his tenure on the School Committee, Mr. Futrell has served as a champion for the social and emotional health of all students, from the very young through graduation, and therefore be it*
- RESOLVED:*** *That the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledge the efforts of Dan Futrell, and wish him continued success in his role of Chief Executive Officer of the Pat Tillman Foundation, and be it further*
- RESOLVED:*** *That this well-earned Resolution be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Mr. Futrell*

Chair Normand and Ms. Pitone continued with a few words about Mr. Futrell and the three having joined the School Committee at the same time back in 2014. Chair Normand Spoke first.

When we came in the district was in a very different place, MCAS scores were the number one goal and some of our first votes were to refocus the district to make the whole child a goal. It

was a steep learning curve and you have been an exceptional colleague; generous with your expertise, especially with numbers and finance, and an empathetic advocate for our students, your experiences growing up, your leadership as an Army Ranger, the lives you have touched, the situations that you have put yourself in and the expectations of yourself and your colleagues has been very high and it has made me a much better School Committee member and has benefited the whole district, so I am grateful that I had this five plus years with you.

Ms. Pitone then added some sentiments. It has been a real privilege to work with you. I think that your leadership brings both intensity and lightness, which is a challenging balance. You bring up things that are challenging, but at the same time, you have a great sense of humor and you really care about relationships and I really value that. I want to say from the bottom of my heart I am really going to miss you. I think you were a real asset to the School Committee, the next person has some big shoes to fill, thank you so much for everything!

Chair Normand rejoined the podium, and other members said a few words to Mr. Futrell.

Dr. Ackman began by stating that a board is a very unique balance of individuals and while many constituents believe that you need to have kids in school or have worked in education to be on school committee, one of the things that is so wonderful about Dan, is the passion he brings without those stereotypical things the rest of us have. I believe that it has given you the presence and perspective that we're going to miss. I have learned a lot from you, and I really appreciate all that I have learned and

I hope to continue to learn from you, the Pat Tillman Foundation is very lucky and I'm excited to see the work you do there.

Superintendent Skipper followed. I have appreciated since the beginning your connection around advocacy for students, particularly understanding that a student is whole and that the social emotional is so important. In many positive ways you have pushed me and our Cabinet to make sure that our schools have the supports that our students need. We've connected around dropout and graduation rates, and things that in your past life in Europe, were so important to you. So I know that now in this new job, you will bring all your passion in a new way to help a different kind of person, in terms of our soldiers and our veterans, but the kids of Somerville are better for you having served on School Committee and I'm a better Superintendent for you having served on the School Committee.

President Ballantyne also shared well wishes for Mr. Futrell. I want to wish you the best of luck. I will say, in the City Council we have a really strong Chair of Finance, and having the opportunity to sit on the school committee for the last almost two years, you've been a really strong Chair of Finance and I really admire that and feel lucky that you've served the city of Somerville in that capacity. You've just been so professional and I wish you the best of luck in your new role.

Chair Normand invited Mr. Futrell to say a few words.

Thank you, I really appreciate the opportunity to serve with everybody. It's not about me, it's about the teachers here doing the hard work. And I feel grateful to have been asked to support in this way, so thank you very much.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the audience signed up to give public comment.

### **IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

#### **A. DISTRICT REPORT**

- **New Administrative Staff**

So I would like to start with something that we left off at the end of last year, which was

beginning our introductions with a new administrative staff. I am extremely excited about the staff that is joining us this year, they bring collectively such an amazing experience, student centeredness, passion for the work and I could not be more thrilled to have them join us in the various capacities. There are a few Directors here who will do their introductions, and then I will introduce the rest. So, I'd like to start with Christine Trevisone to come up and introduce the new Assistant Director of Special Education.

Ms. Trevisone took to the microphone and introduced Marilyn Vrontas; she was the Director for Sandwich Public Schools and has been a great colleague.

Next is our new Assistant Director of Student Services, which Liz Doncaster will introduce. I have the pleasure of introducing Gilbert White; he hails from Boston Public Schools, where he recently was a middle school counselor, and before that in the Boston Public Schools, he was a high school counselor and disciplinarian, which is a nice fit for my department. I look forward to working with him.

Our next new leader is the Principal at the East Somerville Community School, Obed Morales, who is a veteran leader. He has held various leadership positions, out of state in North Carolina and Florida, and is seasoned as an Assistant Principal, spending a lot of time in middle school and high school years.

This year we have another superintendent fellow joining us, Rebecca Grainger, who I can't say enough positive things about. She just has a way of being able to see the work, particularly the equity in action work that we're about to begin, and see it at both a district level and at an actual city level, in terms of how to tie all the supports together in a framework. She's going to be working with in the schools and across the city. I look forward to working with Rebecca.

The next person needs no introduction, as you all know her. Sheila Freitas- Haley has been in our district and a part of us for many years as an attendance officer, as a coach, and most recently she assumed the interim position for the Supervisor of Health and Physical Education. And so she is going to join us as the Supervisor of Health and Physical Education this year.

The next three are Deans of Students. As you know, the deans of students were positions that we created specifically in the schools to help bridge the work of the redirect and the principal and assistant principal with families and with students. It's a position that really requires a nuancing of understanding of how to be able to look across students as well as across staff. And we're pretty blessed to have three very special people; one who is returning this year in that role and two who are joining us a new. The first is again, someone that needs no introduction, as he's been at the West Somerville Neighborhood School for several years now, Les Larney, will be their new Dean of Students. Karen Grenier-Mernin who is coming from the North Shore, where she has done an incredible amount of guidance work, is joining us as the new Dean of Students at the Albert F. Argenziano School. This next individual comes from Boston College High School, and I think he was with us a day and already was sending me opportunities for our students to get engaged in advance science programming. He comes to us from BC High where he was most commonly known as a pretty impactful science teacher, welcome Eddie Rodriguez, also Dean of Students at Albert F. Argenziano.

Chair Normand, on behalf of the entire School Committee welcomed them all to Somerville, whether you're from Somerville or you're coming to us in a new role, I'm thrilled to see both new faces but also people making their careers here in the district and moving into different capacities.

The meeting took a 5-minute recess at 7:39, and reconvened at

Chair Normand then asked Superintendent Skipper to resume with her report.

- **School Year Calendar**

I am going to ask that after I quickly do the calendar update, we take out of order the SHS Building Project Update from New Business.

In terms of the school calendar, at your request we put on our website and in your packet, a little clarification about why we start school in August before Labor Day. The history of this predates me, but it's a pretty good idea because it enables us to get the teachers and the students in; let students meet their classmates and teachers meet students, so that we can truly hit the ground running post labor day. This has become very important given that the deeper we go into June, the harder it is to really have continuous instruction. By starting a little bit earlier it gives us some wiggle room with the weather, when we do in an inclement season, have to call snow days that cause delays. The goal between the snow gates and the momentum of trying to keep the continuous instruction, it enables us to be able to go through the season, and there's continuity for students and for staff. So that's sort of the history of why the decision was made contractually. And I think getting out June 13, this past year really enabled us to have a break both of the educators and for the students, before our summer programming began to kick off after July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Chair Normand thanked the Superintendent for the explanation. She then called on Ms. Pitone for a comment.

I just wanted to thank you. Sometimes we request things and it's hard to keep track of it. But you guys putting all this on the website is really helpful, because this is the time of year that people start asking about it. And there's definitely a vocal contingent that feels really unhappy that their combination vacation schedule, as well as their life schedule, because people coming in all day can be hard for them. So I just want to thank you for putting this on the website.

Ms. Normand added that we hear from both, there are also families who don't have the resources and there are no camps running this week, so to have their children in a structure environment, with adults getting two meals a day, in some cases getting meals backpacked home really helps. In a district as complex and wonderfully diverse as ours there simply is a huge variety of opinions.

She then introduced item A from New Business, SHS Building Project Update

**V. NEW BUSINESS, ITEM A TAKEN OUT OF ORDER**

**A. Somerville High School Building Project Update**

Superintendent Skipper then introduced Principal LaGambina and Associate Principal DeSimone.

I can't say enough about their work as leaders, also for the staff in the CTE program and the students for all that they've done in building out the Edgerly building with such care, so that this year we could have a sound learning environment there. The flexibility of the Somerville High staff in general; up at the building with the general tensions of parking and not being in the building you're accustomed to, its just required a lot of flexibility on their part. I've been amazed at how they've embraced it and done it as they always do, with class. Mr. LaGambina approached the mic.

Before we begin, on behalf of the staff, we want to thank Mr. Futrell again for all your support. We couldn't ask for a better School Committee; the school, the district is all well supported by the school committee and we just want to thank you. I also want to thank Leo and his staff for the tremendous amount of work, not only for what they did this year, turning the Edgerly into a school, but also what they've done over the past three years; building classrooms in the high school, the new auditorium, creating office space for all the staff. So I just want to thank them

and the students for their tireless work. Now I'll turn it over to Mr. DeSimone.

Mr. DeSimone also thanked the staff and students, we had 12 to sometimes 20 students working over the summer, it's a lot of dedication for them and a big commitment.

I'll start with a little bit about where we're at now, and I will say that I was debriefed this morning and again this afternoon. We received some good news today that the Phase 2 Steel Construction is actually finished, they pulled the cranes off site today. You won't see that back again, until Phase 2A, which will be the east part of the old atrium building, which if you look now you see just the gym standing. So they're finishing on the lower level and taking out the bottom piece of the old welding shop, and after that it's just the structure itself, and then the foundation will go around that.

A little history about last year, this time last year they were abating close to \$100,000 tons of soil, they also dug down 54 feet. So moving ahead a little bit, the logistics plan for this site was just finalized in mid August and was sent out to all the staff, students, parents and guardians and the district. This also aligns up with the muster plan, which is for the fire roots, which go around the 1895 building and the modular classrooms. That all went out to the staff, students and the parents and guardians last week. The central hill parking, the reason we capitalized a little bit on that is because down by the old Homans building there is a parking lot that is accessible for Somerville High School, which is for 20 spots. That can be used as of last week and staff has been made aware of that via email as well. The old c-wing, which was coming down this time last year, as you know is down and below that is where they took out the close to 100,000 tons of soil and they dug down the 54 feet. Please see the attached Somerville High School Building Project PowerPoint Presentation for pictures of the c-wing, and information on its demolition and the steel reconstruction.

The next piece that you'll see, for the actual construction piece is once the demolition company is out of here, hopefully after Labor Day, you'll begin the foundation in front of the atrium and on the east side and the back parking lot as well.

That concluded Mr. DeSimone's presentation and he opened the floor to questions.

Ms. O'Sullivan asked about parking and the difference of this year versus last, in terms of how many spots were lost this year.

What came off line this year was the front of the atrium, which was 12 spots and the side lot, which was another 22 spots and the back lot which was another 38 spots. We added the 20 spots down the hill with the shuttle, and then they also have the accessibility to the city parking permits all around the school district itself, they'll be able to use the regular district parking privileges as well.

Chair Normand asked Mr. DeSimone to explain how this information is being distributed to students and their families.

We did a Connect Ed, a mailing, sent out an email that went out through X2 as well, everything in all 4-targeted languages and went out with one of the picture from tonight's presentation and the bus schedule. Also included was a picture of the actual walkways around the school and the modules.

Chair Normand took this time to thank Mr. DeSimone and Mr. LaGambina. I think this has been a huge undertaking and this coming year is going to be very intense. Logistically, all the learning is still going to go on with kids in multiple locations. I was a little nervous last week, it

was the barbecues for the incoming freshmen, and I thought to myself this will be a task because it's going to be the most chaotic year in terms of more locations and logistics. I had a mom stop me down the street and she was so excited, she was just there last night and it was incredible. She shared there was a scavenger hunt and the student said they knew where they were going and where their classes are. It was incredible to have any rising freshman feel comfortable, but to have that knowing that they have multiple locations to navigate, that speaks to your staff, both in terms of communication, but also their degree of confidence the calmness. So I want you to know that there are a lot of very appreciative parents and students out there.

Superintendent Skipper added that Dr. Curley has done a tremendous amount of work with Mr. DeSimone around the transportation and shuttle pieces. It's been an all team effort between different departments and people like Sheila Freitas- Hayley who had to reconstruct all the gym schedules earlier because there's multiple places that the gym is happening. It has taken literally a village to make it happen, but leaders like Mr. LaGambina and Mr. DeSimone call people to it and what we've seen is people respond to that, including the staff, and the students themselves. I personally am excited for this year it's going to be a great year.

Mr. LaGambina directed a few words to Ms. Normand. Thank you for relaying that message from the parents. I want to take this time to recognize Mike Morgan; he does the SomerSuccess Program, but he also implemented the orientation week and has been working on the barbecue. It is pleasing to hear that parents are appreciative of our efforts. And just one more thing, every time we have school events Mr. DeSimone does a presentation on the new building, we're always hammering at getting the message out, because we want people to understand and know what is going on.

President Ballantyne asked about any additional issues with the asbestos that was found about 6 months ago and how that might have impacted the schedule.

To which Mr. DeSimone responded that it was actually a black mastic that was found around some of the cement poles and columns. There wasn't a delay because they've learned from past experience to get in a non-traditional work plan ahead of time, through the state. They had a very good connection with the department of environmental protection, who came out immediately and abated it and they removed it. At this time they're not anticipating anything, they found in the atrium building, on some of the pillars, some black mastic as well. As I said, they are way ahead of it with the non-traditional work plan they go in the second they find them, they have 10 days to get an answer and they've been getting a turn around of less than four days. So at this point, I haven't heard of expected delays, we're on schedule.

Chair Normand asked Mr. DeSimone what on 'on schedule' means, in terms of where we might be a year from now.

A year from now, September 2020 we should be moved in.

Mr. DeSimone echoed what Superintendent Skipper said, there are a lot of people at the Central Office like Dr. Curly, Ms. Santiago, Ms. Arredondo and Ms. Kelly who work behind the scenes on a lot of small things that save a lot of time and are a huge help. I want to make sure that they get recognized.

Dr. Ackman added that like Ms. Normand said this year is going to be difficult so to please feel free to come back and ask for anything they may need. On behalf of the committee, thank you in advance because it's going to be an amazing, interesting, fascinating time, that will definitely be challenging, thank you for everything you've done to get it here and thank you for the

challenges you're ready to take on.

Mr. Green said it would be extraordinarily helpful to have some sort of short document outlining where students will be and where all the programs are for broader distribution, because it is important for the larger Somerville community to understand just how much work we're asking the staff, faculty and students to juggle this year.

Superintendent Skipper responded that we could certainly do that through Ms. Morgan as well as the City Communication Department. She also added that it would be a good opportunity to give a brief glimpse about the Educational Plan, and underscored that this isn't just about building a building, for us to be ready for it requires our staff and our students to really approach education in a different way. The staff has been working on this diligently now for several years, while they might not be able to physically help the plan, they certainly are doing mental lifting with this. She invited Mr. LaGambina to say a few words about this.

We've been talking about this for a couple years now, 21st century skills, communication, collaboration, the design of the building and its adjacency so that the biology classes and anatomy classes are next to the nursing program so they can collaborate. The collaboration and the envisioning work is going to go beyond just the high school, we'll have them working with hospitals and having students doing internships. We really are striving for critical thinking and collaboration with trying to get students not only to collaborate inside the school, within the CTE department and academics but also to evolve that into the community. That's part of the envisioning work that will be happening over the next two years, it's a gradual release, because we have a lot going each year we're going to do more and more. The vision is for every student at Somerville High School to have a significant out of school learning experience which could include some type of internship, or some community service activity or receiving college credits. We have a partnership this year that's new with Cambridge College; we have 15 ELL students taking courses over there for credits starting in two weeks. These are the types of things that we're going to build on. It's a very exciting time, not only for the new building but also the new Ed Plan at SHS.

Superintendent Skipper then wanted to acknowledge that this work has been supported through the Barr Foundation, first in a planning grant and then in an implementation grant for the next several years and that almost a half a million dollars in sum. What's impressive about it is that when we went out and looked and spoke with staff that were in buildings that had gone through this type of a project, what we heard again and again, was that it was great to move back into the new space, but we weren't ready for it. We hadn't had a chance to work together to prepare ourselves to use the space to its fullest. And so that really has been our philosophy all along, is to do the mental work and the structural work of the Ed planning at the same time we're doing the physical building, and its coming together beautifully.

President Ballantyne commented in regards to the new education model at the high school. There was a tremendous amount of talk this summer about what's next with Powderhouse Studios, it's not happened because the School Committee voted it down, what is The City of Somerville going to do, how are they going to move innovation? It would be helpful for the community at large if you as Superintendent could share with us what does that innovation mean at the high school level? How does it dog tail with what we've heard come out of the powerhouse school discussion? There has to be some clarity on what the steps are and what point in the process we are in, in terms of how we define innovation in a high school setting.

Superintendent Skipper responded that the conversation about what innovation looks like at middle and high school grades is right for presentation. This is something that was presented a bit in ED Programs last year, not all of the details are worked out yet for Somerville high

through the Barr grant or for Next Wave/ Full Circle. But their implementation plan is now for three year. So they are due to present in the Fall and show how it's going to look each for the next three years. In terms of the concepts, the philosophies, the idea round student-centered project based learning, and performance based tasks, they'd be happy to do a presentation of that.

A follow up point from President Ballantyne is that a communication strategy behind that would be helpful, it would be nice to roll that out in a strategic way and make sure that people hear it, because when I talk about the Barr Foundation, nobody knows anything about it.

Superintendent Skipper said we could pull that together once we get through the beginning liftoff at Edgerly.

In appreciate for President Ballantyne's question on innovation, and with the number of parents that reached out about it, Mr. Futrell as a representative of this body, felt that we could've better told the story about innovation here within the district; innovation that already exists and the stuff that we still want to do. I encourage my colleagues to share the kind of energy that would have been felt had we opened Powderhouse Studios, being out in the community talking about it and fielding questions. We didn't do it but we're still doing a ton of innovation work so maybe there's some energy out there to have coffee or community meetings, where we get to talk about some of this in a way that's not related to one school or one grant, but the whole district.

Mr. Green said that presumably for a grant the size of the Barr Foundation we've done a grant report, it would be great if we could share that with the School Committee.

Chair Normand asked if there were additional questions for Mr. LaGambina and Mr. DeSimone, and thanked them both for being here.

## **VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT (continued)**

### **B. Personnel Report**

Superintendent Skipper continued with the Personal Report and announced a few of the retirements that happened over the summer and thanked those employees.

*Maria Medeiros*, Grade 3 Teacher at the WHCIS, for 23 years of service

*Joan Duffy*, ECIP Teacher at the Capuano, for 18 years of service.

*Ethna Sweeney*, who has had a variety of positions in the district, for 32 years as a Special Education teacher, most recently at Somerville High School

*Dr. Theresa Lopez*, who was only with us three years but had quite an impact as an ESL Instructional Specialist.

*Niyo Shift*, who was the ELL Program Administrator at SCALE for 28 years and five months of service.

*Doreen Query* who was the full time computer operator at SCALE, for her 37 years of service.

Chair Norm had a question about the number of positions overtime turning into permanent jobs, can you speak to what that indicates and is this a trend? And how does that fit 9into our Human Capital plan.

This really is a wonderful trend, these are often people who come in in temporary positions and have worked their way up through the organization. Some of them held a different position at one point. And then through professional development, leadership programming and through certification work they were able to work themselves up into a permanent position. This is one of our goals in human capital, is to be able to develop both within but also to hire extremely diverse and talented staff from outside. So you see this nicely coming together, whether its



paraprofessionals doing their teaching internship with us and then becoming a teacher, or whether it's teachers who have done a leadership internship with us and who then can become a Dean of students, an Assistant Principal or a Director.

Superintendent Skipper continued with her District Report.

- **Superintendent's Notes:** *School Committee Meeting - Monday, August 26, 2019*

We have had an excellent summer and are ready and eager for the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers were officially back in session today and para's will join us tomorrow. Students in grades 1-12 are back in session this Wednesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, for a half day. And the first day of school for pre-K and Kindergarten students will be Tuesday, Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

We welcomed new educators to our district last week, and are so excited to have them join our SPS family. The energy and excitement is palpable, and we are looking forward to another outstanding school year.

As you know, getting our schools ready for the school year is a community effort. We are so appreciative of the support we get from our many partners – parents & guardians, other city departments, community agencies, our Mayor and his staff, our dedicated School Committee and City Council members, and our many neighbors who are committed to supporting SPS youth.

I want to give a special shout-out to our friends at the Somerville DPW. Not only do they work tirelessly to get our schools ready and in the best shape possible to welcome our students and staff for the new school year, they also work hard throughout the summer to maintain our schools during summer programming. We appreciate your support, and the tremendous pride that you take in your work, and are thankful to have you on our team!

Now, a few updates:

Our **summer programming continues to grow and thrive**, thanks to the commitment of many community partners. This summer, more than 1,500 students participated in one or more of our district-led or partner-led programs. Students had many program options available to them to support their summer learning. Among them were SPELL, Community Schools Adventure Camp, The Calculus Project, several Music Camps, summer Special Education programs, Breakthrough Greater Boston, Citizen Schools, Somerville Recreation camps, Junior Police Academy, and others. Thanks to everyone involved for an outstanding summer of learning and exploring.

Once again, we are grateful to be starting off the school year with the very generous support of **Cradles to Crayons and the Somerville Kiwanis Club**. Each organization generously donated backpacks filled with school supplies that will support thousands of students in our district. We are immensely grateful for your continuing support.

As you know, the **Somerville High School building project** is well under way! It's hard to believe, but this time next year, we will be celebrating the official opening of the new Somerville High School and preparing to welcome students to a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility. We encourage you to visit the building project website ([www.somervillema.gov/highschool](http://www.somervillema.gov/highschool)) to watch the building go up. It's amazing to see the evolution of this exciting project.

This year will be a year of transition for SHS students, as renovation and new construction work continues at SHS, to ensure that we are ready for the scheduled fall 2020 opening. Many of the SHS CTE programs will be temporarily located at the Edgerly Building in east Somerville, the school Library and programs have been temporarily relocated to the current SHS main building, most of the classes will be held in the SHS main building or in the mods, and Physical Education classes will be held at various locations in the city including the Cummings School building, St. Anne's, and the Edgerly.

I want to give a special shout-out to Leo DeSimone and his outstanding CTE team. Over the summer, CTE staff and students worked to retrofit classrooms at the Edgerly and get them ready for their CTE programs this school year. The classrooms are ready, and we are excited to welcome them to the

Edgerly. We will continue to keep students, parents, and guardians updated on the progress of this project and any changes in programming.

You will also be hearing about a lot of **great projects** that we are undertaking or continuing this year, including the following:

- The work that our Somerville High School and Next Wave/Full Circle staff have been doing to redesign the learning experience for their students, with a focus on project-based and student-centered learning. This work will be supported for the next 3 years through a large BARR foundation grant.
- Increased enrichment and mentorship opportunities for our grades 5-8 students through our partners such as Breakthrough Greater Boston, Citizen Schools, Boston Debate League, The Calculus Project, MX2 (Advanced Math), Catalyst Program(STEM), and El Sistema Somerville.
- A new partnership between our Community Schools Program for grades Pre-K to 5 with BellXcel to strengthen daily academic enrichment opportunities.
- The cross-sector work we are doing to build out our birth to Pre-K structures and strengthen our partnership with early childhood/daycare providers across our City, thanks to a 1.5 million dollar State CPPI grant and a 1.5 million dollar grant through the Commonwealth Children's Fund.
- Our commitment to continuing to strengthen our family connections and support, and the restructuring work that the SFLC undertook this summer to better serve our amazing community.

**Back to School Nights** are coming up soon. Please check our website Calendar of events for a complete schedule of upcoming Back to School Night events.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, the first day of school for students in grades 1-12 is this Wednesday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, and it will be a half day for all students (noon dismissal). Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup> is a full day for students, and there will be no school for students on Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. All schools and district offices will be closed on Monday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, in observance of **Labor Day**.

The only other thing I just want to share for myself is that I had a grandson.

Ms. O'Sullivan then commented that it is amazing, to our supporters who donated 2000 backpacks thank you, that's awesome. She asked Superintendent Skipper to speak a little bit about the supplies and about where we have support for kids and getting the supplies for those backpacks.

Ms. Skipper responded that the backpacks come with supplies. And what was very nice was that it's a great mixture of age ranges, Cradles for Crayons, which does a grate job with the K-8's and the Kiwanis Club had the backpacks more suitable for high school, slightly bigger.

Mr. Green also wanted to acknowledge that the Tuft Health Plan is providing backpacks and supplies for all the students who attended the Mystic Picnic last week. Also, overdue but finally getting national attention is the issue of teachers who buy supplies out of their own pocket. I'm sure this happens here in Somerville, I wonder if we could poll our teachers and find out what that number looks like.

Superintendent Skipper responded that we could certainly do that.

I also I'm just looking at my notes and want to give a shout out to Michelle Kelly. So as you know our students are offered various sports camps: soccer, football and cheerleading and you know we always try to be well prepared but occasionally there are times where a student gets exhausted, dehydrated, breaks something etc. We had a situation at one of the camps where one of our students was extremely dehydrated and had a pre existing issue. And because Michelle Kelly who is our Head Physical Trainer, new the student, the situation and the signs, she was able to identify right away that the student needed to get into an ambulance and go to the hospital. And honestly had she not done that it might not have turned out as well as it did for the student. That's the kind of deep knowledge and dedication that Michele brings to the table. I would be remiss in not thanking her on behalf of all of us, for everything she does for the district and our Somerville High School Students.

## **VII. REPORT OF SUMCOMMITTEES**

**A. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** April 24, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

Mr. Futrell read his report for the Finance and Facilities meeting of April 24, 2019

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Futrell, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole of April 24, 2019.

Motion approved via voice vote.

**B. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** May 21, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

**C. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** June 17, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

Mr. Futrell read his following two reports together.

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Futrell, seconded by Mr. Green, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole of May 21, 2019 and of June 17, 2019

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Futrell, seconded by Mr. Green to accept the Bill Rolls from the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Motion approved via voice vote.

**D. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction:** June 17, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

Education Programs & Instruction - Meeting Minutes - June 17, 2019

The Education Programs & Instruction Subcommittee held a meeting on June 17, 2019. Subcommittee members in attendance were Paula G. O'Sullivan, Emily Ackman and Laura Pitone. Participating district staff included Superintendent Mary Skipper, Assistant Superintendent Almi Abeyta, and Winter Hill principal/incoming Assistant Superintendent Chad Mazza. Ms. O'Sullivan called the meeting to order at 8:35pm. There were two topics on the agenda, an initial discussion of a memo on x-block and a discussion of potential agenda topics for the next school year.

X-block is a daily 40-minute period, outside of the core instructional time, where students in grades 1-8 can get extra support or work on enrichment activities. For example, students can participate in weekly band or strings, or work with a reading specialist, or work in a small group with a classroom teacher during x-block. This initiative was implemented several years ago and committee members had questions up about how it was going so far, whether the district was getting what it wanted out of the initiative and how to assess the effectiveness of it.

District staff stated that x-block can look different at each grade and each school. Also, at the three schools that are providing Spanish instruction for all students in grades 7 and 8 (Kennedy, West, and Argenziano), there is no longer this block set aside for interventions, but students still receive interventions when necessary.

A longer discussion about the effectiveness of x-block is warranted in the future, with feedback gathered from teachers, administrators, and students, along with other data. The superintendent suggested that the district instructional leadership team get involved in the review.

The subcommittee then discussed a list of potential topics for the 2019-20 school year, some of which came up during regular school committee business, others submitted by subcommittee members and district staff. Of all the topics, the following had the most interest (in no particular order):

- Trauma-sensitivity training in the district
- A focus on the academic side of "tier 1" instruction, within the MA Tiered System of Support structure.
- Plan for presentations of School Improvement Plans to school committee
- The early education connection to the *By all Means* initiative
- A renewed focus on literacy

- Further discussion of X-block
- Differentiation - what's the goal and what's actually happening
- Middle grade offerings, what is common across schools and what is school-specific
- The high school schedule, in particular the need for more flexibility
- Advanced placement classes at the high school and the impact of the weighted GPA -
- HS health curriculum updates
- Barr Foundation work with HS and NWFC

Subcommittee chair Paula O'Sullivan will work with incoming Interim Assistant Superintendent Chad Mazza to develop subcommittee meeting agendas for next school year.

Finally, Laura Pitone made a motion, seconded by Emily Ackman, to approve the May 21st subcommittee meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:28pm.

MOTION: Motion by Ms. O'Sullivan, seconded by Ms. Palmer, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction of the Whole of June 17, 2019. Motion approved via voice vote.

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **B. Homework Policy Update**

Chair Normand welcomed Interim Assistant Superintendent Chad Mazza in his official capacity tonight, to do the Homework Policy update.

Mr. Mazza started off by expressing what an honor it is to be here today. As you know, with the Homework policy one of the key drivers is teacher voice, and one of the things that came out of my meeting with Rami Bridge and Meghan Brady was to design focus groups centered around teacher voice. We want a comprehensive plan that will engage teachers from all schools at different points during the school year. So we could get a wide representation of responses to the revised policy and what teachers would want as we move forward. This year we decided that teachers would have 10 independent hours of Professional Development that they have control over. So, we decided that one of those hours would be devoted, if they chose, to participate in the focus groups at their school. The focus groups are now part of the district professional development catalog, which went out today, I want to thank Karen Woods for getting out. It was 46 or 47 pages' worth of professional development offerings, which is incredible.

There will be two facilitators at each focus group session, and the sessions will run from October through January. There will be three focus groups in October, two focus group sessions in November and December and three in January; we figured that November and December are short months with holidays, that's the reason for less focus group opportunities. Then in January, I will come present the data and the findings from those focus groups. This process has been really collaborative, I want to thank Rami and Meghan, for their partnership in the process. We're all new to our roles and I think this is a great beginning, to a productive relationship. I also want to thank Karen woods and Jessica Boston Davis, who will be the facilitators for many of the focus groups, but I will say that this really places value on teacher voice in the process. I think that's an important piece that we recognize, and that's why we are being so comprehensive with our focus groups moving forward.

Ms. Pitone thanked Mr. Mazza for doing this collaborative work with teachers and staff. This is incredibly important to this process., I'm curious, are the focus group findings going to be presented back to the school committee? How does this information get merged in with parent input? What are the next steps in the process or have you not aligned those just yet?

Once we get all the data, I will present to the school committee what we found through the four months, beginning in October and ending in January. Because it's important that we hear what teachers have to say in regards to this policy, and then we'll mirror with what parents have to say. Then we'll see how to move forward.

Mr. Green asked Mr. Mazza to explain who Rami and Meghan are, for those people who may not know at home. He then asked, how is this process for getting teacher voice substantially different now with the

new STA leadership?

Rami is the new President of the STA, and Meghan, is the Vice President of the STA.

One of the things that we tend to do is we send surveys, instead of having conversations. The focus groups now are more focused on conversations; teachers are sitting in a group talking about feelings, talking about what they do as far as the teacher role, how much homework they give, how it affects students and families. So, we're placing an effort on that voice through conversation. Surveys are very important and they give us some data, but sitting and talking with people, is really where you learn how people feel, because you can read a comment, but you can't ascertain how that comment made people feel. I'm not sure what happened a few years ago, but moving forward, we're looking forward to this process.

Ms. O'Sullivan thanked Mr. Mazza for his response and agreed that getting the input in multiple ways is important. She pointed out that two years ago, there was a plan for focus groups, and isn't sure if those ever happened. She knows this is challenging and appreciates the solution of having it be during one of the PD hours. But we should be cautious about how is this going to be different and making sure that if we're looking for more robust data, that we are paying attention to that not just from teachers, but from all stakeholders.

Superintendent Skipper responded that there was limited amounts of focus groups. They weren't representative of the overall STA, and we saw the same thing with the parents. For instance, our ELL parent voice was not as active in the surveying as we would have liked to see. Part of this is the methodology, surveying can only get to a certain part. The focus groups allow people to have a little bit more in depth conversation, and by us actually dedicated or allowing an hour with the PD, we will get much more broad representation within STA. Additionally with the parents, it's also working with SFLC for a deeper outreach so we are getting feedback from all groups of parents in the city. When you make a policy that impacts the entire district, and not just one segment, we have to make sure we have representative voice.

Ms. O'Sullivan wanted to make an additional point regarding the high school. There is a lot of conversation about this building up to the high school, I absolutely support that want that to be a reasonable bridge from eighth grade into high school. What do ninth grade teachers expect of their students, which is an important part of this.

Mr. Mazza assured Ms. O'Sullivan that they are part of this process. They are an integral part and they'll have their own focus groups just like the K-8's.

Ms. Skipper added that the high school is a good case and point, one of the pieces of data we'll be showing in the early Fall are the results of the AP classes, which were wonderful. We had increase in access, increase in performance, and in almost every subgroup. My concern is the cumulative impact as kids take more and more AP classes, because each AP comes with a certain standard amount of work that's expected by the College Board and taking a college level course. So, if we have this conversation at the high school level, where the students are now taking discrete content subjects, and they have discrete teachers, that really becomes a little bit harder to actually quantify what's a reasonable amount of homework. For instance, if a student is taking three AP classes, to think that student is going to be doing less than an hour of homework when each of those are about 45 minutes, isn't going to happen. Some of this is also an invitation to a broader conversation around what's a healthy balance for our students in pushing them with rigor but also not pushing them over the edge.

Ms. Normand asked Mr. Mazza to explain to families was is the current homework policy and what they should expect as we launch into the new year? There's been some confusion about which policy we're using right now.

Mr. Mazza clarified that the policy we're currently using is the policy that was in effect for most of last year, the revised policy is not in effect right now, we are back to the original policy that we've had for many years in the district.

### **C. Ward 2 Vacancy Update**

Chair Normand wanted to break it down to two ways; one, an explanation of the process, and then to lay out a timetable.

Solicitor Frank White did a wonderful job of looking at the City Charter, the School Committee Policies and Roberts Rules and taking those three different structures and balancing them out and producing a memo of how we should proceed to fill the Ward 2 seat.

I'm going to just read some of it just so that we're all very clear, and it's very transparent.

**Process for addressing an anticipated vacancy on the School Committee that will occur approximately four months before the end of the vacating member's term.**

As to the vacancy, the Charter states in pertinent part, that "if the vacancy in the office of school committeeman shall occur less than one year prior to any regular municipal election, it shall be filled for the remainder of the term by ballot of the remaining members of the school committee, the member so elected to be a qualified voter of the ward in the representation of which on said committee the vacancy exists." Somerville City Charter, Section 30.

The School Committee Rules set forth that Robert's Rules of Order "will govern the proceedings of the School Committee, except when those rules are in conflict with the committee's approved policies and regulations. . . ." School Committee, BEDD. Robert's Rules or Order set forth several methods of making nominations:

1. the most familiar method - from the floor (open nominations); nominations do not have to be seconded; nominations close after all nominations received; or
2. by the chair; or
3. by a Committee; or
4. by ballot; or
5. by mail; or
6. by petition.

See Robert's Rules for Making Nominations -- Chapter XIV, Rule 46, pp. 416-424.

Nominations are followed by the election. A majority vote for one nominee is required to elect. See Robert's Rules for Elections, Chapter XIV, Rule 46, Page 426 - 427.

As for the method of voting, the School Committee rules state:

5. Method of Voting - Action shall, unless otherwise ordered, be by voice vote, . . . See School Committee, BEDF.

However, the Charter's use of the word 'ballot' indicates that members must cast a written vote. Robert's Rules states an assembly "cannot make a valid voice-vote election when the [Charter] requires elections to be by ballot;..." Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Ed., s. 10.. p. 119.

While ballot voting is generally secret, the Charter's ballot requirement must be read harmoniously with the disclosure requirements of the Open Meeting Law. In my opinion, individual members are required to cast their written ballots without disclosing their vote to each other at the time of casting their individual votes, but immediately after all the ballots are cast and collected the Chair must read aloud the ballot, including the name of the School Committee member/voter and his or her vote, i.e. "Member Doe casts her ballot for Jane Roe."

As to the uncontested candidate, in the November city election, for the seat being vacated, the Charter does not award the seat to an uncontested candidate. Any member may nominate any qualified voter of the ward to fill the unexpired term. To the extent a School Committee member wishes to nominate the one uncontested candidate, that person may be nominated. While the likelihood is remote, an uncontested candidate does not automatically assume a seat as that candidate could lose a seat to a write-in candidate at the election.

I would like to entertain any questions about the process and then I will lay out the time frame.

There was a follow up conversation I had with Mr. Right, he advises us not to fill the seat until it is actually vacated. Tonight, this seat is not yet vacated. I would like to have that vote on our next meeting, which is Monday, September 9. However, there are some anticipated absences. And I would like to ask the body whether there's some objection to going to September 9<sup>th</sup> or if we should move it back.

Mr. Green made an objection to the vote being held on September 9<sup>th</sup>. He would like to see it done in two stages, would like to see nominations put forth on the 9<sup>th</sup>, and the vote take place the following meeting, on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Futrell urged his colleagues not to leave Ward 2 unrepresented for as long as possible. So, you know,

Mr. Green clarified that his suggestion was for transparency of process.

Mr. Futrell debated that adding time to a process doesn't add transparency. The process is transparent, as the chair read, it sounds like you would like more time to deliberate and consider.

Ms. Pitone also commented. I think my initial reaction was similar to Mr. Green's, thinking about whether or not we need to give people an opportunity to nominate themselves. But that also necessitates the School Committee having some kind of process to put it out there and communicate it out that there is an open seat and do people want to nominate themselves or do we want to nominate others? I don't think we have a form or a mechanism to do that. So, I was thinking about, for expediency and having the opportunity for Ward 2 to be represented sooner rather than later, and I am leaning towards Mr. Futrell's recommendation.

To be clear, my understanding from the memo and from the discussions with Mr. Right is that the remaining members of this body would be the ones putting a name into nominations. This is not a public process, it's not the same as going to the elections office and pulling papers. It would be the members of his body to put a name forward. It would be on us to put the word out, I would like to do it in one meeting and I think that there's enough time. Whether we did it on the 9<sup>th</sup> or we push it out one more meeting, to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. That would be enough time, the process has been outlined as one meeting and that's how I would like to proceed.

At the next meeting, anyone can nominate someone as a resident of Ward Two and any number of names can be put in. Then the remaining body will vote and the person with the majority of the votes will win. This will be on the agenda for the Monday September 9 agenda to take a vote.

**D. FY19 SCALE/ADP Diploma Request** (Recommended action: approval)

Papa Mark Anthony Antoine Cambridge, MA

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by DR. Ackman, to approve the ADP Diploma for Papa Mark Anthony Antoine of Cambridge, MA.

Motion 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
1,750 Backpacks	Cradle to Crayons	Somerville, MA	TBD	Somerville School District
Monetary	Maureen Oakes	Somerville, MA	\$500	Somerville School District
Grant	The Boston Foundation	Arlington, MA	\$87,309	SPS' Prenatal/Birth - 5 Partnership
Grant	Barr Foundation	Boston, MA	\$300,000	Somerville High School
Grant	Barr Foundation	Boston, MA	\$200,000	Next Wave/ Full Circle

MOTION: Motion by Mr. Green, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to accept these donations with gratitude.  
Motion approved via voice vote.

#### **IX. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

##### **Mr. Green**

Made a request for an update on the Gender Identity Support Policy that was passed about a year ago.

##### **Ms. Pitone**

I put a question or request about whether or not the district was able and/or willing to create Google calendars for the district calendar as well as for the high school calendar. I think would be a great service to families that they could just access the Google Calendar, if that's a possibility.

The second thing that has come to my attention a few times, and I don't think we have it on any agenda right now including Ed Program, so I just want to put it forward for consideration; the cell phone use policies within schools, it's something that we talk about a lot, but I don't feel like we've made that a priority. I would like this to be considered for a future School Committee meeting.

Superintendent commented that we don't have a clear set policy for cell phones. What has happened is that schools have adopted their own. In general, the cell phones can be an incredible distraction to our young people in school. I think that's something I would like to take back to the Rules Subcommittee and start the discussion, we have looked at other districts, and most districts don't have to set policy, they function similar to us.

#### **X. CONDOLENCES**

Superintendent Skipper shared that over the summer, suddenly, we lost a student that would have been a Senior at Somerville High School, Anthony Samayoa. He was an East Somerville Community Student followed by the high school. From all accounts, he was a wonderful young man that people really appreciated, he had a great sense of humor and was very kind. His friends created a memorial that was over on the basketball court at ESCS. This Summer, with his sister and some of his friends, we were able to relocate that memorial away from the basketball court because of the student's return on Wednesday, and it is now located on the little island that's right in front of the East Somerville, where the buses pull in. I did not want to let tonight pass without adding him to our condolences.

Dr. Ackman then asked for a moment of silence and expressed the School Committees condolences for the following people who passed away over the summer:

**Constantine "Dean" Limberakis** – Former SPS Director of Music.

**Florence Sotiros** - Retired SHS Teacher and Guidance Counselor, also aunt of Sharon Sotiros, Kennedy School Teacher.

**Bonnie Cargan** – Mother of Reid Cargan, Teacher at ESCS.

**James Synan** – Husband of Barbara Synan, Retired Secretary

**Amanda Foley** – Daughter of Laurie Foley, Health Careers Teacher

#### **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned via voice vote at 8:56.

##### **Related documents:**

Agenda

SHS Project Update Presentation



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
REGULAR MEETING – AUGUST 26, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.**

**Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Vision Statement/Goals**

*We believe in developing the whole child - the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical potential of all students - by providing students with the skills, opportunities, and resources that will nurture innovative ideas, foster pride in diversity, inspire students to become lifelong learners and empower them to enrich their communities.*

- Goal #1: Increase achievement and access for all students. Reduce all performance gaps by half.  
 Goal #2: Develop and implement a comprehensive PreK-12 social-emotional learning framework that provides students with the skills they need for social and academic success.  
 Goal #3: Increase engagement with the community to reflect the community in which we live.  
 Goal #4: Continue to develop and implement innovative ways of measuring student academic performance and school quality such as formative assessment, performance-based tasks, and whole quality indicators.  
 Goal #5: Develop a comprehensive plan for Universal Kindergarten Readiness that supports intellectual, physical, and social/emotional growth from birth to Pre-K.  
 Goal #6: Develop and implement a strategy to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and talented staff.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

**II. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

- B.** Recognition of Service for Outgoing School Committee Member  
*Dan Futrell*

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

**A. District Report**

- New Administrative Staff
- School Year Calendar

**C. Personnel Report**

- June
- July/August

**V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

**E. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** April 24, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole of April 24, 2019.

**F. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** May 21, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole of May 21, 2019.

**G. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole:** June 19, 2019 (Mr. Futrell)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole of June 19, 2019.

**H. School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction:** June 17, 2019 (Ms. O'Sullivan)

MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Education Programs and Instruction of the Whole of June 17, 2019.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. SHS Building Project Update**

**B. Homework Policy Update**

**C. Ward 2 Vacancy Update**

**D. FY19 SCALE/ADP Diploma Request** (Recommended action: approval)

Papa Mark Anthony Antoine Cambridge, MA

**E. Acceptance of Donations** (Recommended action: approval)

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Grant	Barr Foundation	Boston, MA	\$200,000	Next Wave/ Full Circle

**VII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**VIII. CONDOLENCES**

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

# Somerville High School Construction Update

Department Head Meeting

Department of Infrastructure & Asset Management  
21 August 2021



## Site Logistics: 2019/2020 School Year



## Central Hill Parking



## Old C-Wing, New West Wing Progress

We're half way to the opening for 2020/2021 school year!

May  
2018

Students moved to  
modular  
classrooms



25<sup>th</sup> July  
2018

Interior subelement  
complete



30<sup>th</sup> July  
2018

Demolition  
complete



Sept  
2018

Debris removed



March  
2019

Mass excavation  
complete



June  
2019

Foundations  
complete



August  
2019

- 1,500 tons of steel
- 500,000lbs of rebar
- 3,100 CY of concrete
- 127,400 hours of labor



## Old CTE-Wing, New East Wing Progress

June  
2019



August  
2019

