

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday November 16, 2015 – Regular Meeting**

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

**Members present:** Mr. Roix, Mr. Futrell (8:01 p.m.), Ms. Rafal, Ms. Pitone, Mr. Bockelman, Alderman White, Ms. Normand, and Mr. Sweeting

**Members absent:** Mayor Curtatone

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Adam Sweeting called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the Board of Aldermen's Chambers at City Hall at 7:10 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America. This evening, Mr. Sweeting asked that, during the moment of silence, we remember the people of Paris and Beirut as well as all others touched by the recent tragedy and sadness across the world. Mr. Sweeting asked for a roll call, the results of which are as follows: - Present – 8 – Roix, Futrell, Rafal, Pitone, White, Normand, Bockelman, and Sweeting, and ABSENT – 1 –Curtatone.

**II. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Mr. Ojo was absent this evening due to a death in his family.

**III. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

• **Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation**

Mr. Sweeting asked Ms. Normand to assume the Chair so that he could present the members of the Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation with a resolution honoring the work they have done to provide scholarships to graduating seniors from Somerville High School and Full Circle High School over the past 25 years. Mr. Sweeting asked the Foundation members to join him at the podium as he read the resolution (included at the end of these minutes) into the minutes.

Foundation President Joseph Favaloro thanked the School Committee for honoring them and introduced the members of the Scholarship Foundation who were present - Dave O'Brien, Paul Murray, Noreen Santucci, David Willey and Branden Wilson. Mr. Favaloro also provided a brief history of the organization and its accomplishments.

The meeting recessed at 7:15 p.m. so that members could thank the Foundation members.

The meeting resumed at 7:19 p.m.

Mr. Sweeting announced that he would now like to take Item VII. A. out of order, but before doing so, would like to recognize Mr. Andre Green, the recently elected Ward 4 School Committee person who will be on board in January. Congratulations to Mr. Green!

**VII. A Introduction of Dutch Educators**

Mrs. Skipper announced that we are so pleased to be hosting five teachers from the Netherlands in our district this week - 3 at Somerville High School and two at elementary schools– as part of an educational exchange opportunity offered by the Institute for Training and Development (ITD). From November 11-19, these teachers are completing the Placement Component of this project, participating in activities such as classroom observations, job shadowing, leading and assisting with activities in the classroom, attending sporting and other school events, and others, to get a sense of what the educational experience is like in the United States. We feel fortunate to be able to welcome them to Somerville and to our District, and hope that their experience has been both a great learning experience, and an opportunity to see first-hand why we believe Somerville is such an exceptional community. The project is funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science of the Netherlands, and is supervised by the Fulbright Center of the Netherlands. The visiting teachers were introduced and offered the chance to comment on what they saw and learned and will take back to the Netherlands and also, what they think we can do better. Francis van der Vegt, Michael Breeveld, TJ Nabring, Nadine van der Heijden and Yvonne Scherphof took turns sharing their observations which included the following:

- The Welcome Center at Somerville High is beautiful and extremely valuable
- The high quality support systems we have in place – full-time nurses, counselors, the small class sizes

- The fact that we have separate teachers for special subjects – art, music, physical education, etc.
- The focus on positive behavior and how staff members know each student
- Motivated, dedicated and prepared teachers
- Communication skills
- Respectful school community

Following these reports, members engaged with our visitors on the following topics:

- The value of teaching of English as a second language beginning at age 4
- The age of students in the Vocational Program in the Netherlands
- What a typical day looks like in a classroom for them
- Differentiated instruction practices here vs. there
- Classroom management
- Standardized testing
- Funding for schools

The meeting recessed at 7:56 p.m. so that members could thank the Foundation members.

The meeting resumed at 8:02 p.m.

### **B. School Safety presentation by Richard Melillo, Director of Student Services**

Mrs. Skipper announced that, given all of the issues around the world recently, we are being diligent with safety and Mr. Melillo is here tonight to provide information that should be reassuring. Mr. Melillo's presentation included information on the following:

Emergency Response Planning that is school specific that is updated annually

Strong relationships with the Somerville Police and Fire Departments

Information relative to Lockdown Trainings the five step process—

- Trainings, by school, staff, department
- Mock drills for staff only
- Community roll-out
- Presentation of audience-sensitive trainings which were also age appropriate
- Comprehensive drills over the course of two weeks

At the conclusion of the Lockdown Drills, all parties meet to debrief.

Building assessments have been done to ensure locks, doors, etc. are all in proper order.

311 requests were submitted and the Department of Public Works was very responsive to our requests.

As drills went on, there was less anxiety.

Following Mr. Melillo's presentation, members expressed their appreciation for his presentation and for the level of care and planning put into developing the drills. Discussion ensued which included the following:

- Evacuation Plans and "Be Safe"
- Expressions of confidence and thanks for Mr. Melillo overseeing this task
- The decision to hold drills this week following the tragic circumstances around the world over the past few days
- Social Media plans
- Use of 911 texting, walkie talkies, panic buttons
- The role the police officers who are part of the STEPS program have played in these drills
- Drills for afterschool and summer programs

## **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- October 19, 2015 Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to approve the minutes of October 19, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

- November 2, 2015 Regular Meeting

MOTION: Ms. Rafal made a motion, seconded by Ms. Normand, to approve the minutes of November 2, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

## **V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

### **A. Finance & Facilities Subcommittee: Nov. 10 (Ms. Normand)**

In Attendance: Carrie Normand, Dan Futrell, Steve Roix, Christine Rafal, Paul Bockelman, Superintendent Mary Skipper, Finance Director Pat Durette, and Assistant Superintendent Vince McKay.

There were no audience members.

Ms. Normand called the meeting to order at 6:00.

There were six items on the agenda.

1. **Minutes of October 7, 2015.** Mr. Roix made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Futrell, and the motion passed unanimously.
2. **Brown School Grade 5 Transition** The Brown School will become a K-5 school in 2016-17. As part of the planning process, Finance Director Durette presented a chart of Grade 6 Capacity 3 Year Projection that shows the projected number of Brown students in grades 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> for the current year and three years out. It is projected that the number of Brown students transferring to other district schools will not exceed the number of available seats. Superintendent Skipper has shared this information with Brown Principal Shawn Maguire. Informational meetings for families are being planned for after Thanksgiving to share information and answer questions well in advance of needing to submit transfer applications.
3. **Facilities Update** Superintendent Skipper reported on the work to be done on 42 Cross Street including installing a drainage system from the back of the building to draw water to the sewer system in the front, installing windows that can be opened to increase air circulation, repairs to the foundation from water damage, and the replacement of wallboards also damaged from water. Central Office staff with offices in the building will be moved to the Edgerly School, some SPS offices are already there, while the work is done. There was discussion about the possibility of some Central Office staff remaining in the Edgerly both to reduce the number of employees in 42 Cross Street and to facilitate a more collaborative working environment among Central Office staff.
4. **Expenditure Report FY16** Finance Director Durette answered a few clarifying questions. Mr. Futrell requested that department total expenditures from the previous year to be included as a point of comparison from year to year.
5. **FY16 Bill Roll** Mr. Futrell made a motion to pass the Bill Roll, seconded by Mr. Roix, and the motion passed unanimously.
6. **Photography Contract** Finance Director Durette recommended renewing the contract with the current photographer for school photos in a large part because every student is supplied with a class photo with or without purchase and the variety of price points offered for photo packages. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Roix made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Futrell, and the meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM.

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Futrell, to approve the minutes of October 7, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to approve the FY16 Bill Rolls.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Ms. Normand made a motion, seconded by Mr. Roix, to accept the report of the Chair of the Finance & Facilities Subcommittee for the meeting of November 10, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice votes.

**B. Educational Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:** Nov. 10 (Ms. Pitone)

Members present: Christine Rafal, Paul Bockelman, and Laura Pitone

Others present: Carrie Normand, Steve Roix

SPS Administrators present: Mary Skipper, Vince McKay, Sibby LaGambina, Jim Nocito, John Oteri, Steve Simolaris, and Christine Trevisone

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

1. SHS Program of Studies changes: Sibby LaGambina, the Curriculum Committee Chair, shared the recommended changes in the SHS Program of Studies with the support of members of the Committee.

Health and Physical Education – SHS recommends the addition of a Dance course, supporting physical, social and emotional wellness by exploring different cultures through dance. This course is being developing with curriculum support from the Boston Ballet and will increase the number of non-competitive courses for PE credit.

Social Studies – Sibby LaGambina represented the recommended change to reduce Facing History and Ourselves from a full year course to single semester to promote flexibility in scheduling.

World Language – Jim Nocito shared the recommended introduction of several extensions of the language course sequences including Spanish, Italian and French as well as the introduction of a French for French speakers as a parallel to the heritage offerings in other languages. Of note is the addition of Spanish 5 Honors and CP to provide an extension for students who began studying Spanish in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as a change to the Spanish Heritage class to an AP course. The additional French course increases French staffing from .8 to Full Time. No other budget implications were identified. The middle school language offering as currently defined was discussed, recognizing that all students benefit from the exposure to modern languages, as well as the need for a long term World Language vision, including SHS, middle grades and immersion program (such as Unidos) offerings.

Special Education – Christine Trevisone shared updated life skill course names, descriptors and the addition of 5 credits per course, both in the general and adaptive sequence, outlining a specific scope for each course in the sequence. In addition to a new Resource Math 4 and an improved course descriptor for Resources Study Skills, there was the request to add a Transition Program serving students from 18-24.

Paul Bockelman moved to approve the courses as presented, pending financial review. The motion was seconded by Christine Rafal and passed.

2. Youth Risk Behavior Survey data from Spring - Steve Simolaris shared data from the Somerville Health Survey (the Youth Risk Behavior Survey with additional Somerville specific questions) administered for middle grades in spring 2015. Every year this survey is administered alternating between HS and middle grade students each year. Finding and concerns for middle grades students:
  - Substance and sexual activity has gone down for our students, source speculated but not verified
  - Increase in stress, self-harm and suicidal ideation are a great concern and the importance of:
    - SPS integration with school nurses, our first level of mental health and substance abuse screening
    - The importance of educating classroom teachers to identify signs
  - Desire to increase opportunities for physical activities (~50% of students regularly exercise for 60+ minutes a day, 5 days per week)

Although not included in the survey the increase in mental health concerns and trauma in K-3 students was discussed, based on an increase in referrals, teacher observations and incidents of early identification.

The connection between the Director of Health and PE and the Director of Student Services was clarified as well as the collaboration with food services and the City's health department confirmed. Social, emotional and mental health curriculum falls under health curriculum. The primary curriculum used is Second Step. Currently Second Step is primarily delivered by counselor educators that are supervised by the director student services. The value of classroom teachers and counselors in SPS partnerships reinforcing this curriculum was identified.

A summary of this data was requested to be shared with SPS staff.

### 3. Updates and New Business -

- A memo submitted by Steve Simolaris, new Supervisor of Health and PE, provided a brief overview of social and emotional programming at SPS. This topic to be presented in more depth along with a broader update on Health and PE in a future Educational Programs subcommittee, tentatively scheduled for the December 8th meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday December 8th at 7:00 p.m. at 42 Cross St. The agenda will tentatively include the Health Education, proposed format for School Improvement Plans, and Homeschooling. Please check the call for the week of 12/7 for a final agenda.

At 8:30 p.m. Ms. Rafal moved to adjourn. Mr. Bockelman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to approve the courses, as presented, pending finance review.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

MOTION: Ms. Pitone made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rafal, to accept the report of the Chair of the Educational Programs Subcommittee for the meeting of November 10, 2015.

The motion was approved via voice vote.

## **VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

### **A. Personnel Report**

Included in this week's packet is the November 2015 Personnel Report. Mrs. Skipper highlighted the retirement of Ms. Pamela Connors, currently a teacher at the Kennedy School, effective December 31, 2015.

### **C. District Report**

#### **B. Library and Media Department Presentation**

This presentation has been postponed to a future meeting date.

The Superintendent provided her district report as follows:

- The Somerville High School Building Project Committee will be hosting a community meeting this Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, at the SHS Library. We invite Somerville community members to join us to learn more about the project details. The meeting begins at 6:30pm.
- A great annual family event, the Somerville Early Childhood Literacy Fair, takes place on Saturday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, from 10:00am to noon at the Healey School Gymnasium. This is a FREE family event that offers fun literacy activities for kids 6 years and younger, and provides families with young children the opportunity to learn about programs, activities, and resources available to them in and around Somerville. The theme of this year's event is Health and Wellness, so be on the look-out for our visiting veggies.
- The second round of Parent-Teacher Conferences begins this week. In fact, Next Wave/Full Circle conferences are taking place tonight from 6:00-8:00pm. The conference schedule is:
  - Tuesday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm – Kennedy School
  - Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm – Brown School
  - Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:30pm – Somerville High School
  - Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm – Argenziano School
  - Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 6-8pm – Winter Hill Community Innovation School
  - Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 6-8pm – West Somerville Neighborhood School
  - Tuesday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 6-8pm – East Somerville Community School
  - Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6-8pm – Capuano Early Childhood Center
  - Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6-8pm – Healey School
- There is still time to volunteer and be part of the 2015 Somerville Hour of Code event. Thanks to a great community effort, last year's Somerville Hour of Code event resulted in every student in our District having the chance to learn the basics of computer science and participate in coding during the week-long event. This year's Hour of Code event will take place from December 7<sup>th</sup> through December 13<sup>th</sup>. Visit our District website home page ([www.somerville.k12.ma.us](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us)) to access the link to this volunteer opportunity.
- The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SPED PAC) will be hosting an "Executive Function" workshop from 7:00-9:00pm on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Kennedy School Library, presented by Lynn Crowley, Ph.D. candidate from Harvard. Parents interested in a novel and unique approach to acquiring and applying Executive Function Skills at home will find this workshop interesting and are encouraged to attend.
- On Friday, November 20, Mrs. Skipper will be presenting on a panel at the National Race Amity Conference being offered by Wheelock College.
- On December 12, 2015, Somerville High School will hold Somerville Public Schools' first ever College and Career Day from 9am – 12:30 pm. There will be workshops led by college and career experts for each grade level to help you plan for the future. Don't miss this great opportunity! Learn about financial aid, preparing for college, two-year college options, job preparation skills, and more. Students and families are strongly encouraged to attend!
- Just a quick reminder that Thanksgiving Recess begins on Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be a half day for all students. District offices will also close at 1:00pm that day. All Schools and District offices will be closed on Thursday and Friday, November 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. We're thankful for your support and your commitment to Somerville youth, and wish everyone a safe and enjoyable Thanksgiving weekend.

*The Superintendent deferred to Assistant Superintendent Dr. Vincent McKay for his report on curriculum-related issues:*

We are justifiably very proud of our program of early education in Somerville... Pre-Kindergarten programs for four year olds here in the city and the School Committee goal of universal K readiness. As we launched this initiative two years ago, you will recall that it included one key aspect: a commitment building a city-wide SYSTEM of support for our families.

For pre-school, that means a commitment to collaboration between the pre-schools within our district – and we educate about half of our four years olds within the district schools – and with the private pre-K providers in the city.

That approach, the partnership approach, is where Somerville leads the way, one that's gaining a lot of traction with state level policy makers and on Beacon Hill.

Since we are on the map, Somerville was asked to serve on a panel

Last Thursday November 5th, I served on a panel at the MASC/MASS meeting in Hyannis.

I was privileged to serve on that panel, providing an overview of our strategic planning early education here. Joining me on the panel was the Massachusetts Commissioner of early education, Mr. Tom Weber.

As a result of the meeting, I'm pleased to announce that Mr. Weber requested to arrange a visit, which is now scheduled for early January.

Also, with the PARCC / MCAS vote set for tomorrow, with a recommendation from Commissioner Chester that the "Somerville" recommendation be adopted, which is to develop MCAS 2.0. Given all the advance publicity about the recommendation and vote, there appears to be a good deal of support for this approach.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Sweeting asked if any members had items for New Business at a future meeting.

Mr. Roix asked about high stakes testing support and was told that this item would be on a future Ed Programs meeting agenda.

Mr. Futrell announced that he will present his report from the MASC/MASS Conference at the next meeting, including information regarding the resolutions he voted on.

## **VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Mr. Bockelman**

1. The Somerville High School Track PAC will hold its annual craft fair on the Saturday after Thanksgiving in the Somerville High Field House from 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. A fun time with raffles and holiday shopping opportunities.

### **Ms. Rafal**

1. Encouraged attendance by parents and guardians at the Somerville High School PTSA. This is a very important time, particularly for seniors who are completing their college applications. Ms. Rafal recommended a stop by the guidance office while at the high school.

### **Mr. Roix**

1. The Ward I Resistat meeting is November 18 at the East Somerville Community School
2. The Somerville High School Building Committee Meeting for public participation is November 19 at the Somerville High School library.

### **Mr. Sweeting**

1. Reminded members to check their emails and please respond regarding the Vision Statement Draft
2. Also, a reminder that the School Committee self-evaluation is due back by November 30. The document will be discussed at Long Range on December 15.

### **Ms. Pitone**

1. Thanked Mr. Sweeting and Ms. Rafal for pursuing the School Committee self-evaluation.
2. There will be a craft fair at the Argenziano School on December 4.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

Prior to adjourning, Ms. Normand expressed the School Committee's condolences for the following relatives of staff members who have recently passed away:

- Claude Etienne, brother-in-law of Magalie Olivier, teacher at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School.
- Barbara Carney, Retired School Nurse from the Kennedy School.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m. via voice vote.

**RELATED DOCUMENTS:**

1. Agenda
2. Minutes of October 19, 2015 and November 2, 2015
3. November 2015 Personnel Report
4. School Safety Information
5. Staffing demographic data
6. Resolution for SHS Scholarship Foundation

**City of Somerville, Massachusetts  
School Committee**



***Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation***

- WHEREAS,***      *The Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation was founded in 1990 by then Headmaster Anthony Fedele and a group of caring and dedicated staff, parents and community members, and*
- WHEREAS,***      *The Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation provides scholarships to graduating students from both Somerville High School and Full Circle High School, and*
- WHEREAS,***      *These scholarships, ranging from \$250 to \$2,000, have provided financial assistance to deserving graduates from both high schools in their full-time pursuit of higher education without regard to race, color, creed, age or sex, and*
- WHEREAS,***      *Since 1990, the Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation has awarded nearly one million dollars to over 800 Somerville students, and*
- WHEREAS,***      *The Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation continues to work diligently to increase the Foundation's endowment for future years through their annual raffle and commemorative brick campaign so that it can continue to assist our students, therefore, be it*
- RESOLVED:***      *That the Somerville School Committee congratulates the Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation on the occasion of their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and thanks them for their unwavering support and hard work on behalf of our students and be it further*
- RESOLVED:***      *That this Resolution be recorded in the minutes of this School Committee meeting and that a framed copy be presented to members of the Scholarship Foundation.*

Adam Sweeting, Chairperson  
Steven Roix  
Dan Futrell  
Paul Bockelman  
Mary E. Skipper, Superintendent

Somerville School Committee  
Carrie Normand, Vice Chairperson  
Christine Rafal  
Laura Pitone  
William A. White, Jr., Aldermanic President  
Joseph Curtatone, Mayor

***November 16, 2015***