



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 28, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:05 PM and adjourned at 8:00 PM with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Clingan, and Davis) none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Sait).

The Committee entered into recess at 6:07 PM for the School Committee to open their meeting, and returned at 6:08 PM.

Others present: Jill Lathan - DPW Commissioner, Alicia Privett - Environmental Health Coordinator, Kimberly Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Rubén Carmona - Superintendent, Amara Anosike - Chief of Staff of Somerville Schools, Sarah Phillips - Vice Chair of School Committee, Leiron Biton - Chair of School Committee, Laura Piton - School Committee, 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 # [24-1388](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee Meeting of September 25, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Order
(ID # [24-1285](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on efforts to eliminate rat infiltration in school buildings.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner Jill Lathan spoke to the memo submitted entitled *SBFM 2024-10-28 DPW Memo* about the ongoing partnership with the rat mitigation team and the continued efforts with pest management. Councilor Clingan asked the Environmental Health Coordinator Alicia Privett to clarify if rats are living in school buildings or if there have only been rat sightings. She responded acknowledging the process is for a 311 report to be submitted and then the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) will address, there have been sightings outside the East Somerville School and none inside to her knowledge. Vice Chair of the School Committee Sarah Phillips asked if there are any additional issues that have not been addressed. Superintendent Rubén Carmona spoke to the ongoing efforts between the school district and DPW to address any issues

and access points for the rodents to be responded to in a timely manner. School Committee member Leiran Biton asked if a rat or a mouse can enter through a shut door. Commissioner Lathan said the rodents can go flat and just because a door or window is closed does not mean they cannot find another way into a building. Alivia Privett spoke to how rats can fit rough a size of a thumb and mice the size of a pinky so being diligent in other manners is also key in controlling the issue. Councilor Sait asked if Waltham Pest Services is a contractor hired for schools only and what they are doing compared to DPW. Commissioner Lathan confirmed they were hired for Schools and City. DPW and the School Department have an ongoing partnership to determine who will do what in laying down traps and picking up carcasses and working with the custodial staff on how to appropriately discard of food waste. Councilor Sait asked if we have investigated composting and if it comes from the school or city budget. Alicia Privett spoke to a few schools trying composting on site and confusion around management and how to “rodent proof” that process and would have to return with an answer on budget. Councilor Clingan also asked if sweeps of Burroughs are being done on property off school grounds to address the properties close to the school premises. Commissioner Lathan spoke to the ongoing conversation that happens on what to look after during maintenance and reminding staff to point out problems as they see them.

Chair Davis moved that the Commissioner of Public Works work with the Superintendent of Schools to present a plan to re-introduce composting in the schools. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Sait, Clingan, and Davis), 0 opposed, 0 absent.

There was additional conversation around the proposed motion and the implications for the schools to address and handle. School Committee members Sarah Phillips and Leiran Biton both mentioned they would like the focus of any future composting to be led and in partnership with the educators and students at the schools. School Committee member Laura Pitone asked if a report on the composting pilot could be put together so schools could learn from what was successful and what was challenging. Chair Davis and Councilor Clingan emphasized the ask is not of the schools to spearhead but towards DPW and to re-open the conversation of a composting project.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order
(ID # [24-1287](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update about the functionality of public address, or PA, systems at multiple Somerville Public School buildings.

Superintendent Rubén Carmona spoke to the background of this item and that the PA systems are used for safety and the partnership with DPW to ensure they are working properly. School Committee member Leiran Biton asked for the completion date of the project to which Commissioner Lathan responded the items have been procured and the funding is now available to move forward but there is not a hard deadline for completion. Councilor Clingan asked if all speakers that do not work have been identified, Commissioner Lathan confirmed everything that was wrong has been identified but it is known that there may be more things uncovered as repair work begins. Superintendent Carmona provided more content saying a walk through was done in September with Capitol Projects and DPW and four schools were identified for fixes.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [24-1288](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on repairs to damaged play structures at the Capuano Early Education Center schoolyard.

Superintendent Carmona spoke to the issues that have been identified on parks to date and School Committee member Leiran Bitone also asked how damages occurred to the slides and structures. Commissioner Lathan and Superintendent Carmona relayed the playgrounds get a lot of wear and tear and the structures can be used beyond the school hours and open to the public. Councilor Clingan asked Commissioner Lathan when this issue was identified and how long do parts normally take to be delivered.

Commissioner Lathan stated the issue was identified summer and that regardless of the parts there will be supply chain issues through the distributor and getting the part ordered and delivered will vary. Councilor Sait also addressed parts that were water damaged and if that will be solved when the damaged parts are, Commissioner Lathan shared that is a larger issue during heavy rains and a vendor in conjunction with Capitol Projects will need to be acquired to solve the water damage.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [24-1289](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on the reliability and repairs of the elevator(s) at the Winter Hill and Edgerly Schools.

Chair Davis opened the item identifying the issue was caused by Eversource and the city has since worked with Eversource to fix the issue. School

Committee member Leiran Biton added that a comprehensive district wide assessment of maintenance logs has also been submitted for the record and the school committee's appreciation for its submittal. School Committee Member Sarah Phillips asked if all elevators were checked after the Edgerly went down, Commissioner Lathan clarified there is not an expectation that Eversource be responsible for inspecting other buildings as they are not as heavily involved in other buildings, the regular maintenance is to check and identify issues before a closure like the one at Edgerly occurred. Councilor Clingan asked if an elevator issue gets addressed asap over other 311 requests, Commissioner Lathan confirmed a 311 request and an email or phone call for it to get addressed immediately.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [24-1301](#))

By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Sait

That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council on plans to minimize the timing impacts of future closures of the Ginny Smithers Sanders Pool for periodic maintenance.

Councilor Sait introduced this item sharing multiple constituents have emailed about pool closures and after reaching out to the Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) team for an explanation thinks it would be helpful to have this information public and notifications send to users in advance of closures. Commissioner Lathan stated it is up to Parks and Recreation to communicate to their users any updates and changes to ongoing activities that occur. Legislative Liaison Hutter spoke to the multi-departmental approach the notification process is and will flag for future updates to be shared out. Additionally, Councilor Sait asked why the maintenance happens during late summer months to which Commissioner Lathan shared from her time working with Parks and Recreation that it is identified a low use time of year and works best when coordinating with vendors and payment planning.

Chair Davis moved that the Administration ensure that all information relating to the schedule for, including any closures of the Ginny Smithers pool be communicated to pool users and updated on the Parks and Recreation and general city websites. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Sait, Clingan, and Davis), 0 opposed, 0 absent.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [24-1286](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Commissioner of Public Works discuss use restrictions in place for
Somerville Public School athletic teams at Reavis field.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED