

-----Original Message-----

From: Jaclyn Rossetti  
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 3:38 PM  
To: Board of Aldermen  
Cc: [oboukili@somervillema.gov](mailto:oboukili@somervillema.gov)  
Subject: FW: Information regarding City and school buildings

Please see the email below on behalf of Omar who was unable to send this remotely. He is available via email and cell to answer questions.

-----Original Message-----

From: Omar Boukili  
Sent: Wednesday, February 11, 2015 3:19 PM  
To: Jaclyn Rossetti  
Subject: Information regarding City and school buildings

Dear Aldermen,

Please find below information regarding school and city buildings. Should anything else need clarification, please feel free to call me or Denise Taylor at 857-523-9905.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Here is the text from the School CTY to parents:

We have been working on plans to safely re-open the Somerville Public Schools and City buildings as cleanup efforts continue from a historic amount of snowfall. During this process, we have also had our roofs inspected and it has been determined by our engineers that the amount of snow accumulation on our roofs has created an unsafe situation. The only City buildings open to the public today are our public safety buildings and Traffic and Parking, which is open until 7pm.

Right now it is not safe to have residents, students, staff, and others in our schools and municipal buildings without the roofs being cleared, and we cannot clear the roofs while these buildings are open. For this reason, schools will remain closed on Thursday and Friday. We will continue to provide updates on City buildings.

Roof experts are assessing the situation today, and the City has already secured contractors to begin clearing as soon as possible. We are working at maximum speed to have our roofs cleared safely.

We recognize that having City offices and schools closed for the week has created difficulties for our residents and families. We appreciate your patience and understanding, and assure you that we will continue to work diligently to ensure that all buildings can reopen safely.

Residents and businesses should also pay attention to snow and ice buildup on their own roofs. For more information: <http://bit.ly/1zLBzcn>.

2. The letter from the City's Director of Capital Planning and Projects regarding snow accumulation on the roofs is also attached to this email.

3. The video of the press conference on this offers useful details and can be viewed on the City website here: <http://www.somervillema.gov/alerts/video-message-mayor-storm-response>

#### Q&A's

1. Why are schools closed?

a. An assessment of the accumulation of snow on school buildings after the end of the most recent storm revealed an average depth of snow of 2-3 ft, with drifting in some areas topping 6 feet. General industry practice as well as recommendations from our on-call architectural firms are that snow removal is necessary once the accumulation of snow on roofs reaches 18 inches. Greater depths can create a serious structural impacts and thus safety hazards. Because we have the depths that we do, to make a professional determination of the safety conditions for staff and students, an architectural firm was brought in to do an assessment. We are clearly beyond current safety codes for the weight on some roofs. Meanwhile, roof snow clearing is necessary and cannot be conducted with buildings open due to the potential for snow and ice falling on students/staff. Significant and dangerous icicles are also accumulated at some schools and these cannot be cleared until snow removal is complete.

2. How much snow is on the roofs?

a. An average depth of snow of 2-3 ft, with drifting in some areas topping 6 feet.

3. Why wasn't the snow removed sooner?

a. Snow cannot be removed from roofs during snow events for obvious safety reasons including visibility and wind. The most recent storm dumped more than twice what was originally predicted (more than 2 feet in some areas with greater drifting). We secured an emergency contract for roof snow removal immediately following the storm. Contractors have already begun work on both school buildings and essential City buildings.

4. What will be done to make up the school days?

a. The Superintendent will work with union leaders and parents and guardians and staff to make recommendations to the School Committee to determine the best options. Options to be considered will be the April break, Saturdays and extending the school year. The school year already would have ended 2-days earlier than usual because the schools had already eliminated two holidays during the year. So that fortunately reduces some burden when lengthening the school year. Earlier this season, Somerville opened on the frigid temperature day when many others closed and we opened a day earlier than most neighboring districts after the first of the series of storms. In total, including the 5 days missed this week, 9 school days will have to be made up.

5. Where can families take their children while schools are closed?

a. The City and Schools are working to offer recreational activities for students. The City and Schools will update as soon as information is available. Parents are being contacted and informed that via the school website, they can access a guide to home educational activities and remote learning options.

6. What is happening right now:

- a. We contracted with an architectural firm that today took snow samples from school roofs to sample weight and density of the snow. They are also reviewing architectural and structural plans to make a determination of what standards each building was designed to (the age of our buildings varies greatly from new to over 100 years, as does structural design). There are many variables that determine how much snow load a building can bear including the pitch of roof, amount of snow, design and structure of the building, density of snow, etc.
- b. Roof clearing crews have been hired on an emergency contract. Snow clearing is being prioritized based on depth of roof snow and clearing large snow drifts on school roofs first before returning to clear snow at each school.

7. Is the snow the only problem on the roofs?

- a. As the snow melts and freezes, it creates a situation where the ice is heavier than the snow and then you get additional snow on top of that adding to weight, which increases the risk. Heat from the building is melting snow that refreezes at night.
- b. As noted above, icicles are an issue on some school buildings as is the risk of snow and ice falling from the edges. This will be addressed as snow is removed.

8. Was the City planning to open schools anyway? Isn't this about the parking lots?

- a. The City had developed a plan to open alternative teacher parking so that schools could open Thursday without residents needing to vacate the lots. This plan was reviewed and approved by SPD, the school district, the City, T&P and preparations were underway when the roof safety issues became known. Aldermen White and Chairman Sweeting were present and participated in all discussions. Somerville opened the last storm a day before all other neighboring communities.

9. Has any damage already occurred?

- a. Due to snow on the roof of the School Admin. Office building on Cross St. deflection in the roof and cracks in the walls have already occurred. We are working to remove snow from school and City buildings as quickly as possible to avoid any further damage. But at this time, no other damage has been observed.

10. Final note: No one wanted to make a decision to keep schools closed, but safety must be paramount. We understand the difficulties and inconvenience for families and are concerned about any interruption of the educational process. But we simply cannot put lives at risk.

Best,  
Omar