



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 28, 2025

6:00 PM

Joint Meeting with the School Committee's School Building Facilities and Maintenance Committee

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:04 pm by Chair Clingan and adjourned at 7:46 pm with a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Sait, Davis and Clingan), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Director Rich Raiche - Infrastructure and Asset Management, Christine Blais - Office of Sustainability and Environment Director, Danielle Barry - Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, Laura Pitone - Somerville Public Schools Personnel, Leiran Biton - School Committee Chair, Dr. Sarah Phillips - School Committee Member, Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-1454](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee Meeting of September 15, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

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

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.

Councilor Sait recused herself from the discussion due to her residence being located near one of the proposed school sites.

Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, reported that negotiations on the project contract are nearing completion, with the scope and fee finalized and some allowances included. He shared that the Construction Advisory Group (CAG) recently met to review results from an online survey about preferences for the new school project, which received a record 2,500 responses. The consultant hired to analyze the data found that the community remains divided on whether the schools should be combined

or remain separate. Residents in Wards 4, 5, and 6 generally favored separate facilities, while those in Wards 1, 3, and 7 preferred a combined school due to cost efficiencies. The full report will be posted publicly on the city's website soon. Smaller focus groups were also held with educators, teachers, parents, and non-parents to gather additional input. Parents from the existing Brown and Winter Hill schools expressed a preference for separate schools, while most educators supported a combined model. Overall, there is no clear consensus among the community. The next CAG meeting will take place on November 10 to deliberate on recommendations, with a finalized report expected on November 24 that will include the decision, justification and supporting information.

Chair Clingan asked what information was being used to inform the recommendation and inquired about the timeline for a final decision, noting the transition between the outgoing and incoming mayors. Director Raiche explained that the city provided the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) with information on why Trum Field was not considered a preferred site, citing its status as protected open space. Based on survey results, residents also expressed that they did not want Trum Field to be used for the new school. He noted that the next mayor will ultimately have a significant role in the decision and will be responsible for signing the necessary documents, though the CAG's work is expected to conclude in December. Director Raiche added that he and Finance Director Ed Bean will also make a staff recommendation and that both the current mayor and mayor-elect will use all available information to make the best possible decision for the community.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [25-1355](#))

By Councilor Sait

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management update this Council on when the school buildings maintenance project website will be available to the public.

Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, explained that his department has been managing several pressing priorities but plans to work on this in December and January. Councilor Sait clarified that the purpose of the order is to ensure regular updates are consolidated in one central location for easier access and transparency. Chair Clingan asked whether coordination with the school communications team would be possible, but Director Raiche noted that communications for this project would fall under the responsibility of the city's communications team.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Resolution
(ID # [25-1356](#))

By Councilor Sait, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Scott, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Mbah and Councilor Strezo

That the Administration release the report on the School Department composting pilot program and that the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council on any plans to re-introduce composting in the schools.

Chair Clingan emphasized the importance of taking responsibility in schools to ensure everyone is doing their part to reduce waste. He noted that there had already been a pilot program in at least one school and that there is strong interest in expanding those efforts. Director Blais, of the Office of Sustainability and Environment, reviewed the document *SFBM - 2-25-10-28 Memo (with 25-1356)* and provided background on previous composting initiatives. Between 2018 and 2019, a five-month composting pilot was conducted in four Somerville schools. The pilot showed promising results, but maintaining and expanding the program required additional personnel. Before those changes could be implemented, the COVID-19 pandemic halted expansion efforts.

Director Blais explained that food waste in schools generally comes from two sources: the cafeteria and the kitchen. To find a more sustainable model that required fewer staff resources, the city tested an organic kitchen waste disposal program in two schools, though the results were not as strong as the initial pilot. Since then, the city has identified both a need and an opportunity to dedicate more staff to addressing food waste in schools. Somerville has also developed systems to design a plan that works best for all stakeholders. A Zero Waste Plan has been released with the goal of reducing waste by 90 percent by 2050, and Director Blais noted that it was important for the plan to reflect community values, particularly around composting. She also shared that Somerville recently launched its first curbside composting pilot program, which saw nearly 170 sign-ups in its first week, far exceeding expectations. The city is committed to ensuring that the program aligns with state and community goals and does not make the rat problem worse.

Chair Clingan asked why food waste from school lunches could not simply be collected and sent elsewhere, noting that this issue has been discussed for some time. Councilor Sait agreed and said she wants to see concrete action taken, adding that enough has been learned from previous pilots to move forward. She hopes to see a detailed plan by September for implementation in the next school year. Chair Clingan clarified that one of the main challenges has been the cost associated with expanding composting programs. Dr. Sarah Phillips expressed interest in reviewing cost estimates for a district-wide composting program and emphasized the importance of including these expenses in the school district's budget.

Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety, and Transportation Coordinator, noted that schools already take steps to reduce waste by repurposing leftovers into new

meals, such as turning leftover chicken into chicken pot pie, and mentioned that one past concern had been irregular compost pick-ups. Ms. Laura Pitone commented that expanding composting would also help instill strong environmental values in students and said she hopes it will be viewed as a worthwhile investment. Director Blais agreed, saying the initiative is about building a culture of conservation and that the city is exploring potential synergies between existing programs to determine what approach would be most feasible. Staff have conducted site visits at schools to better understand rodent concerns, and they are considering different approaches for “front of house” and “back of house” composting since each has different operational needs. Councilor Sait expressed appreciation for the update and said she believes students will be receptive to the program. She plans to file an additional order requesting a detailed cost estimate.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [25-1422](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Commissioner of Public Works provide information regarding the installation, safety and accessibility of a railing on the concrete stairs between the play structures and the soccer field at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School playground.

Chair Clingan reviewed the memo *SFBM - 2-25-10-28 Memo Response (with 25-1422)* and also noted that this is the site of the only accessible slide in the city.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Resolution
(ID # [25-1438](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Wilson

That the Administration inform this Council of the process, action and communication used to consider acquiring the closed school building privately owned by the Archdiocese of Boston, on Thurston Street, after the Winter Hill Community Innovation School was deemed unsuitable for use.

The Saint Anne’s school building is currently vacant and no longer in use, and its layout offers a good opportunity to expand without needing elevators. Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, said he has spoken with the Archdiocese about the property and they are not ready to make an offer yet, as they are still working through the MSBA process, but conversations are continuing. Ms. Laura Pitone added that having more property on Sycamore Street would be beneficial.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-1455](#))
- By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson and Councilor Sait
That the Director of Health and Human Services inform this Council which school buildings have menstrual products available and which school buildings have inoperable menstrual product dispensers and when they are scheduled to be replaced.

Chair Clingan reviewed the memo *SFBM - 2-25-10-28 Memo Response (with 25-1455)*.

Councilor Sait asked for clarification on the process for addressing broken menstrual product dispensers. Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety, and Transportation Coordinator, explained that there was no data indicating any dispensers were currently out of service. She noted that any out-of-service units should be reported through a 311 request, which is entered by the school secretary or principal. Councilor Sait also asked how and how often the dispensers are refilled. Coordinator Barry said that custodians are responsible for refilling them and added that she frequently checks the dispensers herself. She observed that they are generally three-quarters full, indicating they are checked regularly.

Leiran Biton expressed surprise that there were no dispensers in boys' restrooms and asked whether that had been discussed. Coordinator Barry said she would look into how the decision was made regarding the locations of the dispensers.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

8. Order
(ID # [25-1517](#))
- By Councilor Davis
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the condition of the High School building exterior tiles, and efforts to prevent and mitigate future tile failures.

Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, shared that an outside third party inspected the falling tiles using drones on October 6th and released their report on October 8th. They also checked all areas of the school accessible by boom lift. The tile that fell was a replacement in the same location as last year. The investigation found that the issue stemmed from the original installation. The system uses vertical metal rails with predrilled holes and clips to hold the panels in place. For this particular tile, the bottom holes were elongated during installation, which over time caused the clips to shift downward and the tile to fall. They expect to release a final report in early November.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- SBFM - 2025-10-28 Memo (with 25-1356)
- SBFM - 2025-10-28 Memo Response (with 25-1422)
- SBFM - 2025-10-28 Memo Response (with 25-1455)

