



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 3, 2025

6:00 PM

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

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chair Davis and adjourned at 7:02 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Sait, Clingan and Davis), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Somerville Public School staff: Leiran Biton and Dr. Sarah Phillips, Rich Raiche – Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, Yasmine Raddassi – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

The meeting was recessed at 6:03 PM (to allow the School Department's committee meeting to be called to order) and reconvened at 6:04 PM with Councilors Clingan and Davis present and Councilor Sait absent. Councilor Sait joined the meeting at 6:14 PM.

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0194](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee Meeting of February 6, 2025.

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.

Councilor Sait was recused from this item.

Director Raiche reported that everything is moving according to plan. Staff is in the process of procuring a project manager and met with about a dozen potential applicants. It's expected that at least 3 candidates will be invited for interviews in the coming weeks. Councilor Clingan asked when projected cost estimate will be available and Director Raiche explained that

since the city has been involved in the MSBA process, it has been consistent in its statements that concept cost estimates would not be available until the fall of 2025. It's necessary to have a project manager and a designer/architect on board first and it was anticipated that the CAG wouldn't be able to make any decisions until the fall of 2025 because they would need cost estimates to do so. Mr. Biton asked if the estimates would include any costs for mothballing existing sites or making improvements to the Brown School and Director Raiche explained that in the scenario for combining the schools, those costs would not be included, however the city would need to know about the disposition of the Brown School and any credits associated with it. In the scenario for retaining the Brown School, associated costs would have to be factored in. He noted that nothing has been mapped out yet, but costs need to be determined.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [25-0237](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management discuss with the City Council and School Committee, the development of the FY 2026 project plan and budget in accordance with the adopted Capital Investment Plan.

Director Raich referenced the disappointing judgement involving the parcel at 90 Washington Street which has added \$30,000,000 to the city's liabilities and simultaneously reduced the dollars available for long range planning. Staff is getting close to presenting a projection plan for the short term and is working closely with SPS staff. Every school building has had a walk through to daylight issues and prioritize those items in the CIP. The hope is to lock down the projects and get the 2026 CIP published prior to starting projects. Mr. Biton asked what criteria is used to match projects with various CIP budgets and Director Raiche explained that several factors are considered, primarily the 1) the importance of existing/desperate programs, and 2) the risk components of building envelopes (e.g., HVAC, roofs, chillers, boilers, etc.). Mr. Biton would like a summary memo provided to the committee to show the process and the Director noted the Capital Projects webpage needs updating and will have the information available.

Councilor Sait asked how this relates to school building decarbonization and Director Raiche replied that there are basically 2 processes going on to reach the city's goals: gathering data for a longer term roadmap for environmental health and trying to make advancements on immediate needs. He noted that there is a need for an unoccupied, or partially unoccupied, building in order to make some of the critical changes. The Director noted that staff meets with SPS, IAM, OSPCD, DPW, OSE and Finance on an as needed basis, at most twice per week and at a minimum of once per month.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [25-0234](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management develop a Swing Space plan to accommodate Somerville Public Schools students to mitigate disruption to students, families, and staff while a school building is unavailable or during construction.

Director Raiche stated that staff is aware of this need and said that it's difficult to make advances on it. Speaking about the Cummings School building, he noted that there are significant code, safety, roof and HVAC work needed there before it could be used as swing space and staff is working on a comprehensive scope of what would be needed. Staff has talked with the Archdiocese of Boston about using its schools, but no plans have been made although lines of communication remain open. Councilor Clingan pointed out that the Cummings is essentially the only building available in the event that the Brown School went down and Director Raiche agreed that it's the only city-owned building.

Liaison Raddassi commented that the administration's understanding was that this matter was to be discussed by the City Council and Dr. Phillips pointed out that this item originated because the School Committee was looking for an answer. Mr. Biton said that any failure would be made worse by not having a plan in place to accommodate students that needed to be relocated to a swing space and he urged the city to develop a complete plan for review. Chair Davis commented that it sounds like the Cummings is not the plan and he also would like to have an operating plan on paper. Councilor Clingan asked if IAM staff could develop a plan or if the services of a consultant would be necessary and Director Raiche replied that IAM's capacity is constrained in both staff and consultants and is struggling to execute high priority projects. Councilor Sait pointed out the importance of knowing exactly what is needed going into budget season so funds may be allocated.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [25-0235](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the conversion of the former science lab in Room 208 at the Arthur D. Healey School, to small group learning classrooms.

Director Raiche noted that this work will be complicated as there is a significant amount of work that needs to be done. IAM has worked with SPS staff and prioritized the Argenziano School for work this summer and is planning to work at the Healey next summer. Mr. Biton noted that the room

in question has not been used as a science lab for many years and that there are no plans to use it as such. It's currently being used for small groups of students for intervention and physical therapy and it's a challenge to use the space for purposes other than a lab and makes it difficult for students and educators.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [25-0238](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Commissioner of Public Works complete installation of any remaining lockdown blinds needed for safety at Somerville High School.

The Administration submitted a memo on this item and Liaison Raddassi provided an update based on that memo.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- SBFM - 2025-03-03 DPW Memo (with 25-0238)