



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 8, 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 6:03 pm by Chair Clingan and adjourned at 7:49 pm with a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Sait, Davis and Clingan), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Leiran Biton - School Committee Chair, Laura Pitone - School Committee Member, Dr. Sarah Phillips - School Committee Member, Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison, Rich Raiche - Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, Danielle Barry - Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, Bill Fisher - Director of Emergency Management, Ralph Henry - Director of Capital Projects and Planning, Jill Lathan - Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner 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 # [25-1708](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee Meeting of October 28, 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.

Yasmine Raddassi, Legislative Liaison, reported that the Mayor and Mayor-Elect are actively communicating on this matter. Rich Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, noted that the School Building Committee continues to meet monthly and is currently developing the educational plan. Once completed, the plan will be presented to the School Committee for approval. Chair Clingan added that the public is encouraged to attend the committee's public meetings and that steady progress is being made.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

3. 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.

Bill Fisher, Director of Emergency Management, reviewed the attached document *SBFM - 2025-12-08 Memo (with 25-0234).pdf* and explained that the team is meeting weekly to assess risks, identify available resources, and evaluate alternative facilities and continuity options that best support the school's educational expectations. In response to a question from Chair Clingan regarding the TAB building, Director Fisher clarified that the TAB building would serve only as a temporary option at this time.

Leiran Biton, School Committee Chair, asked about the March 2026 deadline, and Director Fisher noted that a draft plan is expected to be completed by January and could be executed if necessary, while a more fully developed continuity plan would be prepared by the March 2026 timeline. Chair Clingan expressed appreciation for the memo.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Resolution
(ID # [25-0906](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Mayor create and make public specific plans that outline the full scope of the work necessary at the Cummings School, including capacity, time, and cost, to host Somerville Public School students in the event of an emergency, and provide regular updates to this Council on such plans until completed.

Rich Raiche, Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, discussed the attached *SBFM - 2025-12-08 Cummings School (with 25-0906).pdf* document and noted that the contract has been signed. He explained that the immediate focus is to prepare the building as a warming center, with the possibility of exploring its use as a school in the future. In response to questions from Chair Clingan, Director Raiche confirmed that the building currently has ADA, electrical, plumbing, and structural deficiencies, and that the work underway so far is focused on ADA and code compliance. When Chair Clingan asked how this project interacts with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) plans, Director Raiche clarified that it does not. There is flexibility in the future use of the space, with potential options including adult office space, basic needs services, swing space for a school if necessary, or use by the Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences (SCALE). Ralph Henry, Director of Capital Projects and Planning, shared that it will take contractors approximately three months to produce a draft report, which should be ready for presentation to the committee around May.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [25-1096](#))

By Councilor Sait

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management and the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment provide a written report to this Council by July 1 regarding any updates on measures and practices taken to assess, monitor, maintain, and improve healthfulness of the schools' physical environment.

Councilor Sait noted that in 2024 the Council passed a resolution to promote student and community health and resilience in the area of climate change, with an update scheduled for the 2024-2025 school year. Yasmine Raddassi, Legislative Liaison, explained that under the collective bargaining agreement, the School Committee, through Somerville Public Schools (SPS) legal staff, needs to work on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City Law Department.

Laura Pitone added that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) has reopened its Accelerated Repair Program, which includes repairs to roofs, doors, and the installation of heat pumps, noting that heat pumps could be of particular interest for this climate-related work. Rich Raiche, Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, added that heat pump construction cannot begin until swing space is available, as the work will take longer than the summer break. He also noted that West Healey School and Kennedy School both need new roofs, and since West Healey School is further along in planning, they would like to proceed before submitting to the MSBA so they do not have to wait.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. 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.

Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, shared that the Director of School Health Services reported that East Somerville is restocked every 56 days and Winter Hill every 28 days as part of a pilot program to match the restocking frequency of other city buildings. At East Somerville, they opted for less expensive products since this was a new program being implemented there. Custodians notify staff when supplies are running low, and this system has been working effectively.

Additionally, a dispenser was installed in the gender-neutral bathroom at the Albert F. Argenziano School, the only school where the gender-neutral

bathroom previously did not have a dispenser.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-1637](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management update this Council on how the foundation at the Brown School is monitored, whether mitigation is required to address any concerns, and if so, the details of those mitigation plans.

Ralph Henry, Director of Capital Projects and Planning, noted that an existing crack in the school's foundation has widened and experienced erosion. He stated that a purchase order has been issued for a contractor to fill the crack. The area is monitored quarterly, and during the most recent inspection, the previous filler material had fallen out. The purpose of the repair is to prevent pests and water from entering.

Chair Clingan asked what caused the deterioration. Rich Raiche, Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, explained that the issue is most likely due to age, though stress from the roots of a nearby tree could also be a contributing factor. He clarified that the crack does not present a structural or safety concern.

School Committee Chair Leiran Biton asked whether a mitigation plan had been developed given the long-standing nature of the issue. Director Raiche responded that the current plan is continued monitoring. Since there has been no significant worsening of the condition, staff will maintain quarterly monitoring and are hesitant to remove the mature tree at this time. Chair Biton expressed interest in remaining involved in the ongoing discussion regarding monitoring. Quarterly reports will be shared with Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety, and Transportation Coordinator. School Committee Member Laura Pitone also requested that information about the foundation crack be made more publicly accessible so constituents are aware that it is being monitored, and Director Raiche said they can look into that.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Resolution
(ID # [25-1721](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Administration and the School Department discuss with this Council the budgetary and planning impact of snow days, and how adaptation to climate change may affect future snow day planning.

Jill Lathan, Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner, noted that the amount of snow does not necessarily correspond to the amount of money spent, as the city must be prepared regardless of the forecast. She emphasized that the city is diligent in ensuring that all residents, regardless of mobility, are able to get around safely.

In response to a question from Chair Clingan, Commissioner Lathan explained that they rely on various weather sources and briefings. Anytime snowfall is forecasted to exceed four inches, a snow emergency meeting is called. She clarified that while not every snow day is declared a snow emergency, every snow emergency results in a snow day, depending on the nature of the snowfall.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Order
(ID # [25-1722](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on how snow and ice is removed from different types of surfaces in schoolyards, including any limitations based on surface type.

Councilor Davis noted that the new safety ground surfaces are difficult to clear safely of snow and ice. Dr. Sarah Phillips shared that practices vary by school, but at some locations any amount of snow results in the play structures being closed. She expressed interest in exploring whether a powered snow brush could be used.

Jill Lathan, Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner, stated that there is currently no way to remove snow without damaging the surfaces and that a powered brush would still cause damage. Chair Leiran Biton noted that play surface materials should be taken into account when designing and constructing new schools. During the design process, community members preferred poured-in-place rubber, though rubber mats can be more durable and easier to clear of snow. Chair Clingan suggested that leaf blowers might be an option for clearing light snow from the poured-in-place mats.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- SBFM - 2025-12-08 Memo (with 25-0234)
- SBFM - 2025-12-08 Memo (with 25-1722)
- SBFM - 2025-12-08 Cummings School (with 25-0906)