



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 1, 2023

6:30 PM

Joint Meeting with the School Committee's Finance and Facilities Subcommittee.

Others present: Laura Pitone – School Committee, Emily Ackman – School Committee, Sara Dion – School Committee, Chad Maza – School Department Superintendent of Operations, Rich Raiche – Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, Jill Lathan – Commissioner of Public Works, Jackie Piques - Interim Director of Communications & Grants - Somerville Public Schools, Luisa Oliveira - Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:36 PM by Chair Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 8:25 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Davis, Clingan and Gomez Mouakad), none against and none absent.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Beatriz Gomez Mouakad , Vice Chair Jesse Clingan and Lance L. Davis

- Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0194](#)) Approval of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Committee Joint Meeting with the School Committee Building and Maintenance Subcommittee Minutes of February 1, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad and Vice Chair Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

School Building - Feasibility Study

- Order (ID # [22-1528](#)) By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Strezo That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the status of the School Building Systems Feasibility Study.

Director Raiche reported that the chiller at the Kennedy School is nearly ready. Retro commissioning, i.e., putting the systems through their paces to assess efficiency over two seasons, is scheduled to begin at the Capuano and Argenziano Schools. The documents for the West Somerville Neighborhood School (WSNS) will be ready for a first round review in June or July. The Healey School and the WSNS will need implementation plans since those facilities contain both heating and cooling systems. Modular units will be used to lessen disruption and to provide some heat in some of the buildings. Director Raiche noted that the hope is to do 1-2 school buildings per year for five years. He explained that equipment lifespans

vary and that the city is cognizant of some needed electrical upgrades. A parallel effort is being made to install solar panels on buildings that will support them. Councilor Clingan asked about the status of the cooling system at the WSNS and Director Raiche replied that the ultimate plan is in development and that the DPW addressed last year's issues, so it should be operational for this year's cooling season. Commissioner Lathan will inform Chair Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Clingan about pre-testing the systems.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [22-1527](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the status of the School Building Feasibility Study.

Agenda items 3 through 7 (ID # 22-1527, 23-0479, 23-0609, 23-0480 and 23-0481) were discussed together.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
(ID # [23-0479](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management clarify the phases for the programming, design and development of the Winter Hill and Brown School Renovation/Reconstruction in the CIP Presentation shared with this Council on March 9, 2023.

Liaison Carrillo explained that the purpose of tonight's presentation is to provide clarity on the process and terms used. She stated that two website are being developed, one for the Brown School and one for the WHCS, to track the progress of the work.

Director Raiche gave the presentation and reviewed the components and phases of the school building plan, explaining the processes involved, e.g., building capacity study, enrollment study, gap analysis, feasibility study and community process, design and construction. Some of the essential questions to be asked during the process are:

- How many classrooms can fit within a structure?
- Can the Brown School and WHCS be renovated and how many classrooms can it contain?
- How many students are expected, by grade and program, thru 2030?
- How do enrollment numbers translate to classroom needs?
- Is it possible to fit additional classrooms within the existing building portfolio?

Additional details are provided on the presentation referenced at the end of this report.

Ms. Dion said that she was more concerned about immediate issues, e.g., the

lack of Wi-Fi and rodent infestations and she wants to hear updates on these issues at future committee meetings. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that pricing for Wi-Fi upgrades has just been received. Councilor Clingan commented that he stays in contact with the principal of WHCS to stay on top of any problems. Ms. Pitone stated that alignment on timelines still needs to be discussed, sooner rather than later and Superintendent Mazza reported that the DPW staff are addressing problems in timely manner at that school.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [23-0609](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the Building Conditions Analysis and Renovation Potential Assessment of the Winter Hill Community Innovation School and provide a schedule of the projected completion of this analysis and assessment.

Director Raiche estimated that this might be complete by May and ready for review in June.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [23-0480](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management detail how funds for the School Building Feasibility Study budgeted for FY 2023 have been expended to date.

Chair Gomez Mouakad noted that funds were allocated for the study and Director Raiche stated that he is in discussions with Finance Director Bean regarding how to manage that budget and that the committee can expect to see an accounting soon. He said that the enrollment study was delayed, so the funds have yet to be fully expended.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. Order
(ID # [23-0481](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management identify department staff allocated to the School Building Feasibility Study, and the projected time commitment of this staff for the duration of the study.

Liz Galloway will be the project manager. Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that she wants to make sure there is enough staff on board so that projects don't fall behind.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

School Buildings - Maintenance

8. Order (ID # [22-1927](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Gomez Mouakad That the Commissioner of Public Works provide the current noise readings of the mechanical systems on the roof of the East Somerville Community School and verify that they are in compliance with Noise Control Ordinance regulations.
- Commissioner Lathan reported that the test was completed and that the noise levels were below the ordinance's limit.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
9. Order (ID # [22-1417](#)) By Councilor Gomez Mouakad That the Commissioner of Public Works provide quarterly reports to the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee on any major repairs and 311 work orders in school buildings.
- Commissioner Lathan said that a repair was made at the East Somerville Community School since the last report. The elevator at the WHCS is operational, but has a low fluid level occasionally, and this will be addressed with the elevator contractor.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
10. Order (ID # [23-0144](#)) By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Wilson That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on issues with the High School Field House track flooring material and bleachers.
- Director Raiche explained that there was a soft spot on floor created by exposure to water and that he doesn't know how or why the water got there. The damaged section was cut out and temporarily replaced. When the correct color material comes in, the patch will be permanently repaired. Excess material is being purchased to repair damage caused by the wheels of the bleachers. That problem has been lessened by installing limit switches to stop the wheels from burning into the floor.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

11. Order
(ID # [23-0145](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad

That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry and the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management explain the selections of surface materials for school parks and playgrounds.

Ms. Pitone questioned why blacktop surfaces that have been decorated are not plowed and Director Oliveira responded by explaining that those surfaces have a seal coating applied to them to protect the “games” that are on the surface. The surfaces can be plowed with specialty plow equipment, but in the past, there has been some damage when plowed. Superintendent Mazza said it’s difficult when stencils are down, but he agrees that during snowstorm, plow contractors don’t have the proper equipment to use on them. Ms. Pitone said this issue has come up several times and that the end game is to make outdoor spaces usable for as long as possible.

Director Oliveira stated that it’s about tradeoffs and Commissioner Lathan explained that other areas of city need to be prioritized after a snowfall, e.g., ADA ramps, crosswalks and bus stops. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if some of the play areas could be heated and Director Oliveira said all of schoolyards have already been renovated, (so it would have to be a retrofit), and the Kennedy School is only one that could be examined for heating a section of the playground, if it’s even possible. Ms. Pitone said she understands snow clearing priorities but said that snow is still in the play yards several weeks after a storm. She said that the district should get a better understanding of the situation. Superintendent Mazza pointed out that once the snow falls, soccer fields can’t be used, so where can kids play? Director Oliveira said the fields could be used but if the surface gets pierced, damage will result. Snow cannot be removed from them. Chair Gomez Mouakad said a protocol is needed to ensure that people know that these areas can’t be shoveled. Superintendent Mazza said that he will be working with school personnel on this.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- School Building F&M - 2023-05-01 Feasibility Study Breakdown 2023May01 final