



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 18, 2024

6:00 PM

Joint Meeting with the School Committee's Finance and Facilities Sub-Committee

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03 pm and adjourned at 7:33pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Sait, Clingan, and Davis), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Luisa Oliviera - Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry, Jill Lathan - DPW Commissioner, Leiran Biton - Chair of School Committee, Sarah Phillips - School Committee, Laura Pitone - School Committee, Amara Anosike - Chief of Staff of Somerville Schools, Rubén Carmona - Superintendent, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1598](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee Meeting of October 28, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Resolution (ID # [24-0466](#)) By Councilor Davis
That the Administration provide the Special Committee on School Building Facilities and Maintenance with regular updates about the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process for the Winter Hill and Brown Schools.

Liaison Hutter highlighted the memo that was submitted prior to the meeting, *SBFM - 2024-11-18 Revised SBFM IAM Memo (with items 24-0466, 24-1593, 24-1594, 24-1595)*, details all required materials have been submitted and the administration is awaiting review and approval. Superintendent Carmona shared an update that the eligibility phase of this process is ending, and the project is on track for the second phase. School Committee member Laure Pitone brought up concerns on the potential delay on construction and the possibility to accelerate a recommendation from the construction advisory group (CAG). Councilor Clingan echoed concerns and stated he is hopeful the process can be expedited not take the full 18 months. Liaison Hutter confirmed the CAG is available to be flexible depending on

the timeline hearing back from the MSBA process.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [24-1591](#))

By Councilor Sait, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the redesign plan for the Kennedy School front playground.

Director Oliveira stated the school is slated for design and the city is actively in the process of obtaining a Request for Proposal (RFP). Once a contractor is secured, they will begin the community engagement process of designing the front school yard. Chair Davis and Councilor Sait asked if there is a more concrete timeframe, or way to expedite in executing the design and implementation of the school yard. Director Oliveira clarified the design selection, engagement with the community, and putting it out to bid while finding funding include a lot of variables that the team is hesitant to nail down a date, a park project can take on average, three years to completion.

Councilor Sait stated the grant was awarded in 2019 and asked if there is a reason the project was not started sooner and if the grant awarded will cover all funds. Director Oliveira shared the pandemic that began in 2020 put a lot of projects on pause and many that were started in 2019 are now being finished. The grant covers \$65,000 for the design of the schoolyard but additional funding will need to be secured to finish the project. Parks projects can be funded by a combination of State, Federal, or City Council funding and they are working with Capitol Projects to secure the funding necessary to complete the project. Councilor Sait also asked what the process is for providing updates on this project and the Director shared the Somervoice platform is viewable to all and will be updated regularly. Councilor Sait asked a final question if there is going to be any collaboration between the Elm-Beacon project and the construction of the schoolyard. Director Oliveira highlighted there is always going to be collaboration with the Mobility department but that is a streetscape project and will not impact the design of the schoolyard.

In conclusion Councilor Clingan asked if feedback obtained prior to the pause of the project will be considered. Director Oliveira recalled the materials obtained can be rehashed but the process now will be more inclusive and thorough working with the neighborhood and schools.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

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4. Order
(ID # [24-1593](#))
- By Councilor Pineda Neufeld
- That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the condition of the Somerville High School building exterior tiles.
- Chair Davis shared an update in addition to the memo that was submitted prior to the start of the meeting, *SBFM - 2024-11-18 Revised SBFM IAM Memo (with items 24-0466, 24-1593, 24-1594, 24-1595)*, that there was investigation into why the tile fell and there is no definitive answer, but inspection is on-going. Liaison Hutter shared the last areas for inspection should be completed end of next week and will be followed with a report from the contractors. Leiran Biton requested to be able to review the final report once it is submitted and Liaison Hutter shared the report can be sent out upon receipt to all.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
5. Order
(ID # [24-1594](#))
- By Councilor Pineda Neufeld
- That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide a timeline and update for installation of a new classroom on the third-floor atrium at the Argenziano School.
- Liaison Hutter expanded that staff is working on a solution given the limitations of the building and code requirements. There is additional information in the updated memo submitted prior to the meeting, *SBFM - 2024-11-18 Revised SBFM IAM Memo (with items 24-0466, 24-1593, 24-1594, 24-1595)*. Sarah Phillips from the school committee made mention the classroom was brought up in May 2022 to the city and if renovations are not fulfilled prior to the start of next school year 18 families will be displaced from the Argenziano School. Superintendent Carmona reinforced the school district is working hard to not displace any families and students from their community. Laura Pitone from the school committee shared feedback she is receiving that it is hard to retain Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) staff by way of unable to match the salary and scope of responsibilities of neighboring communities, she posed the question of how to budget the department appropriately to attract and maintain staff to be able to fulfill projects such as this one. In response Liaison Hutter does not have a formal response prepared but the Mayor's Office is committed to constant review of departments and staff. Chair Davis and Leiran Biton shared concerns about communication and why the classroom was only brought to the attention of IAM in the last month. Superintendent Carmona provided light that conversations with DPW occurred three years ago and Amara Anosike in a September walk through this classroom was identified as a critical need and is now being labeled a crisis to be completed. Amara Anosike shared there is a list of running needs with DPW and IAM and this has been on it since the beginning of the school year. Liaison Hutter heard the concerns and shared she would go back to the departments and
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investigate what conversations have occurred in the past.

Councilor Clingan asked what the scope of work for this project is and could renovations be contracted out with reserve funding. Commissioner Lathan clarified there are no reserve funds through DPW, the funds are reserved at the beginning of the year for each project pending. Commissioner Lathan also shared DPW is repairs and Capital Projects look at the building of buildings and procurement process for the type of project for this classroom.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

6. Order
(ID # [24-1595](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide a timeline and update on the creation of a production kitchen at the Argenziano School.

Liaison Hutter highlighted the new bid process is opening on November 26 and referenced the submitted memo, *SBFM - 2024-11-18 Revised SBFM IAM Memo (with items 24-0466, 24-1593, 24-1594, 24-1595)*. Sarah Phillips asked what the city is doing to ensure that enough completed bids are received to fulfill these project requirements and what type of outreach has been done. Liaison Hutter shared the process is to go back and look at how the bid was written and how can it be adjusted to attract strong and appropriate bids. Liaison Hutter stated she can reach out to staff on the specifics of outreach that has been done. Lerian Biton asked how the lack of a production kitchen affects the school. Superintendent Carmona recognized the efforts of the Food and Nutrition Department to still offer nutritious and delicious meals to students but there are not particulars to how the lack of a kitchen has affected the school.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. Order
(ID # [24-1596](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Commissioner of Public Works provide information on the procurement and installation of window blinds for certain classrooms at Somerville High School that have unobstructed views from the hallways and need blinds in order to conduct lockdown procedures.

Commissioner Lathan was present to speak on this item, sharing the blinds must be custom made and ordered. DPW started the process of measuring and ordering last week.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- SBFM - 2024-11-18 Revised SBFM IAM Memo (with items 24-0466, 24-1593, 24-1594, 24-1595)